



# MIND THE GAP: Improving the Policy Impact of OSF Alumni Network in the Western Balkans

COLLECTION OF POLICY BRIEFS

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Regional Alumni Conference

**MIND the GAP**

Bridging Research and Policy Development  
in European Integration of the Balkans



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## INTRODUCTION

Policy briefs collected in this publication are developed as a result of six-months-long research and writing process conducted by 6 teams composed of Open Society Foundations Scholarship Programs alumni (OSF alumni) from Macedonia, Serbia, Kosovo\*, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Policy Briefs are created within the project “**Mind the Gap: Improving the Policy Impact of OSF Alumni Network in the Western Balkans**” implemented by the Belgrade Open School with support of the Open Society Foundations (October 2016- September 2017).

Six policy briefs created during the project were presented by authors at the regional OSF alumni conference that took place on 8th and 9th of June, 2017 in Belgrade, Serbia. Papers are presented to targeted stakeholders engaged in topics presented in policy briefs. Aim of this event was to gather and engage potentials of the OSF alumni in developing and advocating policy solutions and answering to policy challenges Western Balkan countries face with. Topics policy briefs are dealing with are recognized as of a huge importance on the Berlin Process agenda, which is perceived as a most relevant framework for accession of Western Balkan countries to the European Union. Three topics that were in focus are: (1) youth cooperation, (2) migration and border issues and (3) energy, climate, environment protection.

Aim of the project is to support development of the Western Balkan region founded in evidence based policy making and regional cooperation. Besides this, project strives to increase the impact of OSF alumni network in answering to policy challenges within the EU integration of the Western Balkan region. Aim of the project is also to promote the role of the OSF educational advising centres from the Western Balkans as facilitator of policy potentials of the members of the OSF alumni and interlocutor between alumni and decision makers.

Belgrade Open School thanks all authors for engaging in the effort to create proposals for improving public policies in the Western Balkans in areas of their professional expertise. Moreover, we would like to thank to peer mentors for their inputs and mentorship throughout the research process: Mr Mirko Dautovic, International Relations and Middle East Expert for briefs in the field of migration; Ms Dragana Mileusnic, Climate Action Network Europe for brief in the field of energy, climate, environment protection; Ms Milica Skiljevic, Youth Representative of Serbia in the Governing Board of RYCO and Mr Vladimir Pavlovic, policy mentor for all alumni teams.

The views set out in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Belgrade Open School, neither Open Society Foundations.

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\* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSC 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

# Migrants/Refugees in Macedonia and Serbia

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## BACKGROUND

The closure of the Balkan route in March 2016 was a temporary solution seeking to secure a relative stability for Western Europe through the EU-Turkey deal, a highly disputable agreement that questioned the Union's commitment to human rights. The viability of the agreement is yet to be seen, given that the current European legal framework allows returns in two cases only<sup>1</sup>, when the criteria for asylum are not met and when the individuals submitting the asylum request have entered EU from a safe country. In order to consider Turkey, which up to date has not adopted the Geneva Convention in grounds of geographical limitation, a safe country EU should compromise its own standards. Non-Refoulement requires an effective procedure in determining if the applicant is entitled to protection. Overall, the European Union's approach in addressing the situation is mainly security related. Agencies like Frontex and Eurosur - its surveillance system are designed to keep people from crossing borders. Up to date there is no agency that exclusively focuses in aiding and supporting countries like Greece, Italy, Serbia and Macedonia in managing the crisis according to the European standards.

## CAPACITIES AND POLICIES IN MACEDONIA AND SERBIA

Before the Western Balkan route was shut down, UNHCR estimated that about 750,000 migrants/refugees transited through Macedonia and Serbia in 2015. To cope with the flow, Macedonia established two temporary transit centres: Vinojug in Gevgelija, on the border with Greece, with capacity of 134 people and Tabanovce, on the border with Serbia, with capacity of 547 people. The country also has a Reception Center for Asylum Seekers in Vizbegovo, 3 km from capital Skopje, with capacity of 150 people, and has opened one safe house for vulnerable groups of refugees / migrants with capacity of 13 people in Skopje. Similarly, in addition to 5 already existing asylum centres in Serbia (Krnjaca, Banja Koviljaca,

Bogovadja Tutin and Sjenica), in 2015 and 2016 a number of transit and reception centres were founded in Preshevo, Miratovac, Bujanovac (Macedonian border), Dimitrovgrad and Pirot (Bulgarian border), Sombor, Shid, Principovac and Adashevci (Croatian border) and Subotica and Kanjiza (Hungarian border). Overall, there are at present 11 refugee centres in Serbia, which can host up to 6000 people according to the NGOs' representatives estimates, or up to 8000 according to Serbian officials.<sup>2</sup>

In August 2015, the first temporary registration centres were opened on the borders of Macedonia and Serbia.<sup>3</sup>

**The legal procedure means that after registering with the police, which at the same time is expression of intent to seek asylum, refugees/migrants receive a 72 hour residence permit. If they do not apply for asylum, then the residence permit expires. Since very few of the refugees/migrants want to stay in the country, the 3-day period gives them ample time to transit. However, if they submit application to seek asylum then they should be provided with accommodation, food, medical care, legal aid and psychological support. They have the right to stay and freely move within Macedonia and Serbia, even arrange for private accommodation if they have the means, while the Ministry of Interior processes the application.**

In addition, Macedonia developed standard operating procedures when dealing with unaccompanied minors (November, 2015) and other vulnerable groups (i.e. elderly, pregnant women, single parents) (April/May, 2016)<sup>4</sup>. In particular, during 2016 Greece, Macedonia and Serbia established a transnational mechanism for identifying highly vulnerable children.

Macedonia erected a fence and set up barb-wire on the border with Greece. There are 120 EU Member States' police officers, mainly from Visegrad countries, that patrol the border together with Macedonian police. In addition, the army is also deployed to protect the border.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/news/paradox-eu-turkey-refugee-deal>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.bgcentar.org.rs/bgcentar/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Pravo-na-azil-u-Republici-Srbiji-2016-FINAL-za-stampu.pdf>, p. 88.

<sup>3</sup> Oxfam, "Closed Borders", 2016, p. 4

<sup>4</sup> Oxfam, p. 5.

However, if there is a new wave of migrants/refugees, for example if 40-50,000 are again based in Idomeni, nothing can prevent them entering. In that case, Macedonia is most likely to organize transit and has capacities to organize daily transit of about 10,000. Serbia, in distinction, so far consistently refused the idea of building a fence.

## THE CONDITIONS FOR MIGRANTS/REFUGEES IN MACEDONIA AND SERBIA

The closure of the Western Balkan route did not stop irregular migration in Macedonia and Serbia. To the contrary, it increased chances that people fall prey to human trafficking and smugglers. Local sources in Skopje claim that on average there are 650 monthly irregular transits only in one village close to Serbian border.

In April 2016, there were 600-800 refugees/migrants in Tabanovce and 126 in Vinojug<sup>5</sup>. New arrivals continued, albeit in small numbers. The ones that crossed illegally were apprehended and returned back to Greece. Throughout the year the numbers of refugees/migrants stranded in Macedonia decreased. In November 2016, there were approximately 550 refugees: 220 in transit centres, 90 in the Reception center for Asylum seekers Vizbegovo and 40 in the Reception centre for foreigners in Gazi Baba, and 200 persons were situated in villages along the border with Serbia<sup>6</sup>. In February 2017 there were only 46 refugees in Tabanovce and between 49 and 69 in Vinojug<sup>7</sup>. Some of the migrants/refugees were sent back to Greece, based on readmission agreements, and others wanted to go back to sign up for the re-allocation program. However, not all were eligible for the re-allocation program. Most of the refugees/migrants left Macedonia illegally with the aid of trafficking and smuggling group, and some were pushed back to Greece by the Macedonian police. It seems that both Serbian and Macedonian police push back migrants/refugees from their countries, and are

unwilling and/or incapable to combat human trafficking and smuggling efficiently. The transit camps are closed-type in Macedonia. This means that migrants/refugees do not have freedom of movement and effectively feel like imprisoned. This gives higher incentives to escape and to get out of the country. Exceptions are made in Vinojug, where some people are allowed to exit the camp once or twice a week; however, this is not the formal rule. Closed-type camps cause depression, lack of will and inactivity of migrants/refugees. Otherwise, the camps in Macedonia are in a good condition. They have clean beds, toilets and showers. The food is nutritious, hot meals are served regularly and meat is served several times a week. Some returnees from Serbia complain about conditions and food in Bujanovac. In Macedonia, humanitarian NGOs put a pressure from start to provide and have good food, and the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy and the Red Cross stuck to the same menu. In contrast, Greece and Serbia have open camps, and there is one semi-open type camp in Preshevo, where people get permissions to exit. In Serbia, users are free to leave it without permission during the day (6 am to 10 pm in the winter, and 6 am to 11 pm in the summer), but are obliged to be present during the evening control so as not to lose their place.

Refugees continued to arrive in Serbia every month as well. UNHCR reported an estimated 300 irregular arrivals to Serbia per day in May and June 2016, mainly from Macedonia (80%) but also from Bulgaria (20%). According to UNHCR and NGOs, the number of arrivals in the Balkan countries have continued to increase, with UNHCR observing that the “overall estimated number of refugees, migrants and asylum-seekers in Serbia grew from 2,800 in mid-July to approximately 4,000 as of 8 August 2016.”, and settled at some 6,000-6,500 from September 2016 onwards<sup>8</sup>. In September 2016, Serbian government adopted a Plan on Reaction to the Refugee and Migrant Crisis for the period October 2016-March 2017, which relied on the assumption that henceforth approximately 30 refugees/asylum seekers on average will cross the

<sup>5</sup> Macedonian Young Lawyers Association, “Field Report 2016, April-May-June”, p.1

<sup>6</sup> Macedonian Young Lawyers Association, “Field Report 2016, November”, p. 1

<sup>7</sup> Macedonian Young Lawyers Association, “Field Report 2016, February” p. 1-2.

<sup>8</sup> UNHCR, “Europe’s Refugee Emergency Response Update #29, “19 July – 8 August 2016”.

<http://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/51145>. By the end of August, UNHCR reported that the number of refugees and migrants in Serbia had increased to 4,700, see UNHCR, “Inter-agency Operational Update August 2016”.

Serbian border each month. This plan envisaged that around 5000 people will spend their winter in Serbia. However, this estimate proved to be grossly underestimated, as the number of people arriving continues to be several hundred per month and currently rests at some 7,000-8,000, out of which 53% from Afghanistan, 10% from Pakistan and 9% from Syria<sup>9</sup>. Starting from November 17, Serbia has closed its borders to refugees and migrants who are not coming from war-affected areas of Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan.

## THE PERILS OF ASYLUM SEEKERS IN MACEDONIA AND SERBIA

**In the asylum centre in Vizbegovo only one hot meal per day is served, and other conditions are discouraging applicants from seeking asylum. It is not clear why the living standards are different in the transit camps in the asylum centre. It seems that there is a lack of political will to offer support and to integrate the refugees/migrants.**

The Ombudsperson was the only public institution willing to act on behalf of the migrants/refugees. He inspected their living conditions, whether their rights were being respected, and reacted once wrongdoings were noticed. The Ombudsperson signed a Memorandum of understanding with several humanitarian NGOs and acts on their call to protect and improve the rights and positions of migrants/refugees in Macedonia.

However, the main approach of other public institutions was to facilitate transit, when the Balkan route was open, and to push the migrants/refugees back to Greece and/or to be lenient toward irregular migration when it closed down.

Macedonian Young Lawyers Association reported that the police refusing to take asylum application and pushing refugees back to Greece in January, 2016<sup>10</sup>. In addition, apprehended illegal migrants were returned to Greece and were not given possibility to seek asylum in

Macedonia. It seems that the standard practice of the police was to refuse asylum applications. There are even cases reported when asylum application was filled out, but it was never processed. In addition, the police gave faulty information to migrants, for example that children will have no medical services if they submit asylum application, to discourage them from applying for asylum.

Furthermore, the formal rules are slow and burdensome. Applicants can wait up to 4 months for their application to be processed, and another 12 months for the decision. In the one year period they do not have working permit, and access to health care and education system is a challenge. The ones who cannot afford private accommodation have to stay in Vizbegovo asylum centre and the conditions are as not good as in the temporary transit camps. They have limited space, and health service is provided only for 3-4 hours 3 times a week. In the transit camps, Red Cross offers primary health service. For more migrants/refugees with serious health issues have to be taken to bigger cities and clinical hospitals.

The Ministry of Social and Labour Policy in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration is implementing a project to renew capacities in hospital for mental illness in Demir Kapija, to serve as an additional facility for asylum seekers. Notwithstanding the need to increase asylum centres' capacities, there are several challenges to this project. Demir Kapija is on the main road to Serbia and relatively close to the border with Greece; however, it is a small town (population) and opening an asylum centre there may have adverse effects for the local population. Moreover, placing migrants/refugees under the roof of a mental health institution may have adverse effects on them as well. In addition, the small city cannot offer access to health and education service on the same scale like larger cities like Skopje, Kumanovo and/or Tetovo – that are much closer to the border with Serbia, which are multicultural and have much better capacities to offer health care and education. This argument can also be supported in the case of Serbia, where

<sup>9</sup> Pravo na azil u Republici Srbiji: periodični izveštaj za jul-septembar 2016, <http://www.bgcentar.org.rs/bgcentar/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/SRB-FINAL.pdf>, p. 9-10.

<sup>10</sup> Macedonian Young Lawyers Association, "Field Report 2016, January-February-March", p.1 and p.4

a dramatic flux of unregistered refugees scattered around the town caused locals to protest in Bogovadja and Banja Koviljaca, where refugees/asylum seekers were present for decades<sup>11</sup>. When government officials announced their plan to move the refugees from Banja Koviljaca to Surdulica, local official threatened to launch public protests and block the roads<sup>12</sup>. In early April 2017, the Local Assembly of Shid, on the Croatian border demanded an immediate removal of the local refugee centre<sup>13</sup>.

**A yet another problem in Serbia was that a large number of migrants continued to avoid refugee centres altogether and often squatted in large numbers in Belgrade city centre and central bus and train station. During the last harsh winter, this gave rise to sensationalist media entries in the Western press about appalling conditions of refugees in Serbia, which were compared to the treatment of German war prisoners in the WW2, and led to the Amnesty international Appeal to Serbian government to resolve this situation.**<sup>14</sup>

While lack of cohesion and coordination certainly characterised Serbian refugee/asylum seekers policy so far, it seems that such accusations were partially if not largely unfounded insofar as most refugees prefer the uncertain path of continuing their journey to spending weeks or months on long registration and asylum procedures in Serbia. The fact that in 2016, 12 821 persons claimed their intent to seek asylum in Serbia, while only 574 submitted a request<sup>15</sup>, demonstrates that the overwhelming majority of them intends to leave Serbia as quickly as possible, legally or not and at any cost.

In terms of accommodation, it is not feasible to retain asylum seekers in the transit camps such as those used in Macedonia. Containers are used for accommodation, which may be fine for transit, but do not offer basic human dignity conditions for a prolonged stay. More social support is needed in the camps and in the asylum centres.

For example, children do not have access to education. Several NGOs have started informal education programs. Volunteer professors teach children languages: English, German and Macedonian, and mathematics. NGOs signed Memorandum of understanding with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy to structure social life in the camps (e.g. organize sports events and hobbies). Otherwise, public institutions offer weak support and are more likely to obstruct the work of the NGOs. Overall, an example in good direction is certainly the adoption of the Regional Plan on Reaction to the Refugee and Migrant Crisis in January 2017, which tackles this issue in the regional perspective and includes the list of the needs to be provided for refugees/asylum seekers, including education and other activities.<sup>16</sup> However, while there is a pressing need for a joint regional approach, the problems is that it has been created under the auspices of the UNHCR and IOM, whereas Serbian institutions seems to be less penetrable. Serbian National Assembly still did not adopt the new Law on refugees and asylum seekers even though the Government promised its adoption by mid-2016, which shows its lack of commitment in systematically tackling this issue.

There are several other challenges for asylum seekers in Macedonia. A big challenge is that asylum, when finally approved, appears to be given on selective basis. For example, a woman that wanted to marry a local policeman had no problems to receive asylum. On the other hand, an Afghan man who has been in Macedonia for five years now, speaks perfect Macedonian, and is in a relationship with a local women cannot get documents to reside, because he cannot get a security clearance.

Also, if one is granted an asylum it is not clear whether the existing services and instruments that support entrepreneurs and job seekers (i.e. loans and credits, employment possibilities, SME's incentives) will be available to the refugees as well.

<sup>11</sup> Aleksandar Pavlović, "A Passage to Europe: Serbia and the Refugee Crisis", Contemporary Southeastern Europe, 2016, 3(1), 59-65.

<sup>12</sup> Anon. 2011. Vlast u Surdulici protiv smeštanja azilanata u staru kasarnu. Blic, 21 November 2011 (page assessed 23.5.2016.).

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.blic.rs/vesti/hronika/opstinsko-vece-sida-trazimo-hitno-izmestanje-prihvatnog-centra-za-migrante/n6bwykk>

<sup>14</sup> See, for instance: <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/hundreds-migrants-brave-freezing-conditions-9594123>, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/01/15/child-refugees-serbia-risk-freezing-death-temperatures-plunge/>, <file:///C:/Users/pavlaeks/Downloads/EUR7054952017ENGLISH.pdf>.

<sup>15</sup> Pravo na azil, p. 10.

<sup>16</sup> <http://rmrp-europe.unhcr.org/>.

Finally, the capacities and the background of the personal dealing with migrants/refugees matters. Public employees who have had training for diversity management, and have higher awareness and sensitivity for multiculturalism do a much better job when dealing with the migrants/refugees.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Governments in Serbia and Macedonia should:

- **assure access to asylum and fair treatment of each individual application;** stop the practice of push backs of migrants/refugees; police officers and state officials should be liable for their behaviour. New and younger police officers, with at least some knowledge of English, should be on the forefront and personally deal with refugees and migrants and the use of special forces needs to be avoided as much as possible. Cases of abuse of power, corruption and malfeasance should effectively be dealt with when they occur. There needs to be a clear message issued by Prime ministries and Presidents of both countries, and Ministers of Interior should be clear about the permitted conduct of their Ministries' officials and employees.
- **have open or semi-open transit camps;** the experience of Serbian open camps should be shared by Ministries of Social and Labour Policy of Serbia and Macedonia, and personnel from Serbia working in open camps could visit for a training and facilitate the implementation of such camps.
- **adopt new Law or bylaw acts that regulate this field in Serbia;** existing definitions of migrant and asylum seeker are outdated and not in line with the current situation. This leads to delays and inefficiencies in processing their requests. These legal acts will bring clarity and enable the shortening of current procedures for them. In particular, Serbian government needs to show its commitment to this issue by putting this Law at the agenda of next sessions of the National Assembly under fast-track procedure, to be adopted by the MPs.

- **increase dissemination of information on asylum processes and increase and improve services for asylum seekers (i.e. health, social protection, skill building);** invest in capacity building: train personnel (e.g. cultural awareness and sensitivity), more women, and more interpreters; develop instruments and responses for vulnerable groups of refugees (i.e. safe houses). One way to do this is to have Ministries of Social and Labour Policy in Macedonia and Serbia delegate such tasks to NGOs who already tackled it and have proven record of success. Serbian ministry of Labour regularly has open calls for projects in social care, and these could include refugee and asylum issues. Even better, a separate call could be issued specifically for the improvement of situation for refugees and asylum seekers.

- **increase capacities for asylum centres, in proximity of major cities;** the example of Krnjaca asylum centre in Belgrade shows that greater capacities and better conditions for asylum seekers in the capital lead to their reduced presence in the streets. Also, a number of complaints and protests in smaller towns shows their inability and lack of capacity to adopt great numbers of migrants. Ministries of Social and Labour Policy of Serbia and Macedonia already worked on opening several centres, and should now focus their efforts on providing more beds and spaces in the major city/ies in comparison to the province.

- **assure access to asylum and fair treatment of each individual application, shorten asylum procedures and if positive answer give full labour market access and support that exists for job seekers and entrepreneurs;** implement standard operating procedures and newly developed legislation and expedite issuing documents for identification of migrants/refugees; introduce regular visits (first weekly, later monthly) by Ombudsperson and team to check respect of human rights of human rights of migrants/refugees and legal procedures. Ministries of Interior of Serbia and Macedonia need to assign these tasks to specific parts of their infrastructure.

So far, using their personnel and facilities randomly and as part of their regular workload led to many delays and lack of their motivation and dedication. There should be a structure within the Ministries to insure responsibility and liability for their performance and to set them benchmarks. The office of the Ombudsman proved to be of use here, and it should be enlarged by a person or persons particularly tasked to supervise/follow the work of public authorities and institutions.

- **develop joint programs – not only cross-border management and transit – but joint responses as well, allow family reunification, share data and information;** cooperate with regional and EU institutions in order to resettle some of the refugees in countries like Albania and Bosnia Herzegovina, in the context of the Berlin Agenda; In accordance with the Regional Plan, increase cross-border cooperation to tackle human trafficking. Currently, both Serbia and Macedonia have Refugee Coordinator Model chaired by the UNHCR representative, which involves a number of government representatives from various Ministries. A body that would include these representatives on a joint Serbia-Macedonia level, including other representatives from the region, with their regular meetings and joint efforts and coordination, would be most beneficial.

**THE EU CONSISTENCY IMPERATIVE**

**Addressing Nationalistic and  
Xenophobic Sentiments in the  
Western Balkans Related to the  
Refugee Crisis and Migration**

**Authors:** Elma Demir, Dafina Bucaj and Natasha Stamenkovikj

Following the extensive influx of refugees and migrants from the Middle East to Europe in the past two years, countries in the Western Balkans reacted with mixed popular sentiments. On one side, the fleeing of people from the imminent danger atrocities and devastation reminded people in the Balkans of their own recent conflicts and their personal histories of belonging to millions of refugees and displaced persons across the region not long time ago. On the other hand, the unprecedented arrival of migrants coming from different cultural and religious background and future circumstances, formed a basis for nationalistic and xenophobic sentiments. While such reactions surface in different modalities within countries and across the region in general, considering the ethno-political assortment of the Western Balkans, a factor that has an important effect on the general effectiveness of national responses to the refugee/migrant crisis and subsequent rise of nationalistic and xenophobic sentiments in the Western Balkans is the role of the EU itself. Namely, as this policy brief attempts to illustrate, effectiveness of national responses to existing refugee/migrant issues is not only directly related to their own political situation and institutional framework in general, but is formed around the national relationship with the EU. In this retrospect, major policy problem that EU institutions need to address are their inconsistencies towards different countries in the Western Balkans. The EU needs to develop a regionally coherent political program towards countries in the Balkans followed by funding support directed towards institutional strengthening and provision of services.

## THE RATIONALE

Following the extensive influx of refugees and migrants from the Middle East to Europe in the past two years, countries in the Western Balkans reacted with mixed popular sentiments. On the one side, the escape of peoples from the imminent danger of atrocities and devastation

reminded people in the Balkans of their own recent conflicts and their personal histories of belonging to millions of refugees and displaced persons across the region not long time ago. On the other hand, the unprecedented arrival of migrants coming from different cultural and religious backgrounds combined with uncertainty of their permanent stay and future circumstances, formed a basis for nationalistic and xenophobic sentiments. While in the first instance, the reaction to the refugee inflow has generated remarkable humanitarian response (a combination of spontaneous civic action and governmental support), the long-term reaction remains entrenched in the nationalist and xenophobic rhetoric. Inclination of politicians and journalists in the region to conflate directly or implicitly the refugee/migrant crisis<sup>1</sup> with 'homegrown' issues connected to the recent ethno-religious conflicts, existing political rivalries across those lines, terrorism, the demographic decline and a general sense of economic despair generates backing for islamophobia, racism and xenophobia.<sup>2</sup> This paired with a history of mistrust and ethnic conflict in the Balkans create the general sense of socio-economic insecurity and political instability across the region. Although such developments have been noted within the European Union (EU) member countries themselves, it is important to stress that countries in the Western Balkans are not stable democracies like their counterparts in the north and continue to experience political fragility. Therefore, rise of nationalism and xenophobia should be addressed in light of the long-term institutional stability, incorporating policies that tackle security threats.<sup>3</sup>

While nationalistic reactions surface in different modalities within countries and across the region in general, considering the ethno-political assortment of the Western Balkans, they seem to linger around existing nationalistic oppositions. However, another factor that has an important

<sup>1</sup> Some sources use term refugee crisis and other migrant crisis, however, differences are not only semantical but have important political and legal consequences as refugees and migrants have different rights and standings according to international and national regulation. Taking into fact that the crisis include some migrants along refugees, we are using here terms that incorporates both groups. Despite the status, refugees and migrants are fleeing dire situations in their countries. See Action Against Hunger. Responding to the Migrant Crisis: Europe at a juncture. Global Report. June 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Countries with prior experience of war are more included to experience increase of nationalism. See Mikael Hjerm and Annette Schnabel. Mobilizing nationalist sentiments: Which factors affect nationalist sentiments in Europe? Social Science Research 39/4 (July 2010): 527–539.

<sup>3</sup> Siniša Tatalović and Dario Malnar. Sigurnosni aspekti izbjegličke krize. Političke analize no 23. October 2015.

effect on the general effectiveness of national responses to the refugee/migrant crisis and subsequent rise of nationalistic and xenophobic sentiments in the Western Balkans is the role of the EU itself. Namely, as the second part of this policy brief will showcase, effectiveness of national responses to existing refugee/migrant issues is not only directly related to a country's own political situation and institutional framework in general, but is formed around the relationship the nation has with the EU. In this retrospect, major policy problem that the EU institutions need to address are their inconsistencies towards different countries in the Western Balkans,<sup>4</sup> which in itself invoke a sense of differentiations and discrimination amongst the peoples of the Balkans. The EU needs to develop a regionally coherent political program towards countries in the Balkans followed by funding support directed towards institutional strengthening and provision of services.

## THE EVIDENCE

The second part of the policy brief provides three concise country-level case studies on national responses to the refugee/migrant crisis within their respective territories, the role and relationship with the EU in that retrospect and the subsequent rise of the nationalism and different forms of xenophobia. The study contrasts EU policies towards Croatia with those in Kosovo and Macedonia. Although Croatia is a recent member of the EU, the utilization of this study is quite important as Croatia shares quite recent political past with Kosovo and Macedonia and presents part of the refugee/migrant route to Europe.

## CROATIA<sup>5</sup>

In a seven-month period Croatia managed to provide an effective national response to the refugee/migrant crisis which exemplified itself primarily as a transit route for cca 650.000 refugees and migrants that crossed Croatian borders from Serbia and Hungary, headed for

Germany, Sweden and other EU countries. In this process, Croatia actively cooperated with national security forces in Serbia and Slovenia as well as Hungary. Although this collaboration was not flawless or without problems, the ongoing local and national level communication with relevant stakeholders, the readiness to continuously adjust its actions to changing requirements of neighboring countries and the influx and needs of refugees, made the Croatian humanitarian response a success story. During this process, nobody was seriously injured or harmed, shelter and food was provided and refugees and migrants could transit the county using buses and trains without paying for these services. Few transit camps were built and constantly improved in a very short period of time, transportation organized, and transiting people were undergoing a process of documentation and registration as well as security checks. Although international humanitarian organizations as well as local civic non-profits provided relevant resources, particularly in the first days of the crisis in terms of food and volunteers, the Croatian response was centrally managed but locally executed humanitarian response built on national civil protection framework. A day after refugees entered the country, Croatian Government established a national response task force, the Headquarters for the coordination of activities in charge of the arrival of migrants in the Republic of Croatia, which included representatives of all relevant ministries and agencies, with the Ministry of Internal Affairs leading the whole process on a national and local scale in close collaboration with the National Protection and Rescue Directorate (DUZS). The Headquarters acted as a central point for data collection, analysis, and decision-making founding its actions on information from institutional counterparts operating in the field. The whole process has been evaluated internally and externally as successful and offers an exemplary case of a civil protection framework. Nevertheless, the refugee/migrant crisis did not take place without nationalist discourse, exemplified in political

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<sup>5</sup> Insights on the Croatian response to the refugee/migrant crisis and the Croatian – EU relationship in that retrospect are partially based on research conducted as part of the research project and same-titled working paper: Maren Larsen, Elma Demir, Maja Horvat. Humanitarian responses by local actors: Lessons learned from managing the transit of migrants and refugees through Croatia. The International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED). April 2016.

statements and media commentaries that included xenophobic, islamophobic or racist statements. However, in comparison to other countries in the region such sentiments remained marginal. Considering that the Croatian Parliamentary Elections took place in September 2015, in the midst of the refugee/migrant transit, nationalistic sentiments connected to refugees and migrants were not central part of the election campaign.<sup>6</sup> Although Croatia closed its borders for refugees in early 2016<sup>7</sup>, only a few hundred refugees remained in Croatia, with only a few of them asylum seekers. Croatia should accommodate around 1600 refugees by end of 2017 according to EU agreements, while some refugees are leaving and some are coming to Croatia.<sup>8</sup> This and other refugee related issues<sup>9</sup> raised some political debates, but remained outside the mainstream public agendas.<sup>10</sup>

One of the major factors in the success of the Croatian response to the refugee-migrant crisis as well as the lack of nationalistic/xenophobic concerns can be connected to the fact that Croatian role and expectations in managing the transit was founded on agreements with the EU. This premise is based on the fact that Croatian Government was included in the EU negotiations and agreements in relation to managing the crisis.<sup>11</sup> Another relevant element was financing. Although Croatia pre-financed the costs of the refugee-migrant transit, these were quickly

reimbursed by the EU and all stakeholders in Croatia, including local stakeholders whose properties were damaged or provided services received appropriate compensations. As an EU member country, Croatia must apply set of international refugee and EU migration<sup>12</sup> policies on its territory. Croatia offered asylum to all transiting refugees by displaying such information in its transit camps, in accordance with the Dublin Convention. Small number of refugees submitted such requests, however. Although the future intake of refugees has raised some concerns in terms of country's institutional and integrative capacities, as well as the long term employment of refugees taking into account the Croatian economic circumstances, such concerns are deliberated along the agreements and negotiations Croatia is making within the EU institutional framework.<sup>13</sup>

## KOSOVO

The situation in Kosovo differentiates from the remainder of the countries in the Western Balkans addressed in this policy paper due to several underlying circumstances that derive from the past and the present situation. Kosovo has not been subjected to fluctuation of refugees, and should be noted that due to past history, i.e. the 1998-1999 war, when hundreds of thousands of Kosovar Albanians were forced to flee to countries in the region and beyond, the people of

<sup>6</sup> Although an Irish media source argues differently, other Croatian and German media analysis sources indicate that the refugee/migrant crisis did not have a major impact onto elections although it was mentioned in media occasionally. See Deutsche Welle. Izbori u Hrvatskoj: „Polarizacija umjesto tema“. 07.11.2015.; Dražen Hoffmann. Izvještaj o praćenju diskriminatornog govora i govora mržnje u predizbornoj kampanji 2015. GONG. Zagreb, 27.11.2016; Milica Vučković. Političke kampanje i internet na parlamentarnim izborima u Hrvatskoj 2015. godine. Političke analize no 24. December 2015.; Dražen Lalić. Izborna kampanja 2015. godine: ni predstavljanje ni proizvodnja politike – dugotrajna komunikacijska i politička zbrka. Političke analize no 24. December 2015.; Višeslav Raos. Izbori 2015.: jesmo li ušli u razdoblje nestabilnosti i nepreglednosti? Političke analize no 24. December 2015. See the Irish Times article: Irish Times. Croatia election heavily influenced by refugee crisis

Opinion polls indicate victory for alliance favouring tougher migration controls. Nov 8, 2015.

<sup>7</sup> Ivan Zrinjski. Kako se odvijala migrantska kriza? Na početku su izbjeglice bile prihvaćene otvorenih ruku, a sada se zatvara ruta kojom je prošlo 800.000 ljudi. Jutarnji.hr, 09.03.2016.

<sup>8</sup> Tajana Sisgoreo. Refugee Crisis in Croatia – Report. borderline-europe.de June 2016.

<sup>9</sup> A relevant issue that was raised during the refugee outbreak was the fact that Croatia needs to set and adjust its migration policy taking into account global changes, its demographic and economic challenges. See Vlado Puljiz, Josip Tica and Davorko Vidović (eds.) Book review: Migracije i razvoj Hrvatske: podloga za hrvatsku migracijsku strategiju. Političke analize no 23. October 2015.č Josip Esterajher. Iskustva zbrinjavanja prognanika i izbjeglica i suvremena izbjegličko-migrantska kriza u Hrvatskoj. Političke analize no 23. October 2015.

<sup>10</sup> Milica Vučković. Personalizacija politike u Hrvatskoj na prijevremenim parlamentarnim izborima 2016. godine. Političke analize no 27. September 2016.; Vladimir Nišević. Izbjeglička kriza i budućnost Unije za nas nisu bile predizborne teme. 11.9.2016.; Dražen Hoffmann. Izvještaj o praćenju govora mržnje, diskriminatornog, stereotipizirajućeg i zapaljivog govora u informativnim medijima u rujnu 2016. GONG. Zagreb, 27.09.2016; Dražen Hoffmann. Izvještaj o praćenju govora mržnje, diskriminatornog, stereotipizirajućeg i zapaljivog govora u informativnim medijima u kolovozu 2016. GONG. Zagreb, 07.09.2016.

<sup>11</sup> For overview of EU policy responses to the recent refugee crisis see The EU and the Refugee Crisis. European Union, 2016.; The EU Delegation in Croatia. Izbjeglička kriza: što čini Europska unija?

<sup>12</sup> For overview of EU migration policies see Nella Popović. Imigracijska politika Europske unije na testu izbjegličke krize. Političke analize no 23. October 2015

<sup>13</sup> Emina Buzinkic. The European refugee crisis - the Croatian view. The Heinrich Boell Stiftung, 26.05.2016.

Kosovo have empathy for the refugees. As such the Kosovo people and government have expressed readiness and support for the refugees coming from the Middle East, despite the objective inability of the government to host a large number of refugees.

Nevertheless, the Kosovo situation can and must be looked from a different perspective, namely the role that the refugee crisis had in inciting a migration wave of people from Kosovo, making their way to Western Europe, in the late 2014/early 2015. To elaborate further, according to statistics provided by Eurostat in 2015, Kosovo was ranked 4th on the list of countries of migrants that had travelled towards European countries (approximately 50,000).<sup>14</sup>

While there are no clear indications as to what caused this emigration wave and why particularly at this time, there are several circumstances that when put together shed light on the causes. First and foremost it should be noted that Kosovo is the only country in the region that has yet to enjoy Visa-Free Travel policy for EU, with a decision pending in the European Parliament. Kosovo, a country in the middle of the Balkans, with less than 2 million inhabitants approximately 95% which ethnic Albanians, is excluded from the visa free regime that other countries in the region enjoy. Such policy is seen by local stakeholders, including MPs, government representatives, and civil society as a discriminatory policy of the EU towards the ethnic Albanian population in Kosovo.

Further on, one of the key incentives for the migration crises has been the economic situation in Kosovo and the lack of employment opportunities. Consequently, the visa regime still in place, is seen by many in people in Kosovo as an impediment to travel freely throughout Europe, thus leaving migration as the only solution.

One may easily argue that the above circumstances have existed before, therefore there must be some other factor that triggered the 'exodus' of people particularly at this time. The answer to that is twofold: on the one hand, it is considered that a key factor was the opening of

the route through Serbia as a result of Kosovo –Serbia Dialogue, which allowed for people from Kosovo to travel through Serbia with an ID issued by Kosovo authorities.<sup>15</sup> prior to that Kosovar people were banned from entering Serbia due to political differences that arose after the war and the Kosovo's unilateral declaration of Independence, and the fact that Serbia has yet to recognize Kosovo as an independent country. With the agreement in place, the situation changed. On top of that a final factor that is considered to have triggered the wave of migration from Kosovo is the fleeing of the refugees from Middle East, toward Europe, which opened a window for people from Kosovo and the Balkans to migrate to EU countries on the hope of being admitted as asylum seekers.

There are indications that the EU policies by which Kosovo was denied the same status as the rest of the Western Balkan states, have also contributed to the already existing nationalist and xenophobic sentiments in Kosovo and in the Balkans. In a more thorough analysis, the visa liberalization process in Kosovo has with other processes increasing nationalistic sentiments even more. In addition to the Visa regime, another of the EU requirements that has yet to be met is the Border Demarcation with Montenegro, which opened hefty discussions in Kosovo reviving nationalistic sentiments. Since EU is not willing to remove this requirement and the Kosovo Parliament has not been willing to pass the law, various other processes have been blocked including the Dialogue with Serbia for normalization of relations. In addition to this, there have been various actions by the Serbian government considered as highly provocative and nationalistic such as arrest warrants for former KLA members, building a dividing wall in Mitrovica, dispatching a 'cultural train' with nationalistic indications. The latter may or may not connect directly to the EU policies in the Balkans or the refugee crisis, nevertheless they are a clear indication that the countries in the Western Balkans are still subject to various nationalistic and xenophobic sentiments, as recently witnessed by the events in Macedonia as well.

<sup>14</sup> Migrant crisis: Migration to Europe explained in seven charts, BBC cited Eurostat charts; Tages Anzeiger (2015) Der Westen hat einen Pakt mit Kriminellen Politikern geschlossen; Retrieved from: <http://www.tagesanzeiger.ch/ausland/europa/Der-Westen-hat-einen-Pakt-mit-kriminellen-Politikern-geschlossen/story/21671043>

<sup>15</sup> INDEP report;

## MACEDONIA

The most recent migration crisis was not the first migration crisis in which Macedonia has taken a majorly central role. For example, in 1998-1999 the country was dealing with an influx of refugees from Kosovo. The difference, however, between the migrant crisis then and the one of now is that in the earlier crisis, Macedonia was primarily the point of destination for the refugees, who wanted to stay in Macedonia until they had a chance to get back to Kosovo. In later years (2015/2016), however, the territory of Macedonia was simply a transitory area for the migrants headed for the EU countries. The combination of these factors where (1) the territory of Macedonia was only a transit for the migrants, (2) whose final destination was the territory of different EU countries, put Macedonia into a position of direct dependence on EU's policies and EU's assistance related to dealing with the migrant crisis.

**Therefore, it is very justifiable and legitimate to argue that it was/is necessary that the EU provides Macedonia with active and supportive policies/activities for dealing with the migrants and conditions for migrants at the territory of Macedonia.**

Another result of the above mentioned factors is that it cannot be expected for many of the refugees from the Middle East who entered Macedonia between 2015 and 2016 to have remained in the country. In fact, there is a small number of refugees and migrants who remained in Macedonia. There are both regulated asylum seekers and those who were not granted asylum,<sup>16</sup> as well as some with 'unregulated' status. The most recent developments (as of the end of 2016 and the beginning of 2017) which contributed to a decrease of the number of remaining refugees and asylum seekers in Macedonia (from the middle East) is that the

regional cooperation, especially between Macedonia and Serbia, as well as between Macedonia and the EU and the EU countries, has improved through the implementation of the readmission agreements,<sup>17</sup> which were to serve as the main tool for return of refugees from Serbia to Macedonia and then from Macedonia to Greece.<sup>18</sup> This was not the case before,<sup>19</sup> when the lack of application of readmission agreements lead to keeping refugees in a limbo position, usually in the middle of their route, either in Macedonia or in Serbia. The non-application of the agreements, and therefore the major influx of migrants/refugees who then remain(ed) in Macedonia, overwhelmed the capacities of the local and national authorities in Macedonia to deal timely and properly with the created 'limbo' situation. As a response, Macedonia was financially supported in improving border control and border management. That support was one of the most notable assistance that the country received from the international community, including the EU. It was also, however, one of the management actions in which the country failed badly, as in fact the majority of incidents happened at the border of the country. This may support a standing that while the quantitative capacity building was relatively good at the border management field, it was the qualitative aspect of it which failed. In other words, the assistance of the international community and the EU should be more directly (via trainings, for example) included in assisting the agencies on the field, instead of solely transferring funds and leaving the whole managerial function to the local and national authorities.

For those who remain[ed] in Macedonia things have also improved, as the infrastructure of transit centers 'Tabanovce' and 'Vinojug' has been improved, as a result of multiple international donors, including the EU, the UN, the USA, and

<sup>16</sup> This group of 'regulated' or 'legal' asylum holders and asylum seekers are being settled in the Center for Asylum seekers in Vizbegovo, Skopje. The latter 'unregulated' group of refugees are hosted at the transit centers 'Tabanovce' (near the border with Serbia) and 'Vinojug', Gevgelija (near the border with Greece).

<sup>17</sup> See: Agreement between the European Community and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on the readmission of persons residing without authorization – Joint Declarations, OJ L334, 19.12.2007, p. 7, signed on 18.09.2007 and entered into force on 01.01.2008, Brussels.

<sup>18</sup> Interview with Ivan Sterjoski, a lawyer based in Skopje, who at the time of the major migration crisis in 2014-2015 was working with the Macedonian Young Lawyers' Association in representing and 'legalizing' refugees in Macedonia.

<sup>19</sup> The President of the Macedonian Young Lawyers' Association, Mr. Zoran Drangovski, addressed this issue at a conference 'At a midway – admission and return of unaccompanied minor migrants', stating that Serbia and Macedonia need to conduct better cooperation, especially for empowering an uninterrupted and sustainable exchange of information and for building mutual understanding and efforts in protecting unaccompanied minor migrants within the Balkan route. For more, check: <http://myla.org.mk>.

separate EU member-states. The majority of the international (field) missions are no longer active in the transit center, as their services are not necessary any more, due to the major decrease of the number of people living in the transit centers and of people/refugees transiting through the Balkan route. An important help in resources provided by these international donors were the 'containers' and other equipment, which were left for usage at the transit centers. Domestic actors also played an important role in dealing with the influx of refugees, and in providing the necessary living products needed at the transit centers, as well as for possibly integrating the refugees within the local municipalities. The results were achieved by mutual cooperation between local authorities and NGOs, providing both humanitarian and legal assistance to the refugees. The most recent activities of sort include establishing a contractual cooperation between the MYLA<sup>20</sup> and the local municipalities of Gevgelija, Kumanovo and Butel, aimed at increasing the capacities, knowledge and cooperation between the relevant authorities and municipalities in order to ensure proper legal representation and integration of the remaining refugees and asylum seekers in Macedonia.<sup>21</sup> These and similar activities which are still taking place especially within the transit centers are mainly supported by the UN agencies, by the Embassies of different countries, as well as by the EU.<sup>22</sup> However, these efforts of the EU and the rest of the international community were not clearly presented to the public in Macedonia. That left space for the national authorities to claim there has been no support from international factors, and to therefore point finger at EU, Germany,<sup>23</sup> and at the international community in general, for the failure of the border control

management to deal with the refugees in a manner which would respect their dignity and rights. Such de-legitimation of the Union did not contribute in any way towards better dealing with the crisis. Quite the contrary, it stoked additional fear and even anger of the local population towards the refugees and towards the EU. The latter is certainly not beneficial for the already shaken trust of the Macedonian population towards the EU and the EU integration of the country. Even more, the mentioned de-legitimation shifted the attention of the people (and of the international actors eventually) from the political crisis and the rule of law crisis within the country, and further empowered Euroscepticism. All this could have been avoided if the Union was more involved into public presentation of its participation in the refugee crises in Macedonia.

**This may support an argument that the EU needs to be more directly active, and/or at least more 'transparent' in its actions directed to the refugee crisis in Macedonia.**

By doing so, it would prepare both the local population and the refugees to know what to expect from the circumstances and how to (mutually) address those.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATION

The refugee/migrant crisis presents one of the biggest challenges not only in terms of the EU response to the existing refugee issues and their connection to the rise of nationalistic sentiments in the Western Balkans, but very similar problems have been on the rise in the EU member states.<sup>24</sup> The ability of the EU institutions to provide adequate political and legal solutions will determine the future of the EU.<sup>25</sup> Such solutions

<sup>20</sup> MYLA stands for the Macedonian Young Lawyers' Association. It is an association which is almost entirely financially supported by international donors. MYLA is the main think-tank in Macedonia which is dealing with refugees and asylum seekers in Macedonia. MYLA cooperates with the UNHCR and with the local authorities responsible for integrating refugees and asylum seekers in Macedonia. MYLA also legally (pro-bono) represents refugees and asylum seekers in the country throughout the procedure for granting them legal status.

<sup>21</sup> See: <http://myla.org.mk>.

<sup>22</sup> EU-funded projects are mostly implemented in Macedonia by the Danish Refugee Council, through the so-called ECHO programme (Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Programme) of the EU External Action mechanism.

<sup>23</sup> For example, the President of Macedonia, MR. Gjorgje Ivanov, claimed that Macedonia would have done better in dealing with the influx of refugees if Brussels (referring to the EU) was 'faster' in decision-making on funding for Macedonia, and if Germany was 'slower' in deciding to openly welcome refugees and to make agreements with Turkey. See: Charlotte Beale, 'Refugee crisis': Macedonia tells Germany they've completely failed', The Independent Online, 12.03.2016.

<sup>24</sup> Florian Bieber and others. EU Enlargement in the Western Balkans in a Time of Uncertainty. Balkans in Europe Policy Advisory Group. September 2016.

<sup>25</sup> Claudia Postelnicescu. Europe's New Identity: The Refugee Crisis and the Rise of Nationalism. Eur J Psychol. 12.2 (May 2016): 203-209.

need to include a comprehensive and harmonized response to the ongoing refugee/migrant crisis in the Western Balkans. As we have illustrated with three short case studies the interrelation between the crisis, rise of nationalism and the role of the EU in the migration crisis in the region need to be addressed as mutually dependant activities. Furthermore, economic backwardness and unemployment along security threats should not be separated from these issues.

The Berlin Process and the forthcoming discussions in July this year present an important prospect in that regard. This process however needs to seek a far-reaching and country-level harmonized approach on behalf of the EU. As such, the refugee/migrant crisis cannot be taken out of the enlargement programs and should be incorporated with planned support into future agendas.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EU:

General:

- Apply a more open and proactive policy towards the migration crisis in the Balkans, by taking preemptive action to aid the Balkan countries in dealing with the countries, and cooperating with other EU countries on a safe passage of the refugees, rather than blocking the borders and aiding to the crisis.
- Redefine its role within the Balkans in terms of the approach and involvement towards the political situations in the Balkans by ensuring that there are equal treatment of the countries as such diminishing the differences amongst the countries.
- Ensure that the Refugee policies of the EU are unified and the outreach programs intensified with the aim of decreasing the number of migrants that have misperceived the 'openness' of the EU countries to receive migrants.

Country Specific:

- **Kosovo:** Ensure that the Kosovo people enjoy a visa free regime thus ending the quarantine and guaranteeing equal treatment for the Kosovo population as the rest of the Balkan countries.
- **Macedonia:** Representatives of the EU delegation in Macedonia should be involved more into promoting their activities in the crisis, and therefore, into informing the people in the country about the efforts that the EU delegation in cooperation with the local actors had been doing in easing the situation for both, the local people and the refugees. This could be done, for a start, by giving press releases by the EU (via the EU delegation in Macedonia) on the issue, in the local language and on the local televisions.
- **Detailed numbers** about funding and expenses covered by the EU, as well as about availability of EU personnel (in numbers), in dealing with the refugee influx in the country should also be provided to the civil sector, and if possible, to the people in Macedonia. In this way, the xenophobic tendencies motivated and/or enforced by the political elites in the country (with their statements about EU's failure to help in the situation) would be delegitimised. This can be done by publishing (reports) about the EU activities in dealing with the refugee crisis in Macedonia and in the region. The report should be composed in cooperation with the UNHCR representatives in Macedonia, and with the actors directly involved in dealing with the refugees, both who transit(ed) from and who remain in the country (i.e. MYLA, The Red Cross Office in Skopje, and if possible, the Ministry of interior).
- **Trainings** for the local police units (especially of the border units) should have been, and where necessary still to be, organized by the European External Action Service (EEAS).

# **WB6 Reconciliation through Youth Employment and Regional Cooperation**

**Authors:** Mimoza Telaku, Vlado Damjanovic, Visar Malaj

## RESUME

The slow integration of the Western Balkans to the European Union has been influenced not only by social and economic problems, but also by cultural and historical disagreements between countries. The past conflicts in the region left the societies divided and struggled economic growth. People are sometimes not prepared to cooperate with the members of opposed groups and the hostilities threaten to be transmitted to younger generations. Nationalists control many workplaces which in turn foster nationalism and hamper reconciliation potentials. The resolution of disagreements in the region would contribute to the acceleration of reforms and EU integration, and to the economic development of each country. Unemployment rates remain high, especially among young people, leading to the deterioration in living conditions and to a substantial increase in the number of emigrants. There is a lack of holistic approach in the region to address the existing interethnic hostilities and youth unemployment.

The main objective of this policy paper is the promotion of reconciliation through employment of young people and regional cooperation in the Western Balkans. The proposal of concrete recommendations for the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) is another important goal of this work. Our policy suggests that RYCO, once established and fully operational, should further leverage its capacity of an influencer in the region to establish projects which will, in their core, have the purpose of establishing a network which would feature lasting relationships with national bodies, private sector and academia.

## 1. FACTS AND FIGURES

Western Balkan (WB) region includes Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), Montenegro, Serbia and Kosovo. **WB countries have experienced a slow integration to the European Union (EU) over the past 25 years.** In 1999, the EU initiated the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP) with the WBs, which was the starting point of the accession process. The SAP is based on four main points: contractual

relations, bilateral trade, financial assistance and good relationship between WB countries. The implementation of this important process is connected with the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA), which is specific for each WB country. The SAA determines a free trade zone among the EU and the respective country, and also stimulate the economic and social reforms. In 2017, all WB countries have SAAs in force: the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in 2004, Albania in 2009, Montenegro in 2010, Serbia in 2013, Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2015 and Kosovo in 2016.

The European integration of the WBs has been slowed not only by social and economic problems, but also by cultural and historical disagreements between countries. The armed conflicts in the region during the 90s left the societies divided. People in this region are sometimes not prepared to cooperate with the members of opposed groups. **The hostilities threaten to be passed on to the younger generations. The relations between Kosovo and Serbia remain fragile, regardless of the constant assistance of the United States of America (USA) and EU.** The cooperation between Kosovars and Serbians is crucial for the common road towards Europe, and for the economic development of each country. The naming disagreement between FYROM and Greece is another delicate problem, which is correlated with the accession of Macedonia to the EU. Greek authorities have expressed that 'Macedonia' indicates an ancient Greek region, and they would exercise the veto right to obstruct the EU membership of Macedonia if this problem remains unresolved. The resolution of all the disputes in the region would contribute to the acceleration of reforms, EU integration and economic growth. The income gap between WB and EU countries remains high, regardless of the stable economic growth in the region. **Figure 1 shows the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita (p. c.) in 2015 for the WB and the Euro area countries. The average GDP p. c. for the Euro area economies was about 34.182 USD in 2015, while the respective value for the WBs was about 4.708 USD. Montenegro had the highest GDP p. c. for this year (6.406 USD), while the lowest value in the WBs belongs to Kosovo (3.562 USD).**

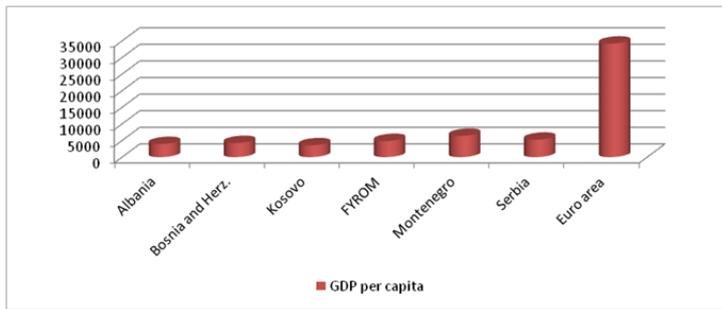


Figure 1. GDP per capita (gross domestic product in current US dollars divided by midyear population) for Western Balkan and the Euro area countries. Source: Authors' elaboration from the World Bank data.

Besides existing hostility sentiments, young people are experiencing high rates of unemployment and growing poverty. Figure 2 shows the unemployment rates in 2016 for the Euro area and the Western Balkan countries. **Among the WBs, Kosovo and Macedonia had the highest unemployment rates in 2016 (26,7%), whereas the lowest rates were recorded in Albania (16,3%) and Serbia (16,5%). The respective average value for the Euro area countries was about 10,1%.** Unemployment rates for Kosovo have been obtained from the Kosovo Agency of Statistics (KAS), which may apply different methods of estimation; hence we should interpret these indicators with caution. Figure 3 shows the youth unemployment rates in 2016 for the Euro area and the Western Balkan countries. Among the WBs, the highest youth unemployment rates were recorded in Kosovo (52,5%) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (67,6%), whereas the lowest rates were observed in Albania (36,4%) and Montenegro (37,7%). The average unemployment rate for the Euro area countries was about 23,8% in 2016.

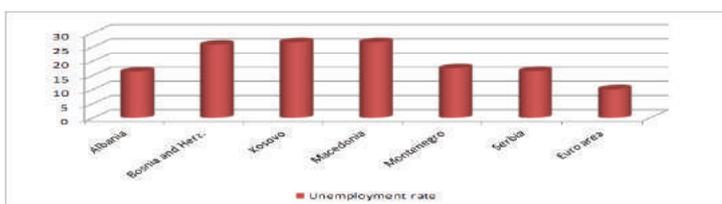


Figure 2. Unemployment rate (% of total labor force) in 2016 for the Euro area and the Western Balkan countries. Source: Authors' elaboration on World Bank and Kosovo Agency of Statistics (KAS) data.

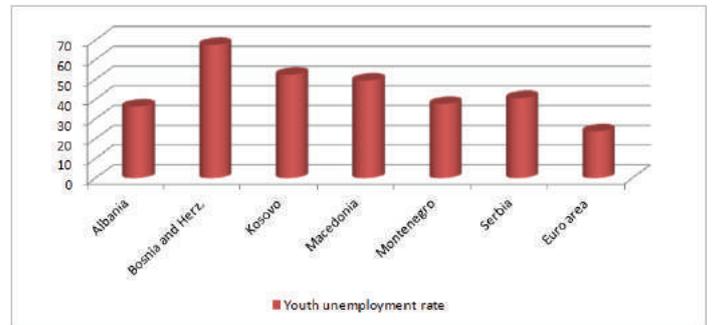


Figure 3. Youth unemployment rate (% of total labor force, ages 15-24) in 2016 for the Euro area and the Western Balkan countries. Source: Authors' elaboration on World Bank and Kosovo Agency of Statistics (KAS) data.

**High unemployment rates and the deep social and economic inequality are strongly correlated with the deterioration in living conditions, a poorer youth education and a growing criminality.** Unemployment is also one of the most important causes of emigration to developed countries. Recent years have been characterized by a significant increase of the number of WB immigrants in EU countries. Figure 4 shows the total number of first time asylum applicants from WB countries in the Euro area for the time period 2008-2016. There was a continuous increase of the WB asylum seekers from 2012 (about 41.000) to 2015 (about 172.000). In 2016, the number of WB asylum seekers decreased by 66% compared with 2015. Albanians, Kosovars and Serbians were the largest groups with respectively 50%, 15,9% and 15,4% of all WB asylum seekers in 2016. The true reasons of the majority of these applications are purely economic, so the probability to grant asylum is minimal.

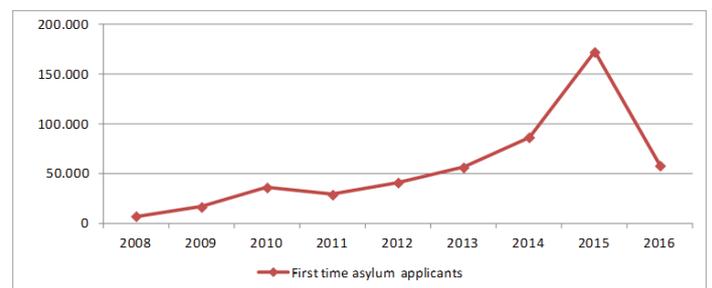


Figure 4. First time asylum applicants from the Western Balkans in the Euro area during 2008-2016. Source: Authors' elaboration on Eurostat data.

**This policy paper aims to promote reconciliation through employment of young people and regional cooperation in the Western Balkans.**

Specifically, this policy paper tries to improve the employability among young people, increase of contact and understanding between young people of different ethnic groups and nationalities, improve regional cooperation of the Western Balkan countries, promote entrepreneurship of multi ethnic and/or multinational nature, prevent brain drain, improve academic cooperation between the countries of the Western Balkan, and improve sustainable cooperation between labor supply and the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO).

**This policy paper aims to target unemployed young people of the Western Balkan countries.**

Specifically, the subgroups of the target are both skilled and unskilled young people. In addition to that, this policy paper has a special focus on highly qualified young people and young people who have studied abroad.

## 2. GAPS

The countries of the Western Balkans have a variety of problems in common. Hostilities between these countries and between ethnic groups, and high rate of unemployment pose serious challenges to the development of this region. **Even though there are some efforts to tackle the existing hostilities in and between countries of the Western Balkans the societies still remain divided.** The hostile attitudes are being passed through generations. **Young people are not being provided with a sufficient environment which could bring them in contact with people of different ethnic/national background.** In such circumstances young people are deprived of learning and understanding people of the opposing ethnicity/nationality. In a study conducted in this region it was found that the interethnic intolerance is still high.<sup>1</sup>

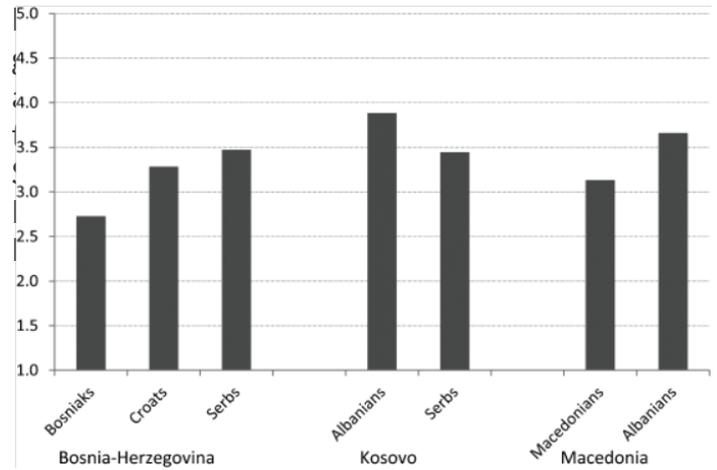


Figure 5. Ethnic intolerance in major ethnic groups within Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Macedonia (All of the items are scored from 1 to 5, with high values meaning high intolerance.). Source: Edited book "Aftermath of War. Experiences and Social Attitudes in the Western Balkans."

In addition to hostilities present in this region, the economic situation poses a serious challenge too. One of the consequences of the economic situation in this region is the high rate of unemployment. The high rate of unemployment affects more young people as it is shown in the abovementioned statistics. This high rate of unemployment among young people is a potential threat of losing a generation and human capital. High unemployment further sours relations between ethnic elites and between the employed and the unemployed. Nationalists' control of many workplaces drastically reduces the employment opportunities for many ordinary people who do not support nationalists.<sup>2</sup> It is more concerning that there is a lack of proper strategies and the lack of support to facilitate the transition of young people into the labor market. There is little coordination between actors to improve youth employment. The benefiting regimes in these countries have not put enough efforts to tackle the youth unemployment. In the other side, the skills of young people do not match all demands of the labor market.

<sup>1</sup> Ellingsen, T., Ringdal, K., Simkus, A., & Strabac, Z. (2012). Security Dilemmas and Ethnic Intolerance in the Western Balkans. In: Ringdal K, Simkus A (eds) Aftermath of War. Experiences and Social Attitudes in the Western Balkans. London: Ashgate, 395 – 451.

<sup>2</sup> Paula M. Pickering, "Generating social capital for bridging ethnic divisions in the Balkans: Case studies of two Bosniak cities." Ethnic and Racial Studies, 2006.

Unemployment is also the main concern of young people themselves in this region. **In a study it is found that the unemployment is the most critical issue among young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Serbia.** Also, it was found that the discrimination based on ethnic lines is one of the top-ranked grounds of discrimination. High rate of youth unemployment and discrimination across the countries in the Western Balkans makes the youth, especially those belonging to ethnic minorities, as a vulnerable group. As such, the legislative treatment of vulnerable groups has been largely neglected across the region<sup>3</sup>.

COUNTRIES	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Kosovo*	The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	Serbia
RANK				
1	Unemployment	Unemployment	Unemployment	Unemployment
2	Poverty	Poverty	Poverty	Poverty
3	Job insecurity	Kosovo territory	Increased incidence of chronic diseases	Insufficient fight against corruption
4	Justice	Environmental pollution	Job insecurity	Improving the position of young people
5	Insufficient fight against corruption	Job insecurity	Environmental pollution	Social justice and Security for all

Table 1: The major problems in the society – the first five ranked problems Source: Balkan Regional Platform for Youth Participation in the Balkans

The legislative treatment and initiatives for youth employment and reconciliation were conducted separately. The youth unemployment was more treated with Active Labor Market Programs (ALMPs). Regarding the reconciliation, the hostilities in this region were mostly tackled by exchange programs and dealing with the past in terms of retributive justice. However, both youth employment and reconciliation lacked holistic approach. Therefore, the youth unemployment and hostilities are at high levels.

Improving youth employment as a common goal of the ethnic groups in conflict would bring the benefits of reconciliation in addition to improving the wellbeing of young people. There is evidence that mixed workplaces can improve interethnic

relations. E.g. systematic observation of how Bosnians viewed the effectiveness of neighbourhoods, voluntary organizations, and workplaces in building interethnic cooperation suggested that mixed (i.e. multiethnic) workplaces were a superior venue for minorities to use reciprocity to build bridging networks. **The capacities and initiatives to organize and develop business along with willingness to work with people of different ethnic/national backgrounds can be a potential to reduce youth unemployment, increase the understanding and promote cooperation between these people.** Sometimes firms/companies face the shortages in professional capacities due to the lack of sufficient professionals within the country. This region has huge gaps regarding the exchange of human capacities in filling in these shortages. Young people who have studied abroad and who originally come from different ethnic/national backgrounds of this region are not supported to return to this region and there are almost no incentives for them for such return due to the high rate of corruption, limited workplaces, and lack of prosperity. Therefore, this region is missing the potential of receiving open-minded young people.

### 3. RYCO ROLE AND SUGGESTIONS

RYCO represents the next step on the road of development of feeling of coexistence, peace and development among the Balkan countries. After the agreement on establishment of RYCO has officially been signed, during the Western Balkans Summit in Paris on 4 July 2016, it is now on the governing bodies of the organization, participation of all members, and quality projects to change things for better.

According to the statute of RYCO, the mandate of the organization is to support youth projects that aim at, and contribute to promoting diversity and democratic values, enhancing sustainable regional cooperation amongst youth, and establishing new relations amongst young people in the Western Balkans region, fostering reconciliation and

<sup>3</sup> Paula M. Pickering, "Peacebuilding in the Balkans. The view from the ground floor". Cornell University, 2007.

constructive approaches to remembrance, intercultural learning, increasing regional mobility, promoting the European spirit of cooperation, understanding, and tolerance, active citizenship and participation in decision-making processes by young people, and social inclusion and promotion of employability of young people.

RYCO will be involved around the following areas, all of which represent lucrative fields for innovative employability opportunities: Education and Research, Culture and Sports, Participation and Activism, Capacity building for all persons who are involved on the institutional level and on the program development and implementation level.

The Article 45 of RYCO Statute states that RYCO may receive funding other than from the RYCO Contracting Parties in line with RYCO mission from:

1. International organizations
2. National and international foundations
3. National bi-lateral donors, such as development cooperation funds
4. Corporate donations
5. Individual donors

**RYCO, once established and fully operational, should further leverage its capacity of an influencer in the region to establish projects which will, in their core, have the purpose of establishing lasting relationships with both national bodies and private sector.**

The final product of building the relationships will be opportunities to introduce the new mobile employability options for the young people through cross-cultural knowledge and experience exchange.

**Through the channels of above mentioned parties, RYCO should take the “seeking opportunities where there were none” approach. What this means is that, through its upcoming operations and projects, RYCO would be able to generate through the network, in relatively short time, a significant number of mobility opportunities which the organization would later spread across the region.**

By following the principles of network expansion, this particular network would grow twice fold every two years, with new partners replacing the ones that are no longer active after some time. Establishment of such a network would meet one of RYCO’s main goals which is the exchanges of elementary and high schools, universities, young scientists and researchers, as well as internships, fellowships, trainings and apprenticeships.

The part that will perhaps require most action will be RYCO’s approach to new businesses, namely start-up companies, from all relevant angles: their ideation, initiation, growth, and later their inclusion in the further youth employment strategy. Self-employability, a process when an individual, unusually due to lack of employment options, starts their own project/venture has been a buzzword for a while now, but we have now reached a point when good ideas are more easily discovered by organizations with investment funds, angel investors, private sector, or government institutions.

**At this stage, our suggestion for this particular policy is to start establishing partnership with young businesses at early stages and later on leverage on those relationships and later on encourage these businesses to share their success stories, as well as provide mobility employment opportunities for students of all levels.**

The official policy suggestion is to create projects which would allow RYCO to develop and maintain its internal database of young businesses and become an intermediary in between these businesses and potential workers. Once again, the final goal will be building relationships with these entities which would result in an increased number of training and work opportunities for young people in the WB region. Similar approach should be taken when accessing established businesses. However, interactions and potential partnership requests should be modified to accommodate larger systems of established companies.

**In line with improvement of youth employability we suggest RYCO to play a crucial role in preparing young people to be constructive and experience friendly interactions with potential co-workers of different ethnic background.** For that we suggest RYCO to support projects which would train young people in this regard. RYCO would identify professional bodies in reconciliation in the region which would be supported by RYCO and which would train young people.

**A greater level of cooperation with academia and other research institutions is needed to exchange data and research findings which would contribute on addressing problems and initiating projects based on evidence.** Our suggestion is to start establishing cooperation and partnerships between these institutions and RYCO. This can practically be implemented by sharing the data and research findings available at these institutions and initiating new joint research projects based on the needs identified by RYCO and supported by RYCO too.

**BERLIN PROCESS IN THE  
WESTERN BALKANS ENVIRONMENT,  
ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE**

**Capitalizing on synergies of  
renewable energy and  
agriculture in the  
Western Balkans**

**Author: Entela Kallamata**

## ABSTRACT

The agriculture sector in the Western Balkans 6 countries is at present underdeveloped; the structure of the sector, of small-scale and fragmented farms, is a major obstacle for the improvement of land productivity. The development of renewable energy from biomass from agriculture is dependent on the development of the agriculture sector. Regional cooperation of the WB6 in agriculture and a cross-sectorial approach are policy options which might increase the potential of renewable energy from biomass from agriculture to contribute to the gross final energy consumption in 2020 and further. To this purpose, agriculture should be included in the regional priorities of the Berlin Process, while estimations and measures of the national action plans on renewable energy of the Western Balkans 6 countries need to integrate the present conditions of the agriculture sector and a future regional framework of development.

## INTRODUCTION

The Berlin Process has been initiated in 2014 from the European Union (EU) and six Western Balkans countries: Republics of Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Albania, Montenegro and Kosovo, (WB6), as an instrument for strengthening the socio-political stability in the region through regional cooperation and sustainable economic development. Environment, energy and climate change is one of the areas at the focus of the Process. In this area, renewable energy sources have a central place, as they are directly related to the global objectives for responding to climate change moving towards low-carbon economies and reducing the dependency on fossil fuels, defined from the Paris Agreement 2016. In line with the Paris Agreement, renewable energy sources are likewise central to the EU Energy Policy. The purpose of a regional framework of development in the energy sector is to ensure a sustainable, competitive and secure supply of energy for the EU countries, with the EU energy market as a main pillar of this framework.

## RENEWABLE ENERGY FROM BIOMASS FROM AGRICULTURE IN THE WB6

*Regional development framework in the energy sector*

The WB6 are members of the Energy Community, an intergovernmental body which purpose is to integrate the energy market of the South East Europe and the Black Sea Region into the EU energy market. Within this purpose, the six countries are in process of harmonizing their respective national legislations with the EU acquis on energy and have prepared a National Renewable Energy Action Plan (NREAP), which defines renewable energy targets for 2020 along with the measures necessary for the their fulfilment.

*Renewable energy from biomass relevant for 2020 targets*

From the NREAPs of the WB6, the gross final energy consumption required in the WB6 by 2020 is estimated to be 21.2 million tonnes of oil equivalent (toe); in this total requirement, renewable energy sources are estimated to contribute between 21 % in Macedonia, to 40 % in Bosnia and Herzegovina; among renewable energy sources, biomass contributes in the total requirement of gross final energy consumption between 10.2 % in Macedonia, to 24.5 % in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In comparison, the gross final energy consumption required in the EU by 2020 is estimated to be 1.086 billion tonnes of oil equivalent; in this total requirement, renewable energy sources are estimated to contribute with 20 %; among renewable energy sources, biomass contributes in the total requirement of gross final energy consumption with 13 %.

*State of development of renewable energy from biomass*

The Energy Community Annual Implementation Report of 2016 analyses development of the energy sector in the WB6. In particular, it finds that shares of renewable energy mostly comply with the planned trajectory towards the targets of 2020; however there is further need across the

six countries to (i) fully comply with the acquis on renewable energy, (ii) revise and provide more accurate energy statistics on consumption and potential, (iii) promote the production of renewable energy sources through legal incentives and supporting policy measures. The Report does not evaluate development for specific sources of renewable energy, or the conditions for development of these sources.

### *Different potentials of renewable energy from biomass from agriculture*

In order to better evaluate the state of development of renewable energy from biomass from agriculture in the WB6, it is important to bring some theoretical considerations to the attention.

The potential supply of a renewable energy source may be estimated on three levels: theoretical, technological and economical<sup>1</sup>.

The theoretical potential is the limit supply of the source from its natural conditions.

In physical terms, the supply of biomass from agriculture is, by definition<sup>2</sup>, determined from the (i) cultivated agricultural land, (ii) variety of agriculture crops, (iii) annual produce and (iii) livestock head; therefore, it is directly dependant on the level of development of the agriculture sector. It follows that the potential supply of biomass from agriculture will, likewise, be directly dependent on the potential level of development of the agriculture sector.

In policy terms, the contribution of renewable energy from biomass in the gross final energy consumption is different when different development policies are implemented; in particular, development policies related with the agriculture sector. This is the conclusion of the European Commission, European Environment Agency and ECOFYS, set out respectively in the following paragraphs.

In the EU energy market renewable energy has to be competitive with fossil fuel energy in order to develop and contribute to the gross final energy consumption, while, in comparison with the latter, technology investment needs and

production costs of renewable energy are higher. The energy market fails to regulate prices that internalize external costs from fossil fuel energy or, otherwise, benefits from renewable energy. Therefore, while the market fails, a more targeted development policy becomes necessary. An ambitious development policy may target a large contribution level of renewable energy in the gross final energy consumption such as would require a large-scale biomass infrastructure to be introduced in the sector; at a large production scale the unit cost of renewable energy from biomass tends to fall, in this way supporting its competitiveness in the market. Such a targeted renewable energy development policy needs to be supported from an agricultural policy likewise targeted, which enables the deployment of a large-scale biomass infrastructure with a secure biomass supply.

In an alternative analysis, the liberalisation of the agricultural market and increase of agricultural productivity may triple the potential contribution of renewable energy in the gross final energy consumption required in EU countries by 2020, in comparison with 2010, within sustainable criteria; moreover, while the biomass potential from forestry, waste and agriculture residues remains stable, the most important part of growth in the potential of biomass is determined by the cultivation of biomass crops and the utilization for this purpose of agricultural land available.

Present best practices of agriculture residue yield increase suggest that the supply of biomass from agriculture can be increased by a unified residue collection system, which comprises technology, infrastructure, logistic and management, through which the residue to crop ratio can be improved. The system can only be efficient in large-scale agricultural land cultivation and harvesting, necessary for the efficient application primarily of technology and infrastructure. Therefore, the lack of agriculture policies ensuring a large-scale cultivation and harvesting of the land constitutes a barrier to increasing the supply of biomass.

The technological potential of a renewable energy source represents its theoretical potential

<sup>1</sup> The economic potential of biomass from agriculture is for the purpose of this policy brief not explored.

<sup>2</sup> ECOFYvS (2016), page 72.

restricted by present technological knowledge and sustainability criteria. Biomass from agriculture is transformed into energy for the generation of electricity or heating through an energy conversion and generation technology. These technologies, as are today available in the EU market, either of large-scale or low-scale, typically require a secure long-term supply – the necessary amount of biomass, of the appropriate variety, at a low-cost, throughout the lifetime of the technology. This is critical to their cost-efficient utilization. A secure long-term supply of biomass is here again dependent on the level of development of the agriculture sector and the agriculture policy.

**In conclusion**, the potential of renewable energy from biomass from agriculture is dependent on the level of development of the agriculture sector and may be supported by agriculture policies.

Directive 2009/28/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources incorporates the ambitious policy for the development of the sector and, in article 20, establishes this relationship, in terms of the theoretical considerations set out above:

*“To permit the benefits of technological progress and economies of scale to be reaped, the indicative trajectory should take into account the possibility of a more rapid growth in the use of energy from renewable sources in the future. Thus special attention can be given to sectors that suffer disproportionately from the absence of technological progress and economies of scale and therefore remain under-developed, but which, in future, could significantly contribute to reaching the targets for 2020”.*

#### *Underestimated potential of renewable energy from biomass from agriculture in WB6*

The theoretical considerations above put the state of development of renewable energy from biomass from agriculture in the WB6 under a different evaluation perspective, one accounting for the possibility of a different potential, dependent on the level of development of the agriculture sector and supported by agriculture policies.

The agriculture sector in the WB6 constitutes a significant part of the national Gross Domestic Product. At present there is no effective regional framework of cooperation among the countries. The sector is on average underdeveloped and challenges are very similar across the six countries. They arise as much from structural issues, as from financial and from socio-political issues. In relation to structural issues, agriculture in the WB6 is characterized by family farms, with the average size of a farm not exceeding 5.5 ha; across the six countries, in Albania the average size is the lowest, at 1.2 ha, and in Serbia the highest, at 5.4 ha; the agricultural land of a farm is fragmented in separated plots of an even lower average size, in Serbia reaching to 0.98 ha.

The structure of the sector alone does not permit the cost-efficient utilization of agriculture technologies, being a main cause for stagnating low average levels of productivity, and hence low competitiveness and income. As a consequence, cooperation at the input, production or marketing level among farmers is generally not present or not effective.

Feasibility studies for the application of technologies of renewable energy from biomass in the rural areas of Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia determine the fragmented small-scale structure of agriculture in these countries a major unfavourable condition, which cannot ensure a secure long-term biomass supply and, thereby, the cost-efficient utilization of these technologies. Consistently, successful applications in the WB6 belong to the region of Vojvodina, Serbia, where the consolidated medium to large-scale structure of agriculture is determined as a favourable precondition.

The relationship between renewable energy from biomass from agriculture and the agriculture sector is generally missing in the NREAPs of the WB6; (i) in physical terms, there is no specific methodology on how has been estimated the contribution of renewable energy from biomass from agriculture for electricity, heating and cooling or transport; (ii) in policy terms, direct measures for increase of biomass supply from agriculture are either not determined or not very specific. Statistical data on biomass potential are generally lacking.

From the NREAPs Progress Reports 2016 of the WB6<sup>3</sup> this position has generally not changed; while for other renewable energy sources the necessary technologies have been gradually established, no progress is recorded for biomass conversion and generation technologies.

Among the WB6, only the NREAP of Serbia presents clearly the objective for developing renewable energy from biomass from agriculture, and, recognizes its relationship with the agriculture sector, where it raises the concern of governmental short-term (annual) policy incentives for its development and a lack of cross-sectorial cooperation, which cannot support the renewable energy sector.

**In conclusion**, the present structure of the agriculture sector in the WB6 is a basic obstacle for the improvement of land productivity and, thereby, development of the sector. While this condition has a relevance of its own, at the same time it doesn't favour the development of renewable energy from biomass from agriculture. This condition continues for more than two decades, and, with the social and political complexity it involves today, expectations for short-term improvement are low among the governmental authorities and private investors, what might explain not determined or not very specific measures in the NREAPs of the WB6 on the development of renewable energy from biomass from agriculture. This lack of midterm targeted policies suggests that the potentials of renewable energy from biomass in the NREAPs are most likely underestimated; therefore, the targets of the contribution of renewable energy from biomass in the gross final energy consumption of 2020 are most likely not accurate.

## PROPOSED POLICY OPTION

### A. REGIONAL COOPERATION IN AGRICULTURE

The WB6 should establish a regional cooperation framework in the agriculture sector. The pillars of a potential framework should be:

1. Common agriculture market within the WB6
2. Common development policies
3. Common standard system of agriculture produce, in line with EU/CAP standards
4. Education of farmers

At present the regional framework of development of renewable energy from biomass in the WB6 relies on a domestic development framework of agriculture. In physical terms, biomass supply for the regional energy market relies on domestic agriculture markets; considering the relatively small population number of the WB6, the most successful case of domestic development of agriculture will supply a smaller biomass in comparison to a successful case of regional development; with a smaller biomass supply, smaller-scale technologies for renewable energy production will be implemented, allowing for a smaller reduction of the unit cost of energy produced. Indeed, technologies for renewable energy production may be implemented in the WB6 at the scale of a farm or village energy needs; on the other hand, within the long-term purpose of the Energy Community, with increasing targets for renewable energy contribution in the gross final consumption of energy, increasing the potential of renewable energy from biomass in the WB6 is necessary.

In policy terms, regional renewable energy from biomass policies rely on domestic agricultural policies; while long-term domestic agricultural policies may ensure secure and long-term biomass supply, the regional renewable energy from biomass policies which in the long-term will relate to land cultivation and utilization, will require the security and long-term biomass supply ensured at best from a regional agriculture policy.

Regional markets will open the domestic farmers towards regional competition, through which the agriculture sector should develop; however, in order to reach this purpose, competition should be strongly supported from regional standards of quality of agriculture produce.

Finally, tackling the structure of the agriculture sector in the WB6 will involve the social dimension of this condition, related to farmers associations. In this direction, education is important, including the sharing of best practices. The regional framework of agricultural development might provide a momentum which

<sup>3</sup> The Progress Report 2016 from Bosnia and Herzegovina is not yet available by the end of May 2017.

has been missing in domestic agricultural policies undertaken until now, but which might be important considering the complexity of this dimension, with its historical roots.

At the same time, regional cooperation of the EU countries through the Common Agricultural Policy provide a sound theoretical and practical ground for exploring the policy option of a regional cooperation in agriculture.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

*Agriculture should be an additional regional priority in the Berlin Process*

The Berlin Process should support building up a regional development framework for agriculture in the WB6, while capitalising on synergies of the energy and agriculture sectors.

*The socio-political area of the Berlin Process should support the socio-political dimension of a regional development framework for agriculture in the WB6*

The historical socio-political relationship of the WB6 is complex and may constitute a barrier to building the regional development framework; support in this direction is necessary.

*Planning of the development of renewable energy from biomass from agriculture must carefully account for the EU sustainability criteria for renewable energy from biomass, as set out in Directive 2009/28/EC.*

### Policy risks

*Opening of the domestic agriculture sectors to the regional market involves political considerations regarding protectionism towards the domestic supply chain.*

## B. CROSS-SECTORIAL APPROACH TO RENEWABLE ENERGY FROM BIOMASS WITHIN AGRICULTURE SECTOR

The contribution of renewable energy from biomass in the gross final energy consumption is different when different development policies are implemented; in particular, development policies related with the agriculture sector. The policy questions arising from these development policies involve both sectors:

- Cultivation of agricultural crops most adequate for residue yield and power generation technologies
- The share of agricultural land to be dedicated to cultivation of energy crops
- Measures to ensure the fall of the unit cost of production of renewable energy from biomass from agriculture
- The implementation of a residue collection system

This relationship of the sector of renewable energy from biomass from agriculture with agriculture is the ground for a cross-sectorial approach to its development. Here again, the cohesion of policies through a cross-sectorial approach is more necessary to the long-term purpose of the Energy Community.

The environment of investments in technology for renewable energy from biomass production, should improve in view of a greater stability deriving from cross-sectorial midterm and long term targeted policies, especially in the still young renewable energy sector in the WB6.

In addition, the regional development framework of the agriculture sector should strengthen by cross-sectorial midterm and long term targeted policies.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

*Develop a study of the development of renewable energy from biomass from agriculture under the conditions of the agriculture sector in the WB6.*

At present there is a general literature gap on the development of renewable energy from biomass from agriculture under the conditions of the agriculture sector in the WB6. The study might be important for informing development policies.

The potentials of renewable energy from biomass are most likely underestimated, and as well the targets of the contribution of renewable energy from biomass in the gross final energy consumption of 2020 in the NREAPs are most likely not accurate; also, direct measures for increase of biomass supply from agriculture are either not determined or not very specific. This study would be important for informing a

revision of these estimations and measures considering the present conditions and a future regional development of the agriculture sector in these countries.

### *Cross-border areas are key to cross-sectorial regional cooperation*

Sharing of technology for the conversion and generation of energy from biomass by operating with agriculture residues of more than one WB6 country might be explored. Cross-border areas may be most adaptable for this purpose.

Connectivity of the WB6 is an area of the Berlin Process of critical importance to the cost-efficiency of technologies shared between WB countries because of the transport of biomass supply from agriculture. *Eco-corridors* may be an opportunity for the transport of biomass supply.

### *Policy risks*

*The share of agricultural land dedicated for the cultivation of energy crops decreases the share for land for the cultivation of food*

The agriculture farm in the WB6 constitutes on average still a means for subsistence; the increase of biomass supply through cultivation of land with energy crops may be limited as a consequence of the conflict with the agricultural land cultivated for food, at least for the mid-term period, due to this state of the sector.

### *Impact of the two policy options*

Regional cooperation of the WB6 in the agriculture sector will provide a momentum for farmers' associations, arising not only from the common larger market accompanied with common quality standards, but also from the security arising with a cooperation endorsed from the Berlin Process, therefore, part of EU integration perspective; at the same time interrelated with the stronger regional cooperation framework of the energy sector, holding long-term objectives, based on international commitments.

With farmers' associations, in the form of cooperatives or associations, the scale of the agriculture sector will increase and permit for the utilization of technology and thereby

improvement of agriculture land productivity; therefrom, the WB6 will open to the possibilities for a larger biomass supply and cross-sectorial policy opportunities for developing renewable energy from biomass from agriculture, increasing its contribution to the renewable energy targets of the Energy Community. It is more likely that the implementation of the two policy options in the WB6 will have this impact in the long-term.

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## DEFINITIONS

### **Gross final consumption of energy:**

From Directive 2009/28/EC

The gross final consumption of energy from renewable sources in each Member State shall be calculated as the sum of:

- (a) Gross final consumption of electricity from renewable energy sources;
- (b) Gross final consumption of energy from renewable sources for heating and cooling; and
- (c) Final consumption of energy from renewable sources in transport.

### **Renewable energy from biomass:**

From Directive 2009/28/EC

‘Energy from renewable sources’ means energy from renewable non-fossil sources, namely wind, solar, aerothermal, geothermal, hydrothermal and ocean energy, hydropower, biomass, landfill gas, sewage treatment plant gas and biogases.

‘Biomass’ means the biodegradable fraction of products, waste and residues from biological origin from agriculture (including vegetal and animal substances), forestry and related industries including fisheries and aquaculture, as well as the biodegradable fraction of industrial and municipal waste.

### **Agricultural residues**

From Biomass Energy Europe

Agricultural residues include a wide variety of biomass types, which can be divided into three main classes:

**Primary agricultural residues**, like straw of wheat, barley, oat, corn, rice etc. that remain after harvesting in the fields.

**Secondary agricultural residues**, like bagasse, rice husks, sunflower husks, nut shells, coffee and cocoa bean shells, kidney bean shells and similar biomass, arise after processing of the primary crops.

**Manure** like pig, cattle and chicken manure.

**Theoretical potential** of biomass is the maximal quantity of waste biomass, which is on disposal according to the potential of its source.

**Technical potential** of biomass is part of the theoretical one, which can be used after taking into account the limitations connected to the present technological level, possible use for human and animal feeding, and ecological limitations.

**Economical potential** of biomass is the potential which can be used under the present economy conditions, i.e. satisfying the criteria to be profitable.

**From “brain gain” to  
“brain circulation”  
policy approach:  
How to connect Albanian  
scientific diaspora with the  
country of origin in  
a sustainable way**

**Authors:** Geron Kamberi and Edlira Alku

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Albania is a country which is heavily affected by large emigration after the collapse of the communist regime and the brain-drain is one of the worst aspects of this phenomenon. In that framework any brain-gain policy which aims to increase the quality of human capital in the country and the development capacity in business, research and public administration sector has been always welcomed. Although Albanian government conducted a brain-gain programme for six years (2006-2011), it is necessary to create new approach towards a more sustainable manner. There is a growing interest in Albania at this time, like in other countries with similar socio-economic development, for the potential in reaching out to the scientific diaspora as a way tackling the issue of brain drain. **For that reason the policy approach on brain circulation rather than brain gain can be proved to be more flexible and sustainable to engage the national financial sources. A Brain Circulation Programme – BCP is needed to be designed and developed to involve the scientific diaspora based upon the country needs assessment in the most development priority areas.** Considering that the scientific diaspora possesses a large professional network, it will serve as an excellent bridge between the Albanian scientific community and the international one. Using the networks that these researchers and academics have created abroad is an excellent way to mobilize cooperation and promote development in a world where online interactions have taken over.

## CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

In the last 25 years, the phenomenon of migration has been at the very core of the political, economic and social changes occurring in Albania.

**Put in numbers around 1.4 million people or more than 1/3 of the Albanian population is estimated to live abroad.<sup>1</sup> In the overall context of Albanian migration, brain drain is one of the most discussed issues.**

During the post-socialist transition, a large number of engineers, doctors, During the post-socialist transition, a large number of engineers, doctors, teachers, artists, researchers, etc migrated from Albania which lead to an erosion of human resources.<sup>2</sup> Previous research conducted by the Centre for Economic and Social Studies (CESS) suggested that about 40 percent of all lecturers in universities and researchers from scientific institutions of the country, most of them trained in EU, left Albania since 1990.<sup>3</sup> This migration continues up to this day with a significant group of successful students remaining abroad after completing university or post-graduate studies there.<sup>4</sup> This highly qualified group of migrants, which has grown significantly in size and scope, has created a scientific diaspora located mainly in several EU countries, US and Canada. For a small country like Albania, this group of researchers is significant as it represents more than 25 percent of the academic potential of the country. Additional sources suggest that this scientific diaspora is likely to grow deeper and expand in the future. According to the research work done by CESS, 42 percent of members of Albanian scientific diaspora work in social sciences or humanities and contribute in areas such as political science, economics, sociology history, anthropology, European integration, psychology, literature and languages, communication etc. Most of them are employed in universities, labs, and scientific institutions of a several EU countries (e.g. Italy, UK, Germany, France and Austria) and US or Canada.<sup>5</sup>

From 2006-2011 the Albania Government and UNDP Office initiated and funded a pilot Brain Gain Programme (BGP) which aimed to create a

<sup>1</sup> This data is retrieved from [data.worldbank.org/country/albania](http://data.worldbank.org/country/albania)

<sup>2</sup> De Soto, H. Gordon, P. Gedeshi, I., Sinoimeri, Z., Poverty in Albania. A Qualitative Assessment. Washington D.C, The World Bank Technical Papers, 2002

<sup>3</sup> From Brain Drain to Brain Gain: Mobilizing Albania's Skilled Diaspora, A policy paper for the government of Albania, UNDP, 2006

<sup>4</sup> In 1998 there were about 4.596 Albanian students that studied in universities of EU countries, in 2005 this number reached 15.240 and in 2013 there were 24.147 students (UNESCO, 2015).

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.ibrarian.net/navon/paper/Repor\\_ts\\_Anal\\_yses\\_14\\_06.pdf?paperid=15302584](http://www.ibrarian.net/navon/paper/Repor_ts_Anal_yses_14_06.pdf?paperid=15302584)- Is Brain Drain from Albania, Bulgaria and Greece Large Enough to Threaten their Development?. A Report written by Dr Nicholas P. Glytsos, Center for International Relations, has been published in cooperation with the German Marshall Fund of the United States within the project 'Transatlantic Security Challenges and Dilemmas for the European Migration Policy'. Issues14/2006( [www.csm.org.pl](http://www.csm.org.pl)),

sustainable environment that would facilitate the return of highly qualified migrants and attach them to public administration or research institutions. The Brain Gain policy approach which was followed during this period is based upon the UNDP TOKTEN (Transfer of Knowledge through Expatriate Nationals) initiative in 1977 which helps reduce adverse effects of the brain drain phenomena or reverse transfer of technology in many developing countries. The policy initiative to establish the Brain Gain Programme had a multi-donor financial structure where UNDP Albania contributed the seed fund for a two-year period (2006-2008) and since it was later considered as a programme of unique importance in the frame of the “One UN” initiative benefited from the Coherence Fund for the time period 2008 – 2011.

The strategic goal of the BGP was to attract through BGP incentive packages mainly two categories of Albanians abroad: those that were temporary outside the country completing graduate studies or professionally engaged while maintaining Albanian nationality, and those belonging to the Albanian Diaspora who no longer have Albanian citizenship. The group of the returning migrants falls predominantly in the category of scholars who returned to Albania while the second group is foreseen for the visiting professor scheme.

**Although BGP - Brain Gain Programme achieved a success in success in strengthening the capacity development effort in academia/universities where BGP fellows brought established new methods of teaching and research, it turned out to be unsustainable in the long term as it petered out after UNDP left the programme.**

Within that framework the problems still remain in place. Despite the fact that BGP lasted for six years (2006-2011), since its end in 2011 there has not been any successor policy or programme to tackle brain-gain issue. In that way, a policy change approach is needed to guarantee that other policies do not face the long-term unsustainability problem.

## CRITIQUE OF POLICY OPTION

**According to the official statistics there are around one hundred individuals returned to Albania. Those individuals were supported for two years through the BGP incentive packages.**

However, the stability of processes that aim to reverse brain drain into a human capital to the home country remains unsustainable when it is highly depended from the financial sources of donors.

Meanwhile the BGP Brain Gain Programme despite its efforts and with its limited financial resources lacked the linkage with the business private sector where the brain gain of fellows who come from applied sciences could bring changes in innovative products or processes. BGP’s outreach towards this sector in particular has not made effect and its impact on public awareness was limited to BGP web page only. On the other side the employment and its sustainability of brain gain fellows in public administration often was challenged by the political culture since the employment by merit is largely rejected in the patronage system which place for barriers for any brain gain policy on public administration level.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The potential benefits from the scientific diaspora are acknowledged and supported by the Global Commission on International Migration, too, which argued that Countries of origin can gain considerable advantage by harnessing the talents and resources of Diaspora populations, which have grown significantly in size and scope as a result of the recent expansion of international migration.<sup>6</sup>

- **Cooperation between scientific diaspora and international scientific community**

There is a growing interest in Albania at this time, like in other countries with similar socio-economic development, for the potential in reaching out to the scientific diaspora as a way tackling the issue of brain drain.

<sup>6</sup> Migrations’ Unrealized Potential: The Report of the Global Commission on International Migration, 2005, [www.migrationpolicy.org](http://www.migrationpolicy.org)

Considering that the scientific diaspora possesses a large professional network, it will serve as an excellent bridge between the Albanian scientific community and the international one.<sup>7</sup> Using the networks that these researchers and academics created abroad is an excellent way to mobilize cooperation and promote development in a world where online interactions have taken over.

- **From return option to brain circulation**

Historically, attempts to counter the loss of human capital due to brain drain have focused on two options: the return option (a so-called brain gain policy approach) and the diaspora option (a so-called brain circulation). The return option refers to policies which oblige an individual who studies abroad to return back to the home country through migration restrictions or even certain incentives. **The second option, considered to be more sophisticated, put in focus so-called off-line and on-line “brain circulation approach” with benefit from the diaspora associations and especially networks abroad. The off-line options include diaspora visiting scholars, short-term secondment to public policy departments to coach legal or strategic framework meanwhile the on-line options are databases, webinars, on-line courses or lectures, social network platforms, international peer review programs.**

In that framework it could be noted that the Albanian government itself publicly expressed its commitment to organize a Diaspora Summit in November 2016, in Tirana whose objective was to foster a spirit of cooperation and establish an effective communication channel, essential for future collaborations and joint projects. This initiative was also welcomed by the Albanian scientific community which testifies the interest to participate was real.

**For that reason the main policy recommendation is that Albania first takes charge of implementing brain-gain policies which guarantee the long-term sustainability.**

**Another recommendation is related to the policy approach on brain circulation rather than brain gain as it is more flexible and sustainable which is necessary to engage the national financial sources. A Brain Circulation Programme – BCP is needed to be designed and developed to involve the scientific diaspora based upon the country needs assessment in the most development priority areas.**

- **National Fund for Visiting Diaspora Scholars Fellowship**

**Meanwhile, based on the experience of other countries the establishment of a National Fund for Visiting Diaspora Scholars Fellowship can enable “brain circulation” approach by facilitating the arrivals and short time stays of representatives from the Albanian Scientific Diaspora at Albanian higher education institutions for short cycles of lectures, PHD mentoring, training, and participation in joint projects. This kind of a national fund may enable communication channels that would be created to prevent this initiative from remaining just another attempt at change and instead become a real strategy with an agenda and a plan for action.**

These policy recommendations will also have indirect impact on public administration and job market in Albania’s private sector which will experience a real boost after such a large professional network is established and the cooperation becomes real. Improving the quality of education is one of the most important of UN 2030 Agenda and where the academic/professional community have a great role to play dealing with the sustainable development. Albania needs to improve its human capacity within universities and research institutions with high-skilled and experienced people from scientific diaspora.

That is why brain circulation policy approach have a long term impact on changing the quality and the culture of the Albanian higher education and research system.

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<sup>7</sup> <http://invest-in-albania.org/internships-albania-an-effort-to-stop-the-brain-drain-phenomenon/>  
(<http://www.internshipsalbania.org/index.html> - Internships Albania is a new initiative by a group of eight Albanian students which study abroad and want to attract their peers to take summer internships in Albania during summer. This initiative comes to resolve a big problem that countries in development face randomly, known as the “brain drain”. Students educated abroad in high-level universities and top schools seek for employment chances in the country they finish their studies and do not want to return to their homelands, in this case in Albania - This voluntary initiative has been supported by the government given that many Ministries have offered space for new interns during summer months. Its founder and CEO is Emanuel Vila, student at University College London who has taken two internships in Albania, as an Auditor at Ernst & Young Albania and at the Bank of Albania, in Tirana capital.

# **Migration Crisis and Western Balkan Response: A crave for functional approach!**

**Authors:** Nina Brankovic, Merita Zulfiu Alili,  
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Syria's civil war has created the worst humanitarian crisis of our time.<sup>1</sup> About 11 million Syrians are on the run with 4.8 millions forced to leave their country (Mercy Corps, 2017) and only a small number of them decided to try dangerous and life threatening travel to Europe.<sup>2</sup> The difference between the 1990s refugee crisis from ex-Yugoslav countries and today is that the refugees from 90's didn't face death and persecution once they've managed to leave their war affected countries. If not faced with drowning in the Mediterranean Sea they are unwelcome in most of EU countries. In order to arrive to Europe, Balkan route was one of the refugee options where the Western Balkans became a European ghetto for the refugees from the Middle East. The main migratory movement across the Western Balkans was coming from the Greek land border with the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, towards Hungarian border with Serbia. In addition, higher number of crossings were also reported on exit points from Romania and Bulgaria at their borders with Serbia, mostly involving migrants who had illegally entered Bulgaria from Turkey and then tried to reach other EU Member States. (Frontex, 2017). During the refugee crisis in 2015, about a million refugees crossed Macedonia and then Serbia on their way to EU countries (Balkan Insight, 2016).

The March 2016 agreement between Turkey and European Union cut off the refugee flow toward EU. Since the Balkan migration route was closed and the EU-Turkey accord drawn up a few days later, around 62,000 have been left in limbo in Greece, 14,000 of them on the islands of the eastern Aegean, where they arrived after crossing by boat from Turkey. A further 8,000 asylum seekers are stranded in Serbia. Although, by closing the Western Balkan route, the number of illegal border crossing has been decreased more than 130,000 immigrants were still trying to use Western Balkan route in 2016 (Frontex 2017).

### Facts in 2016 (Frontex, 2017):

- **Deaths** and missing persons: **increased** from 3175 in 2015 to over 4 500 in 2016.
- **96%** of newly arrived migrants in 2016 used the services of smuggling networks to **illegally enter the EU**.
- Major challenge for border authorities: **Increased** number of cases of **sexual exploitation** and forced labour.
- **Syrian nationals** (17% of total EU) represented the **highest** share of **irregular migrants** entering the EU.
- **Illegal stay**: **increased** from 491 891 (2015) to 699 374(2016)

While EU supports that some of refugees remain in Western Balkan countries, the refugees are striving to resolve their status, either by staying in the Western Balkan countries or by moving toward EU. It can be expected that, in many cases, migrants try to reach Europe to be reunited with husbands and brothers who made the dangerous journey in the previous years and are now settled in the EU (UK Telegraph, 2016). Either way, this could create additional political, economic and security burden for already fragile countries. This paper recognises major issues that should be addressed on country level but also on regional level in order to prevail current and future migration crisis problems that the Western Balkan countries (could be) dealing with.

### SERBIA: POTENTIAL PERMANENT DESTINATION COUNTRY FOR MIGRANTS

When large-scale movements of refugees and migrants hit Serbia in 2015-2016, the country has already been criticized for having ineffective asylum system in place, with limited capacities, resources and experience in dealing with asylum issues. Having all this in mind, it can be said that Serbia handled the legal and political

<sup>1</sup> The immediate cause of the current crisis is the ongoing civil war in Syria over the past four years, which has left 22 million Syrians incredibly vulnerable.

<sup>2</sup> Because the Gulf Arab states did not accept these refugees, Europe emerged as the only other possible destination.

formalization of the Western Balkan route in summer 2015 in a commendable manner, working to support swift movement of the people throughout Serbia. Refugees were allowed to traverse from Greece to Western Europe, reaching Germany in particular, within a couple of days, and often even by way of travelling in special trains and buses.

**EU gave 20 million Euros in 2016 for humanitarian assistance to Serbia for dealing with the refugee crisis (European Western Balkans, 2017)**

During winter 2016, some 6,400 refugees and migrants were stranded in Serbia. Majority of them (80%) has been accommodated in government facilities (five Asylum Centres, five Transit Centres and two Reception Centres) with some thousand people refusing to go to official centres (out of fear of deportation but some claiming there was no space for them) and residing in Belgrade city centre, in the parks and seeking refuge behind a bus station. Small number of asylum-seekers stayed at two border sites Horgoš and Kelebija, forming unofficial camps close to the Hungarian border, hoping to be allowed to enter Hungary and claim asylum there although Hungary reduced admission to only a hundred people per week. Serbia adopted a “Response Plan for an Increased Number of Migrants on the Territory of the Republic of Serbia for the period October 2016 – March 2017” that projects up to 13 000 people staying in official centres for a couple of months during 2017. Serbia also launched mixed army and police patrols on its borders with Bulgaria and Macedonia.

Serbian officials maintained that Serbia is only a transit country for migrants, but with the closure of the formalized Balkan corridor in March 2016 immediately after EU-Turkey deal (up until more than 700 000 people crossed Serbia's territory), they started to worry that Serbia will become a sort of country-camp for stranded refugees and migrants who continued entering Serbia from Bulgaria and Macedonia (approximately 150-200 persons per day), but could not leave the country as quickly as they could have before, or could even end up being permanently stranded in Serbia.

**The major Serbian fire-arms case happened in 2016: The police seized 100 hand grenades, 30 kilograms of explosives, two anti-armour grenades, 12 rocket launchers, eight assault rifles, a heavy machine gun, 6 000 ammunition pieces, as well as detonators and semiautomatic rifles. This was the largest seizure of weapons in Serbia in 15 years (Frontex, 2017).**

## **ALBANIA: LACK OF THE CAPACITY ALONG THE BORDERS**

With regard to the refugee crisis from Syria, Afghanistan and African countries Albania is referred to as a contingency country. Albania is in the secondary transit route through the Western Balkans, and the numbers of arrival were slowly increasing in 2016 after the “wave through” practices in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia came to an end in March 2016. The annual flow for 2016 consisted of nearly 1000 persons and only 200 of them applied for asylum in Albania.<sup>3</sup> UNHCR was critical of the government’s migrant screening and detention procedures and especially in regard to the increased presence of children among migrants.

### **Albania border (2016-March 2017): 957 irregular crossings**

While the humanitarian presence at the border has been reinforced, border monitoring is taking place regularly and the law on asylum specifies time frame of 51 days to grant or deny asylum to an applicant, UNHCR reported that the asylum system lacked effective monitoring. Albanian capacity to handle even small flows of refugees is limited, partly due to lack of resources. There is a limited access to information at the border crossing points and interviews often take place without interpreters. Identification and referral mechanisms for persons with specific needs are inadequate and reception capacity is weak, especially along the borders. Due to reliance on smugglers, there is a high risk of exploitation. Referral mechanisms for victims of trafficking are in place, but the need to strengthen identification procedures and

<sup>3</sup> The rest was returned by the Albanian authorities most to Greece, some immediately, others after weeks of detention in inadequate facilities.

referral pathways for un-accompanied children, victims of violence, women at risk, as well as disabled persons, is acknowledged as a priority by all actors. In case of a new or an increased migrant flow, capacities in Albania should be significantly improved in order to address medical or psychosocial needs of migrants.

## **MACEDONIA: LACK OF GOVERNMENT-SUPPORTED SYSTEMS TO ADDRESS SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE CONCERNS**

Macedonia, country with two million people, has been facing significant logistic, economic and political problems when more than 1 million migrants were crossing Macedonia as transit country. The migration crisis in Macedonia escalated in the spring of 2015 and found Macedonia unprepared to accommodate people for longer periods. In 2015, Macedonia faced the local crisis management decisions that varied from desperate efforts to get international European support in dealing with the crisis, situations of clear disregard for international legal obligations and political opportunism for internal purposes. The border between Greece and Macedonia became a symbol for the desperate endeavors of thousands of men, women and children trying to cross the border and reach their destination in the European Union.

**EU past and planned financial and technical support for border and migration management in Macedonia: amounting to over € 50 million (European Western Balkan, 2017)**

The capacity of camps with the number of pledged shelters are inadequate. Although camps have places to rest, toilets and water taps, whereas food is provided by humanitarian organizations, the capacities need to be improved in all camps. Transportation through Macedonia is organized by train, which can only accommodate up to 400 persons (Šelo, Šabić and Borić, 2016).

Smugglers and criminals were taking advantage of migrants particularly when borders were closed.

Migrants reported abuses by smugglers who tortured, used physical and sexual violence, and detained migrants against their will for several days in order to squeeze more profit in addition to that which was previously agreed (UNHCR, 2017). Macedonia faced a limited capacity and expertise among humanitarian actors and a lack of government-supported systems to address sexual and gender-based violence concerns (UNHCR, 2016). The European Union allocated nearly EUR 19 million over the last year to help Macedonia cope with the refugee crisis whereas overall past and planned EU financial and technical support for Macedonia's border and migration management would reach over €50 million.

## **BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA: LACK OF CAPACITIES TO HANDLE LARGE MIGRANT WAVE AND POTENTIAL RISK OF TERRORISM**

By the end of 2016, refugees have largely skirted around Bosnia-Herzegovina and country has not yet been affected by a refugee crisis like neighboring countries, but that does not mean that it could not happen at some point. (German Ambassador in BIH, 2016)

Based on operational findings of the Bosnian Service for Foreigners' Affairs, it is very possible that further wave of migrants could move towards Bosnia and Herzegovina. Bosnia could suddenly become a transit country along a new route to Slovenia via Croatia. Beneath Bosnian officials' attempts to project an air of readiness are signs of looming disarray: security minister has suggested that the country may tolerate only 5,000 refugees staying on its soil before closing its borders altogether. There is no capacity to handle a bigger influx, as it has only one immigration centre with a capacity for 120 people, and an asylum centre with the capacity to hold around 300 people. There is an additional problem that BIH can face. The country is exposed to the risk of terrorism and to the arrival of foreign fighters and therefore should be especially prepared to make security services ready for effective control. (German Ambassador in BIH, 2016<sup>4</sup>)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.total-croatia-news.com/politics/2511-migrants-to-start-entering-croatia-through-bosnia-and-herzegovina>

## Illegal weapons trade increased in Western Balkan (Frontex, 2017):

- 34% more ammunition pieces
- 77% more fire arms

## EUROPEAN UNION: LACK OF UNITED POLICY APPROACH!

It is evident that the European Union, failed to adequately address the migration crisis both in their definition of the crisis where it was defined as a refugee issue, mass migration or a mixed phenomenon, and in terms of effective and functioning common European asylum policies. The EU countries were applying their own policies toward migrants and ignoring joint policy strategies. The divisions in the EU and the lack of a united approach affected all Balkan countries, small in territory and resources but, more importantly, weak in institutional capacity (Spasov A. Lj. , 2017).

Simultaneously, EU-Turkey deal has negative consequences on health and overall life of migrants. There is an increase suicide attempts and physical self-harm cases and asylum seekers who are stuck in the Balkans have reported being beaten up by police and border guards, bitten by police dogs and repelled with tear gas and pepper spray. The EU-Turkey deal “has been not a success story, but a horror story, with terrible consequences for people’s lives and health.” (UK Telegraph, 2017). Charities called on Brussels to open “safe and legal alternatives” for refugees to reach Europe, including accelerated resettlement and humanitarian visas.

## WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

Should this **status quo** prevail, and potential development of further migration crisis, the negative consequences will only continue to accrue:

1. Humanitarian consequences: people living in inhuman conditions in the migrants centers are easy prey for smugglers and traffickers

2. Political consequences: shift from humanitarian and welcoming approach toward securitization and fear mongering approach contribute to increase of populism in the region

3. Economic consequences: increased costs of the shift from temporary to longer or even permanent settlement of people altogether with new waves of migration that are expected during warmer months.

4. Human rights consequences: increase of cases of abuse and violence against migrants

5. Security consequences: Potential increase of illegal crossing, the risk of terrorism and of arrival of foreign soldiers, particularly in BIH, could create serious security issue. The terrorist attacks in France in 2015 demonstrated that the effective control of firearms is indispensable to fight terrorism. The perpetrators of the terrorist attacks of January 2015 on the Charlie Hebdo office and a kosher supermarket in Paris and of November 2015 on the Bataclan theatre reportedly used weapons from the Western Balkans. (Frontex, 2017). Many of weapons are illegally traded from former conflict regions such as the Western Balkans, where around 800 000 weapons are estimated to be in illegal civilian possession in Bosnia and Herzegovina alone.(Frontex, 2017)

**Ideal situation** would be for Serbia to return to the position of a transit country prior year 2013, which entails for the EU asylum and migration system to work.

However, this is highly implausible at the moment giving the serious cracks in the EU asylum system and ongoing global refugee crisis. Significantly reinforcing capacities for borders officials and infrastructure to handle potential new wave of migrants would be needed in Albania and Macedonia as well. If migrants would opt for transit through Bosnia and Herzegovina ideal solution would be to highly increase capacities for controlling illegal transit and secure conditions for placement of any additional wave of migrants in further months.

Ideal situation for any of those countries would be expensive, politically highly unlikely and unrealistic.

## **SOLUTION THAT WE ADVOCATE:**

The regional response: Joint Memorandum for Western Balkan Countries Response to Migration Crisis!

It is evident that the migration crisis affected all Western Balkan countries, each to a different extent. However, countries of the Western Balkan region responded separately to the migration crisis and dealt with the problems which directly affected each of them. There was insufficient regional response. Furthermore, the crisis brought some serious political issues, i.e. deterioration of relations between Serbia and Croatia. As a result of closing the border crossings between Serbia and Hungary, an increased number of migrants took a road to Croatia, from where they could then enter Austria and Germany, via Slovenia. Despite initial announcements, the Croatian government was not prepared to deal with such a number of migrants and decided to close seven out of eight border crossings with Serbia in order to stop the influx of migrants.

The lack of WB regional cooperation in migration crisis is evident. At the same time, general lack of closer cooperation at European Union level has been recognized and underlined as a potential security problem. As Frontex Report on assessment of risks for 2017 mentions, already highlighted as a priority, a closer cooperation and information exchange between Euro-pean Law -enforcement authorities (both inland and at the external border) and customs authorities, is crucial in the effective fight against trafficking of firearms (Frontex, 2017).

Therefore, some regional approach to current and potential further crisis issues has to be established for Western Balkan region as well. Although, the Republic of Slovenia, the Republic of Croatia, the Republic of Serbia, the Republic of Macedonia and the Republic of Austria have signed the Joint Statement on Head of Police

Services on 18th of February 2016, it almost exclusively addressed the Western Balkan route closure and therefore, not all Western Balkan countries participated. There is a need for **Joint Memorandum for Western Balkan Countries Response to Migration Crisis** that would address following issues, as a minimum:

**Number of accepted migrants:** The Memorandum should define that each country accepts certain number of migrants depending on the specific criteria applied to all countries.

While there is no common meter that would measure a country's immigration absorption capacity; there is an option to consider the criteria used by the European Commission to set its quotas for the current wave of immigrants (Choi and Veugelers, 2015). It accounts for differences in demographics, economic size and immigration history between regions:

- 40% for the size of the population as it reflects the capacity to absorb a certain number of refugees;
- 40% for total GDP as it reflects the absolute wealth of a country and is thus indicative for the capacity of an economy to absorb and integrate refugees;
- 10% for unemployment rate as an indicator reflecting the capacity to integrate refugees.
- 10% for average number of spontaneous asylum applications and the number of resettled refugees per 1 million inhabitants over the period 2010-2014 as it reflects the efforts made by an economy in the recent past;
- It should be advocated, through Memorandum, for a fair distribution of refugees within the region less affected by the crisis as well as in Europe/world through processes of resettlement.

**EU support for migrants' permanent stay:** The Memorandum should define joint advocacy approach of Western Balkan countries for continuous logistic and financial support from EU if Western Balkan countries would be the final destination or resettlement point for the migrants.

Serbia primarily, and other Western Balkan countries too, need to accept that they are not only transit countries, but also destination countries. This requires investing serious efforts into dedicated strengthening of its asylum system (e.g. in Serbia only 90 persons recognized as refugees according to the Law on Asylum in total out of which 42 in 2016), strengthening of reception/accommodation capacities, as well as development of proper integration plans for both refugees and persons with subsidiary protection while working with local communities to bridge social distance between citizens and refugees and supporting their institutional capacities. This requires significant investments, and Western Balkan region should define joint approach, through Memorandum, to advocate for a support from European Union.

**Continuation of EU support for migrant crisis:** The Memorandum should define joint advocacy approach for continuous support from EU in case of new migrants crisis.

No Western Balkan country should get involved in push-backs at its borders, but should rather protect vulnerable refugees and migrants from becoming victims of smuggling rings, from physical violence, trafficking and exploitation. For any single country, to cope with problems of migrants that are currently present in the countries (mainly Serbia) and, depending change of migrants route, to face a potential new wave of migrants is, an issue by itself. Let alone securing adequate conditions and protecting vulnerable refugees, and simultaneously fighting against accompanying and increasing problems such as terrorism, firearms trafficking and human trafficking.

The Western Balkan countries should, by the means of the Memorandum, develop a single voice that would ask for EU logistic and financial support in case any new migrant currents find their way to the WB region.

**Western Balkan region representation:** The Memorandum should define establishment of the Regional Committee for response to migration crisis, where each country would have its representatives, with defined equal responsibilities and rights of all members.

The Joint Memorandum for Western Balkan Countries Response to Migration Crisis should help the already fragile countries develop a stronger position in negotiations with the EU when it comes to the migration crisis and to protect economic, political and social interests of its own countries. The Memorandum would also provide a good platform for closer cooperation between countries in order to jointly address increasing side effects of migrants crisis: fight against terrorism and human trafficking. Finally, it is in the EU and Western Balkan joint interest to address the migration crisis issues recognized in the region, that, if neglected, could have, a serious spillover effect on European Union as well.

## Annex 1

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is a doctoral candidate in Politics at the Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Belgrade, working on the dissertation entitled "The problem of constitution of the body politic in democratic theories". Ms Djordjevic has seven years of experience in teaching undergraduate seminars in Contemporary Political Theory, Culture of Human Rights, Theory of Political Order, History of Political Thought II and Academic Skills at the Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Belgrade where she works as a teaching assistant. She is a research fellow at the joint project of the Faculty of Political Sciences and the Faculty of Law "Constitutionalism and the Rule of Law in State-Building – the Case of Serbia" (2012-2016). In the period between 2012 and 2013 she worked as an associate researcher on the CITSEE research project of the Edinburgh School of Law ("The Europeanization of Citizenship in the Successor States of the Former Yugoslavia"), working on politics of return of refugees, IDPs and deportations, and citizenship in the post-Yugoslav space. She holds an MSc in Political Theory Research from University of Oxford, as well as an MA Degree in Political Analytics and Management from the Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Belgrade. Ms Djordjevic is a secretary and a member of the Serbian Political Science Association and a member of the Serbian Society for Legal and Social Philosophy. She received an OSI Oxford Scholarship (2010-2011) and has been awarded as an Academic Fellowship Program Returning Scholar (2012-2015).



## DANE TALESKI

is Adjunct Professor at the South East European University in Tetovo/Skopje (Macedonia) and has been visiting lecture at the University of Fribourg (Switzerland). He has been a visiting fellow at the Centre for Southeast European Studies at the University of Graz (Austria) and a fellow at the Center for Advanced Studies of Southeastern Europe at the University of Rijeka (Croatia). In 2014, he received a Civil Society Scholar Award from the Open Society Institute in New York. Dane received his Ph.D. in Political Science from the Central European University in Budapest (Hungary).

Fields of interest: post-conflict democratization, transformation of rebel groups, political parties and ethnic politics, regional cooperation, EU integration and Southeast Europe.

## DAFINA BUČAJ

holds a Masters degree on International Law (LLM) from the University of Cambridge. Has previously obtained a Law degree from the University of Prishtina and a Bachelors Degree in Journalism from the University of Prishtina. Currently working as a Teaching Assistant for International Law at the Faculty of Law of the University of Prishtina, and as a legal Adviser for the Deputy Prime minister of the Republic of Kosovo. Also engaged as a Research Fellow at the Nurnberg International Principles Academy in Nurnberg (2016). Has received several awards such as: the National Award for Justice 'Sali Cekaj' by the Ministry of Justice for achievements in the international arena (group award); 'Honourable Mention' for the written Memoranda at the Willem C. Vis Competition, Distinguished Student of the University (2010/2011); awarded the 'Cambridge University Trusts/Open Society Foundation' Scholarship, etc.





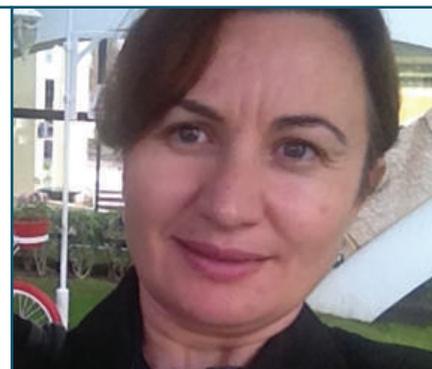
## EDLIRA ALKU-EVANS

is currently working as a Senior Programme Manager for one of the largest charities in London, United Kingdom. Edlira brings over 10 years of experience in strategy, management and change programs in the private, public and third sector. Edlira has an outstanding track record developing and implementing large scale change programs through complex partnership working with a focus in financial sector change work. Her main research and work interest is the translation of policy into practice through innovation and collaboration. Edlira is an LSE/Hansard Research Alumnus and she holds an MA in Contemporary European Studies from the University of Sussex (UK) and an MA in Development Studies from the University of Regensburg (Germany). She also serves as a board member of the Joint Council of Welfare of Immigrants (London) and the Erasmus Plus Student and Alumni Association (Brussels).

## ENTELE KALESHI

has 20 years of experience in research in Western Balkan Countries. Ms Kaleshi is currently a PhD student at Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Tirana and she holds a MBA from Blekinge Institute of Management, Sweden and a MA & BA in Sociology from Tirana University. Since 2011 she has been working as a senior researcher and sociologist at Institute for Change and Leadership in Albania being responsible for projects implementation, organization of capacity-building activities, participating in ICLA research and consultancy projects, ensuring access to local, regional, as well as international networks of ICLA and know-how transfer. Her expertise consists on a great work experience working with multi-layer research studies in Albania and in Balkans and she has good skills on qualitative and quantitative research methods and has participated in many research teams, as team leader and social expert. Her areas of expertise and research interest include Migration Studies, Human Rights, Social Inclusion, Multiculturalism, Socio-economic Policies, Gender and Vulnerable Groups.

Ms Kaleshi is a member of the BISA South-East Europe Working Group, EPEA European Prison Education Association, ISA International Sociology Association, ESA European Sociology Association and she has worked as expert, team leader and project coordinator in various projects supported by UNDP, EU Commission, World Bank, USAID, Council of Europe, UNICEF, UNWOMEN and other international organizations.



## ENTELE KALLAMATA

graduated from the University of Tirana, Faculty of Economy, in 2007. She completed her master studies in European Economics in 2010, through a program supported from the University of Tirana and the University of Bamberg, Germany. In April 2011 she was awarded a two-year scholarship from Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD) and Open Society Foundation (OSI) as part of the DAAD-OSI scholarship program in Western Balkan Countries, for continuing her master studies in European Political Economics at the University of Trier, Germany. She graduated from this University in August 2014 with a paper work on human-made capital and natural capital in the neoclassical theory of economic growth.

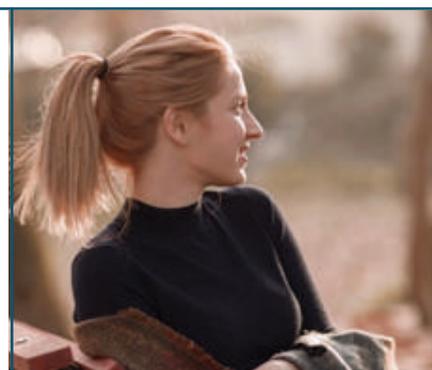
During her master course at the University of Trier, she participated in an interdisciplinary study project in Nairobi, Kenya among students from the University of Trier and Kenyatta University, in a team field research on urban agriculture development among unemployed youth in Nairobi.

During February – May 2013 she participated in the Summer Course, organized from CEU Summer University of Budapest and United Nations Development Programme, on Sustainable Human Development: From international frameworks to regional policies, which she completed with a research paper on regional development in the case of Albania.

Since 2014, Entele Kallamata works at the Urban Research Institute in Tirana, a civil society organization concerned with environmental development and capacity building of the local government in Albania. At the same time, she teaches Economics at the University of Tirana, Faculty of Economics.

## GRISELDA QOSJA

received her Master of Science and in European Studies from the Europa-Universität Flensburg and the University of Southern Denmark. She previously completed a LL.B. at the European University of Tirana. From 2011-2012 she was a fellow at the Center for European Studies at the University of Texas in Austin. Currently she is a teaching assistant and doctoral student at Europa-Universität Flensburg focusing on constitutional developments in the European Union. Her other interests intersect labour law, gender and immigration. She has been engaged in research activities and consultancy with Unicef and OSFA and has written a series of editorials for the printed press. She participated in UEP 2011 and DAAD-OSI 2013.





## MERITA ZULFIU ALILI

is an Assistant Professor of Economics at Faculty of Public Administration and Political Sciences, South East European University, Tetovo, Macedonia. Merita is a member of Western Balkan Migration Network (WB-MIGNET) and as a member of Executive Board they are organizing the Second Annual Conference of the Western Balkans Migration Network. She completed her MSc and PhD studies in Economics at Staffordshire University, United Kingdom. Merita received scholarships for both her master and PhD studies from Open Society Foundations together with Staffordshire University in 2006 and 2009. In 2015 she joined CERGE-EI Career Integration Fellows, Prague. Merita's scientific interests are: foreign direct investment, transition economies, labour market inequality, labour migration.

## MIMOZA TELAKU

is finalizing her PhD degree in Interdisciplinary Studies/Conflict Management and Resolution Program at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in Israel. She has been involved in several research projects related to interethnic relations, marginalized groups, conflict and reconciliation. Her research interests include intergroup relations, collective identity, group processes and reconciliation. She has been grantee of Civil Society Scholars Awards in 2014 – 2015 of Open Society Foundations. During this period of time she has conducted a wide scale study in Kosovo exploring contradictory collective narratives of the interethnic conflict and attitudes toward the other ethnic group in conflict. Currently, she is working on a policy paper which tries to address youth unemployment and hostilities in the Western Balkans within the project "Improving the Policy Impact of OSF Alumni Network in the Western Balkans".



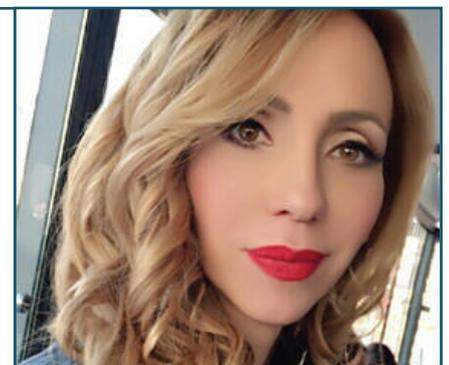
## NATASHA STAMENKOVIKJ

is from Skopje – Macedonia. She holds a Bachelor degree in Laws (LLB) and a Master in Laws (LLM) degree in International Law and International Relations from the Faculty of Law "Justinianus Primus" in Skopje. She also holds a Master of Science (MSc) degree in Criminology and criminal justice from the University of Oxford, Faculty of Law - Centre for Criminology, and a Master in Laws (LLM) degree in International and European law from the University of Edinburgh, Old College. She is currently a PhD researcher and lecturer at Tilburg University, Faculty of Law – Department of European and international public law (The Netherlands). For her research she looks at the Council of Europe's role in the post-conflict transition of the ex-Yugoslav countries. Her fields of interest are: human rights, international criminal law, EU law, transition, EU integration, EU external and enlargement policies, etc. She's been working as a teaching associate at the Faculty of law "Justinianus Primus" in Skopje, and at the Faculty of Law – Tilburg University, where she was/is teaching courses in: European human rights law, International Public law, Transitional justice.

## NINA BRANKOVIC

has 20 years of experience in research in Western Balkan Countries. Ms Brankovic is currently at PhD studies at Faculty of Political Science Zagreb while she gained her Master Degree in Public Policy at Kings College London. She is a member of the LSEE Research Network on Social Cohesion in South East Europe. She performed as a team leader/adviser for various projects supported by SDC, USAID, EU Parliament, EU Commission, Council of Europe, ETF, UNDP, UNIFEM, UNICEF, UNWOMEN, World Bank and other international organizations. Her policy expertise includes number of research analysis with a focus on decentralization, political analysis, education and public policy.

Her most recent co-author publications include EC publication "Higher Education Provision and Labour Market Needs in Bosnia and Herzegovina" (Directorate-General for Education and Culture, 2016), "Higher education entrance qualifications and exams in Europe: a comparison" (European Parliament's Committee on Culture and Education Brussels, IP/B/CULT/IC/2013\_007 © European Union, 2014), "Policy Development Manual for Civil Servants in Bosnia and Herzegovina" (UNDP 2013), journals: "From VET School to the Labour Market in Bosnia and Herzegovina: expected versus actual wages" (European Journal of Education, 2016) and 'Overview of Higher Education and Research Systems in the Western Balkans- Country report: Bosnia and Herzegovina" (Norglobal, 2013), "20 Years After 1991: The Tale of Two Generations" (European Fund for the Balkans 2012).





## VLADO DAMJANOVIC

was born in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. He graduated English Language and Literature at University of Banja Luka in Bosnia. Vlado spent two academic semesters studying Linguistics at University of Georgia on a scholarship awarded by Open Society Foundations through the Undergraduate Exchange Program initiative. At the moment, he is finalizing Communications master's degree at the Faculty of Political Sciences at University of Belgrade. From the perspective of entrepreneurial efforts, Vlado is engaged with two successful venture-funded startup companies, MUNPlanet and Kutpoint, and is a board member of Belgrade's Networked and Social Margin Center NGOs. He is one of the founders of The Global Human Rights Forum series of conferences.

## VISAR MALAJ

was born in Vlora, Albania on 19th march 1986. In 2007 he graduated with a bachelor degree in Statistics at the Faculty of Statistics, University of Padua, Italy. In 2009 Visar graduated with a Master's degree in Statistical, Economic, Financial and Business Science at the same faculty. In 2010 he obtained a second level post-graduate diploma (held in English) in Economics and Finance at the Faculty of Economics, University of Venice, Italy. In 2013 Visar obtained his PhD in Economics at the University of Tirana, where he works since 2010. In 2015 Dr. Malaj has been a visiting scientist at the University of Salento, Lecce (Italy), supported by a Civil Society Scholar Award (CSSA). Afterwards, in 2016 he attended a post-doctorate program in International Economics at the University of Granada in Spain. Dr. Malaj has published different articles in several prestigious international journals, and has participated in different worldwide scientific events, also supported by the OSFs. His main fields of interest include statistical models, poverty, migration, human rights etc. Visar speaks English, Italian and Spanish.

