

Enhanced cooperation to tackle migration – Western Balkans and the Berlin Process

By Senada Šelo Šabić

Acknowledgements: *This brief was supported by the European Fund for the Balkans – a joint initiative of European Foundations, including the Robert Bosch Stiftung, the King Baudouin Foundation and the ERSTE Foundation through the 2018 Think and Link Regional Policy Programme.*

Disclaimer: *All views expressed in this research paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the European Fund for the Balkans.*

IMPRESSUM

Title: Enhanced cooperation to tackle migration – Western Balkans and the Berlin Process
Publisher: Institute for Democracy “Societas Civilis” – Skopje
Author: Senada Šelo Šabić
Proofreading: Jana Ilievska
Design: Dejan Kuzmanovski

The publication is accessible free of charge at:

<http://idscs.org.mk/en/2018/06/26/see-think-net-berlin-process/>

INTRODUCTION

This policy brief analyses migration in the Western Balkans and its effects on different policy areas since the refugee crisis of 2015. It looks at the irregular migration and efforts the governments in the region are making in order to tackle this challenge for the security of their societies and that of the European Union (EU). Tackling the influx of migrants is also framed in the context of a humanitarian and rules-based approach that the EU is trying to uphold on its territory and in policies implemented by partner countries in this region.

On the initiative of the German chancellor and on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the beginning of the First World War, a meeting of the heads of states from the Western Balkans and their counterparts from several EU countries took place in Berlin with the aim to contribute to reform processes in the Western Balkans, in particular “in resolving outstanding bilateral and internal issues, and in achieving reconciliation within and between the societies in the region.”¹ This initiative was also intended to boost economic development in the region.

The Berlin meeting was followed by annual summits in Vienna, Paris, and Trieste. The 2018 meeting is taking place in London.

Connectivity, investment in energy and transport infrastructure, regional cooperation, resolution of bilateral disputes, support to youth, raising environmental awareness, reconciliation and inclusion of civil society in all these policies have been main topics at

¹ Final Declaration by the Chair of the Conference on the Western Balkans. Berlin, 28 August 2014.

summits that have taken place in the framework of the so-called Berlin Process. Although initially intended to last for four years, annual summits are now planned until 2020 with Warsaw and Zagreb pledging to host conferences in 2019 and 2020 respectively.

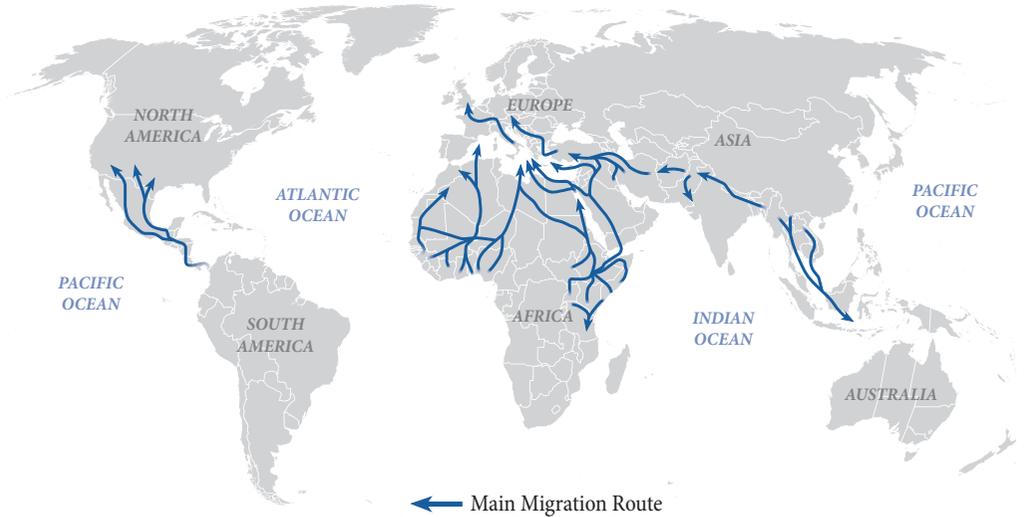
Migration, although mentioned in final declarations adopted at all except for the first summit in Berlin in 2014, has not been perceived as a key topic that the Berlin Process addressed. Believed to be a challenge that originates outside the Balkans and is directed to countries outside this region, migration has been treated initially as a technical issue to ensure further regional cooperation but without a strong policy agenda. This has changed in the meanwhile.

Due to an increased irregular migration pressure on the Western Balkans with the opening of alternative routes for people smuggling, this region is getting into the spotlight of migration pressure on Europe and raises concerns about the ability of these countries to stem the flow. With ever more fearful Europe of new arrivals, the Balkans is now perceived not only as a troubled region, but as a buffer zone, a region that should become sealed for irregular migrants to reach the EU.

In addition to assisting political and economic reforms in the Western Balkans, key efforts are now directed towards their ability to control borders. Balkan countries will not host a large number of refugees. They do not want that and do not have a capacity to do so.

They, on the other hand, will cooperate to the extent that the EU is delivering on other fronts and as long as they maintain a narrative to their own electorates of being human, which translates as not being violent to migrants who only want to leave their territories.

Therefore, after the refugee crisis of 2015, summits' declarations stressed the need to reduce irregular migration, enhance border management and strengthen the fight against organized crime networks.



Source: National Geographic

At the peak of the refugee crisis in 2015, the participants at the Vienna Summit agreed that “the Western Balkans route has become the primary transit route of mixed irregular migratory flows from the Eastern Mediterranean to the European Union.”² The Declaration acknowledged efforts undertaken by EU institutions and individual member states in assisting Western Balkan countries in providing effective border management and in stepping up the fight against human trafficking. It was highlighted that such efforts of the countries in the region reflect “the willingness of the Western Balkan countries to fully assume their own responsibilities in the field of migration, asylum and border management with a view of their European perspective.”³

The Paris Declaration underlined the magnitude of the migration crisis Europe faces and recognised the effort Western Balkan countries made to reduce irregular migration. Without listing any concrete numbers, the Declaration noted that the EU provided various kinds of support to the countries in the Western Balkans in forms of in-kind assistance and financial support as well as by cooperation in controlling the external borders of the EU. “In Paris, the parties identified the areas in which regional cooperation between the European Union and the Western Balkans should be further strengthened: return and readmission, information exchange, coordination, joint operations to fight smugglers’ networks and organised crime, enhanced cooperation between border police forces.”⁴

² Final Declaration by the Chair of the Vienna Western Balkans Summit, 27 August 2015.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Final Declaration by the Chair of the Paris Western Balkans Summit. Paris, 4 July 2016.

Trieste Summit of 2017 stressed the “continental challenge”⁵ migration poses, calling for effective response, “guided by the principles of solidarity, partnership and shared responsibility.”⁶ This Declaration reiterated areas in which further cooperation and joint efforts must continue, such as strengthening border management, preventing irregular migration, fighting organised crime networks and traffickers of human beings. It, however, once again highlighted the importance of respecting human rights and granting international protection to eligible migrants, “in full compliance with international obligations.”⁷

⁵ Trieste Western Balkans Summit 2017 – Declaration by the Italian Chair.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

THE REFUGEE CRISIS IN 2015



Source: At the Gate of Europe, Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Zagreb, 2016

The war in Syria produced millions of displaced persons and refugees seeking shelter in neighbouring countries. The lack of resolution of the war and the lack of perspective for refugees in Turkey led to their massive movement in 2015. The influx of refugees to Greek

islands was on a steady rise since 2014, but it exploded in the summer of 2015. The land route to Europe via Bulgaria was already sealed by then since Bulgaria built a wall and employed extensive force to control the land border with Turkey.

The eastern Mediterranean route over the Aegean Sea became a blue corridor with boats bringing thousands of refugees to Greece on a daily basis. From the islands, refugees moved inland and further to Macedonia via Serbia to Hungary, a Schengen territory. Estimates are that throughout 2015 over one million people reached Europe.⁸

Hungary closed its border with Serbia in September 2015 after which the route was redirected via Croatia to Hungary. Once Hungary erected a razor-wire fence with Croatia and closed the border in October 2015, the route was redirected once again, this time from Serbia via Croatia to Slovenia. Final destination was not Slovenia as refugees moved further to Northern Europe.

The massive influx of refugees on the territory of the Western Balkans caused different responses in the countries in the region. Frustration and fear easily tapped on vulnerable relations that have not been repaired since the break-up of Yugoslavia and the ensuing wars

⁸ Jonathan Clayton and Hereward Holland (2015). Over one million sea arrivals reach Europe in 2015. UNHCR, 30 December
<http://www.unhcr.org/afr/news/latest/2015/12/5683d0b56/million-sea-arrivals-reach-europe-2015.html>

in the 1990s. After Croatia closed its border with Serbia for a few days in September 2015, the German chancellor warned of a possibility of a new conflict in the Balkans if the EU did not step up its assistance in managing the refugee crisis.⁹

Two key observations can be made on the basis of the 2015 refugee crisis – a membership in the EU mattered but was not crucial how countries reacted to the refugee crisis. Serbia and Croatia, a non-EU and an EU member state respectively, both demonstrated more humanitarian approach than Slovenia and Macedonia did, an EU and a non-EU member state, which showed a more security-based approach. A membership in the EU mattered, but not to the extent that it would predetermine a response to the refugee crisis.

The second feature is that none of these countries expressed any responsibility for the crisis. As much as they were able to facilitate the passage of people they presented themselves as cooperative. Other than that, a problem of migration and the refugee crisis were not seen as problems of this region – the countries in the region did not cause it and would not be the ones to solve it. None of them envisaged a prospect that refugees would stay for an extended period on their territories nor would they accept to become hotspots for refugees.

In exchange for cooperation in controlling and facilitating a refugee influx into the EU, these countries were granted financial, technical and humanitarian assistance.

With the public outcry and anti-migration discourse, the dynamic changed in early 2016.

⁹ Natalie Nougayrede (2015). We should heed Angela Merkel's warning of a new Balkan war. The Guardian, 5 November
<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/nov/05/angela-merkel-europe-unfinished-business-balkans>

Austria facilitated coordination of Western Balkan countries in closing their borders, which swiftly led to the EU-Turkey refugee agreement by which effectively the Aegean route was closed.

The deal, although extensively criticized by humanitarian organizations and activists, is in place two years since it was signed. In its annual reports, the EU commission praised the EU-Turkey deal for its success in preventing the entry of refugees from Turkey to the EU.

NEW MIGRATION ROUTES



Source: <http://www.parrocchia-sanmichele-neviano.it/bosnia-herzegovina-the-new-migrant-route-hunger-solidarity-and-landmines/>

Although the 2015 figures remain historic high, a migration pressure on Europe via the Western Balkans only receded to elevate again in 2018. At this time, a new route has become active – that from Albania via Montenegro to Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H) and further to Croatia and Slovenia. Another route is from Serbia to B&H and further to Croatia and Slovenia. Routes over Albania, Montenegro and B&H have been used before, but on a much smaller scale, as movement along them is more difficult due to poor road conditions, larger distance, more borders and other obstacles until a migrant reaches Schengen territory.

Nowadays there may be less Syrian refugees in comparison to migrants from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, and Iraq as well as from African countries, the desire to reach Europe is clearly rising. Migrants are willing to pay higher prices to smugglers and undertake more dangerous journeys to reach Europe.

The Western Balkans is facing a demand to prevent irregular entry of refugees. The expectation is clear – in exchange for support and perspective of membership, these countries should immediately demonstrate additional will and capacity to prove themselves reliable partners and justifiable would-be members of the EU.

The atmosphere in the Balkans is mixed. Some are using migration pressure to score additional political points like Milorad Dodik in B&H who uses anti-migration rhetoric to further destabilise his country. Some are seeing it as a way to facilitate their cooperation with the EU on other fronts.

However, due to the securitisation of migration everywhere in Europe since the refugee crisis of 2015, a sense of fear, vulnerability and a lack of ideas what to do in the future is spreading also in the Balkans. There is a realisation that the Balkans will continue to be exposed to migration pressure since it currently shows no signs of receding.

After a couple of regional meetings to address the problem of irregular migration on newly active routes, Balkan interior ministers met in June 2018 in Brussels with EU representatives. Topics of the meeting were effective border management, fighting smuggling, stemming irregular migration flows and coordinating efforts to prevent a new migration crisis. The meeting ended with an agreement “to continue working together in the coming months to better monitor, register and exchange information on migratory flows, increase cooperation

on border management, enforce and step up returns and readmissions, and to increase efforts to dismantle smugglers and organised crime groups.¹⁰

Berlin Process summits note efforts and provide stimulus for further cooperation in the area of migration management. However, migration policy management between the EU and the Western Balkans takes part within a policy framework of six flagship initiatives that the EU designed on the basis of the Western Balkans Strategy adopted in February 2018,¹¹ optimistically aimed at transformation of the region. Security and migration is one area of cooperation that envisages meetings such as the one described earlier, but also concrete support to Balkan countries in strengthening border management, dispatching Europol liaison officers, further promotion of Joint Investigation Teams and conclusion of status agreements with Frontex.¹²

¹⁰ European Commission (2018). Joint statement by Commissioners Avramopoulos and King, the Ministers of Interior of the Western Balkans and of the current and future presidencies of the Council of the European Union. 19 June http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_STATEMENT-18-4215_en.htm

¹¹ European Commission (2018). A credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans. 6 February https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/communication-credible-enlargement-perspective-western-balkans_en.pdf

¹² European Commission (2018). EU-Western Balkans. Six Flagship Initiatives. May https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/six-flagship-initiatives-support-transformation-western-balkans_en.pdf

POLITICAL DISCOURSE ON MIGRATION IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

There is less ability to empathize with migrants nowadays. The rhetoric of humanitarianism which was still in use three years ago is gone today. Today's discourse swings between relaxed disregard of the issue to engaged security-driven discourse. A main message seems to be that these countries can offer temporary assistance because migrants want to move to wealthier EU countries.

Political discourse on migration does not link demographic trends and migration patterns in this region with migration pressure from the outside. All countries in the Western Balkans are experiencing a demographic decline due to lower birth rates and higher emigration. Whole villages and small towns are disappearing every year with little prospect that the trend might change any time soon.

Country – all data is for 2017	Population growth (%)	Net migration rate	Median age	Unemployment (%)	Population below poverty line (%)
Albania	0.31	-3.3	32.9	14	14.3
B&H	-0.16	-0.4	42.1	20.5	17.2
Kosovo	-	-	29.1	34.8	30
Macedonia	0.17	-0.5	37.9	23.4	21.5
Montenegro	-0.2	-	40.7	17.1	8.6
Serbia	-0.46	0	42.6	16	8.9

Source: CIA World Factbook, author's compilation

Economic hardships, massive unemployment, poor governance, corruption and obsession with past grievance are driving people out of their countries, primarily young ones. For example, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo hold the world's record in the percentage of unemployed youth, 62.3% and 57.7% respectively.¹³ In the case of B&H, nearly 30% of emigrants have university degree, 11.1% of whom are medical doctors which makes another world record.¹⁴ The World Bank statistics data published in 2016 shows all Western Balkan countries, except Serbia, among world top emigration countries in relation to population. Montenegro (45.4%), B&H (44.5%) and Albania (43.6%) are preceded by Puerto Rico and followed by Jamaica. Further down the list one finds Kosovo and Macedonia, 30.3% and 30.2% respectively. They are preceded by St. Lucia and followed by Micronesia.¹⁵ While in the past it was mainly unskilled males from underdeveloped areas who were leaving to work as temporary workers in Western Europe it is now often whole families, educated and from urban areas that are leaving permanently.

Emigration from the region is becoming a social problem *par excellence*, a trend that will be a multigenerational challenge for these countries in the years to come. Berlin Process summits address the issue of emigration from the region, while concrete policies are implemented within EU Commission's programmes in cooperation with relevant institutions and agencies. The European Investment Bank, for example, which has been

¹³ CIA. The World Factbook. Country Comparison: Unemployment, Youth Ages 15-24 <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2229rank.html#ky>

¹⁴ Centar za izborne studije and Heinrich Boell Foundation (2017). Masovni odlazak mladih iz BiH: potraga za poslom ili bijeg od stvarnosti? Sarajevo, Juli <https://ba.boell.org/sites/default/files/studija-masovni-odlazak-mladih-iz-bih.pdf>

¹⁵ World Bank (2016). Migration and Remittances. Factbook 2016, Third Edition, p. 4 <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/23743/9781464803192.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y>

implementing projects which support economic resilience and address the root causes of migration, pledged at the EU-Western Balkans Sofia Summit in May 2018 to continue its focus on this region.¹⁶

A main task, however, rests with governments in this region. How Balkan countries plan to reverse the emigration trend is unclear. Some governments strengthen pro-birth policies, some dream of the diaspora returning to invest, but none currently consider immigration from outside the region as a possible way to tackle demographic decline. If this position will change remains to be seen.

Migration, both into and from the region, creates a profound sense of fear and discomfort among populations. Balkan populists have not risen to the level of European populists simply because Balkan chauvinism thrives on nationalism fed by unresolved issues from the past. An additional reason for less anti-immigrant rhetoric is that a prospect of migrants staying permanently in any of these countries is largely slim. If this situation would change, however, it is almost certain that a populist discourse of reducing European solidarity and cooperation to increase sovereign rights and advance national interests would grow also in the Balkans.

¹⁶ European Investment Bank (2018). EIB confirms support for Western Balkans on the path towards EU integration. 17 May
<http://www.eib.org/infocentre/press/releases/all/2018/2018-117-eib-confirms-support-for-western-balkans-on-the-path-towards-eu-integration.htm>

CURRENT MIGRATION SITUATION IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

Albania witnessed an increased influx of irregular migrants since the beginning of 2018 arriving from Greece. Just in the first five months, Albanian authorities caught 2,311 irregular migrants, in comparison to 162 for the period of January-May 2017.¹⁷ A route via Albania was not preferred earlier due to the rough terrain, limited public transportation that drives up the cost of travel, and tight control of Albanian police in cooperation with EU partners.¹⁸ However, largely (but not completely) closed borders between Greece and Macedonia, and Greece and Bulgaria make this land route active. Lucrative smuggling business is hard to tap despite Albanian government's and EU efforts. Cooperation with the EU is also causing domestic political debates with the opposition accusing the government of making concessions to the EU in exchange for accession negotiations.¹⁹ Austria, the most active EU member state in migration-related issues in the Balkans, apart from Hungary, promised to deploy border police officers to Albania in support of joint operations at the Albanian-Greek border.²⁰

¹⁷ Benet Koleka (2018). Migrant numbers leap on new migration route across Albania. Reuters, 8 June <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-albania/migrant-numbers-leap-on-new-balkan-route-across-albania-idUSKCN1J41KP>

¹⁸ Krisela Hackaj and Ester Mulita (2016). Albania in the Western Balkans Route, April 2015-June 2016. Cooperation and Development Institute. Tirana, June 2016. <http://cdinstitute.eu/web/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/2016-06-23-Albania-in-the-Western-Balkans-migration-route-v.2-1.pdf>

¹⁹ Former Albanian PM: "If EU conditions invitation for negotiations with refugee camps, we'd better have no invitation". 20 June 2018. <http://top-channel.tv/english/former-albanian-pm-if-eu-conditions-invitation-for-negotiations-with-refugee-camps-wed-better-have-no-invitation/>

²⁰ Austria plans to help Albania with refugees at the border. 20 June 2018. <http://top-channel.tv/english/austria-plans-to-help-albania-with-refugees-at-the-border/>

With the support of the Council of Europe Development Bank in the amount of EUR 400,000.00, executed through IOM (International Organisation for Migration) and in cooperation with Albania's Directorate for Border and Migration Police, a new centre for registration and accommodation of irregular migrants was opened in June 2017 in Gerhot, Albania close to the Kakavija border crossing with Greece. It can accommodate 60 people.²¹

Montenegro officials raise a possibility of erecting a razor-wire fence on its border with Albania in an effort to stem down irregular migration. They openly complain about the lack of cooperation with Albania which frequently refuses to take back migrants on the basis of bilateral readmission agreements.²² Serbia has been under steady influx of irregular migrants ever since the refugee crisis in 2015. New routes are thus causing less alarm in the country in comparison to its neighbours. Official figures for June 2018 state that there are 2,600 migrants in reception centres in Serbia, out of whom 128 are unaccompanied children.²³

Bosnia and Herzegovina is facing an especially demanding task. Rated as one of the poorest countries in Europe, it has been subject to multiple increases of entries from Serbia and Montenegro as of the beginning of 2018. Two new migration routes through the Balkans, with migrants arriving via Turkey-Greece, have exits in B&H: Albania-Montenegro-B&H and Macedonia-Serbia-B&H.

²¹ IOM. 27 June 2017.

<https://www.iom.int/news/new-registration-centre-provides-essential-services-irregular-migrants-albania>

²² Reuters Staff (2018). Montenegro may build fence on Albanian border to stop migrants. Reuters, 20 May 2018.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-montenegro/montenegro-may-build-fence-on-albanian-border-to-stop-migrants-idUSKCN1ILOBT>

²³ European Refugee Situation in Serbia, April-June 2018. UNHCR Serbia.

From 1 January until 31 May 2018, B&H has registered 5,290 irregular arrivals.²⁴ This number continues to increase on a daily basis with more than 100 persons entering B&H. However, an average figure of migrants in B&H is around 2,500, which means that most of them managed to leave the country. B&H faces reception difficulties in particular in the regions of Bihać and Velika Kladuša where migrants are temporarily staying in an attempt to cross a border to Croatia. Adding to a danger of illegal crossing in this area are minefields which have not been fully cleared since the war in the 1990s. There are reports of a few migrants drowned (Korana, Drina, also Kupa in Slovenia) in an attempt to swim over to the opposite bank and across a border. 3,300 people were turned back to Serbia and Montenegro, but B&H lacks the personnel and technical capacity to ensure stronger border surveillance.²⁵ B&H also lacks expertise in separating different nationalities of migrants to prevent their fights as well as separating unaccompanied children and single females from adult men.

Irregular migration is presenting an additional burden in this country due to its precarious internal political situation. An attempt of the central government to relocate 200 irregular migrants from Sarajevo to the south of the country nearly caused an armed incident when a cantonal police stopped the convoy refusing its passage to a reception centre in Salakovac. The off-stand was resolved after a couple of hours, but it signalled future problems in case the number of migrants increases and they become stranded in B&H for an extended period.²⁶

²⁴ UNHCR RRSEE data in European Refugee Situation in Serbia, April-June 2018 . UNHCR Serbia.

²⁵ Sertan Sanderson (2018). Info Migrants. 4 June.
<http://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/9669/bosnia-faces-crisis-as-migrants-continue-to-amass>

²⁶ Mladen Lakić (2018). Bosnians Trade Blame over Migrants' Convoy. Balkan Insight, 24 May 2018.
<http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/bosnians-officials-tussle-over-intercepted-migrants-convoy-05-23-2018>

CONCLUSION

The Berlin Process did not bring the issue of migration on top of its agenda. However, due to the new routes and initially increased migration pressure on Europe via the Balkans, migration is getting more attention in discussion between the EU and the Balkans, also in the framework of the Berlin Process.

The Sofia summit between the EU and the Western Balkans in May 2018 highlighted the need to intensify cooperation in preventing irregular migration and tightening border control. EU pledged support in this regard, including dispatching liaison officers in the region.

Upon completion of status agreements negotiations, FRONTEX will deploy its personnel at the borders of Albania and Macedonia “to replace the 157 border guards from select EU countries (Višegrad countries, plus Croatia and Slovenia) currently on duty.”²⁷

Austria is supporting stronger border management and regional cooperation to prevent and decrease irregular migration from this region into the EU. Austrian chancellor Sebastian Kurz pledges to place security and protecting Europe’s external borders on top of the agenda when Austria assumes EU presidency in July 2018.²⁸

²⁷ CIA. The World Factbook. Country Comparison: Unemployment, Youth Ages 15-24
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2229rank.html#kv>

²⁸ Centar za izborne studije and Heinrich Boell Foundation (2017). Masovni odlazak mladih iz BiH: potraga za poslom ili bijeg od stvarnosti? Sarajevo, Juli
<https://ba.boell.org/sites/default/files/studija-masovni-odlazak-mladih-iz-bih.pdf>

Despite a constant pledge to humanitarianism, migration today in Europe, and thus also in the Western Balkans, is seen primarily as a security concern. Apprehensive of a large number of migrants entering illegally, frustrated with ineffective fight against smugglers, afraid that the EU countries to the north will seal off their borders leaving thousands on unwanted migrants stuck on their territories, and fearful of limited resources, Western Balkans countries in all likelihood will further reduce their tolerance for transit of migrants. This is in line with expectations from the EU and in line with their own security concerns. At the same time, governments in the region find themselves under pressure to raise the standards of registration, reception, and accommodation of migrants, including raising standards for asylum procedures and protection mechanisms to be granted to the vulnerable. Migrant influx is adding to the already weak institutional structures, fragile peace and limited economic resources in the region. EU support will be necessary in terms of technical assistance, financial grants and humanitarian aid.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to facilitate cooperation between the EU and the Western Balkans, the following measures need to be taken into consideration.

Due to an increasing demand, a fight against irregular border crossing will constitute a considerable effort in the years to come. Although the governments in the region are aware of the expectation from the EU to break mafia networks and maximally reduce the number of people who reach Northern Europe via the Western Balkans, their operations will need a constant and substantial support from the EU.

Western Balkan countries should not be blackmailed into cooperation on migration prevention in exchange for further EU integration. If this becomes a case, they will develop an image of themselves as frontier countries²⁹ which serve to provide security for the EU while not being considered an equal any time in the near future.

If detected as cynical EU pragmatism, EU enthusiasm in the region will be further reduced. Cynical policies could lead to hypocritical policies of the countries in the region where government officials will pledge support for EU's policies of prevention of migration while in the field police will lax its control as a way to rebuke selfish Europe.

²⁹ Emilio Cocco (2017). Where is the European frontier? The Balkan migration crisis and its impact on relations between the EU and the Western Balkans. *European View* 16: 293-302
<https://gmdac.iom.int/research-database/sites/default/files/documents/Where%20is%20the%20european%20frontier.pdf>

A new narrative that professes that the entire European continent is one house, where territories are linked and cannot be easily separated, will drive a sense of comradeship and solidarity.

Education of population who need to expect changes in their societies will prepare for changes that will inevitably come to the Western Balkans. If Balkan countries want to develop into resilient societies, they can begin to consider designing comprehensive migration policies that will address their demographic difficulties in the decades to come.

INFORMATION ABOUT SEE THINK NET

The SEE Think Net Network was established in mid-march 2018 with the generous support of the European Fund for the Balkans as the first regional network composed of civil society organisations that aim to monitor the topics related to the Berlin Process. The Network encompasses think tanks, civil society organisations and individuals from the 6 Western Balkan countries plus Croatia and Slovenia. Besides the Institute for Democracy “Societas Civilis” (IDSCS) which will coordinate the Network, the SEE Think Net Network includes the Network of the European Movement in Serbia (NEMinS), Open Society Foundation for Albania and its affiliate, the EU Policy Hub, Adnan Ćerimagić, Politikon Network from Montenegro, Kosovar Centre for Security Studies, the Institute for Development and International Relations (IRMO) from Croatia and the Centre for European Perspective (CEP) from Slovenia. The goal of the SEE Think Net Network is to produce significant policy inputs and provide policy recommendations on topics that derive from the Berlin Process. As such, its activities are devised in order to closely monitor the Berlin process and the policy areas the process encompasses.

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE EUROPEAN FUND FOR THE BALKANS

The European Fund for the Balkans is designed to create and support initiatives aimed at strengthening democracy and fostering European integration by enabling inclusive policy making, supporting capacity development and creating a platform for exchange and co-operation in the Western Balkans. The Fund was launched in 2007 by four European private foundations (King Baudouin Foundation, Erste Foundation, Robert Bosch Stiftung and the Compagnia di san Paolo), within the framework of the Network of European Foundations.

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