

MIGRATION ALONG THE BALKAN ROUTE

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The article deals with migration flows along the Balkan route, which remained active during tenth of years and despite the efforts of European countries to control the process. Migration, in contrast to expectations, turned out to be much more complicated phenomenon than it was supposed to be. It brought numerous problems in economic, political, social life of the countries located along the Balkan migration route. It negatively affected the European Union that demonstrated inability to take control of its' functioning despite all efforts.

The purpose of the article is to provide a brief analysis of migration along the Balkan route and its influence on the EU. In particular, the article examines the push and pull factors affecting migrants' decision to travel to Europe; the historical background of migration to Europe; regular and irregular migration as well as pre- and post-pandemic tendencies of migration through the Balkans. The following tasks are defined for the study: 1) examine the process of migration along the Balkan migration route, mapping regular and irregular migration flow; 2) distinguish the factors, influencing destination choice of irregular migrants; 3) identify and analyze the time periods of the migration flows into Europe.

The author offered basic terms related to the topic of migration along with definitions. The article includes observation of the literature that illustrates works related to the topic under discussion and analysis of researches conducted by western scholars who focused on studying of the Balkan migration route.

The Balkan route has been quite intensive from the point of view of migration. 14723 cases of illegal border crossing were registered between January and May

2021. Migrants came from Syria, Afghanistan, Morocco and Libya. They produce the most significant part of migrants who move along the Balkan route. In previous years, 2015-2016, the Balkan route was a dominant corridor for migrants heading to the Central and Western Europe.

Intended destination is also in the focus the author, who came to the conclusion that migrants were rather deliberate in their selection of the destination country in Europe. The article provides the index that demonstrates the least and the most-accepting countries for migrants.

The author comes to the conclusion that the Balkan migration route during 2001-2021 proved that in many cases Europe remains migrants' priority due to numerous reasons. The attitude of the EU member-states citizens (destination spots) is much more positive than the attitude of the Balkan countries (transit ones).

Key words: migration, the Balkans, the Balkan migration route, the European Union, destination country.

У статті розглянуто питання балканського міграційного коридору, який функціонує на постійні основі впродовж багатьох років, попри зусилля країн Балканського півострова та Європейського Союзу. Мета статті полягає в аналізі міграційних процесів на Балканському півострові та його вплив на ЄС і країни Європи. Автор розглянув базові терміни, пов'язані з міграційними процесами, здійснив огляд літератури, присвяченій даному питанню та зазначив основні дослідження західних науковців, дотичних до теми статті. Інтенсивність міграційних процесів у вище згаданому регіоні зумовлена економічною та політичною ситуацією в країнах-донорах мігрантів, серед яких – Афганістан, Пакистан, Сирія тощо. В статті подано список країн, які демонструють найбільшу та найменшу прихильність до мігрантів. Ставлення країн-членів ЄС виявилось позитивнішим до мігрантів, ніж ставлення Балканських країн.

Ключові слова: міграція, Балкани, Балканський міграційний маршрут, Європейський Союз, країна призначення.

INTRODUCTION

Migration crisis in Europe turned out to be a challenge for the UE and almost each of the European countries. Nobody expected that migration will bring up so many negative consequences that will affect economy, politics, social life and other spheres.

The migration flow to European countries through the Balkans has various names: the Balkan route, the Balkan corridor, the Balkans, but despite the variety of names it is still about the same phenomenon – the way of migration from Syria, Afghanistan, Morocco and Libya up to Germany, Austria, Denmark and Sweden. These countries have a certain tradition of immigration.

Building on the data assessment, this study is an attempt to provide an overview of the Balkan migration route, to identify the factors that push people from other countries to start up their journey to Europe and to provide more granular information about the profile of people who have travelled to Europe through the Western Balkans.

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The data collected on the topic was retrieved from a variety of open sources. Due to the fact that the topic of the Balkan migration is urgent, in addition to scientific literature and official reports, the study uses newspapers, media and online sources to stay abreast of the changes. Where relevant, comparisons are made with findings from assessment, conducted by Frontex since 2015 to 2018 and Gallup of 2016 and 2019.

Basic definitions and terms.

The meaning of *migrant* remains contested. According to the definition offered by the United Nations (UN), *migrant* is an umbrella term, not defined under

international law, reflecting the common lay understanding of a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons [41, p. 132]. The UN uses the official name of “international migrant” as “any person who changes his or her country of usual residence”. Specific definitions have also been developed by UN to identify short-term and long-term migrants.

J. Carling offered two approaches to define the term ‘migrant’: the inclusivist approach, considers the term ‘migrant’ as an umbrella term covering all forms of movements; the residualist approach excludes from the term “migrant” those who flee wars or persecution [8].

The European Union (EU) defines immigration as the action by which a person establishes his or her usual residence in the territory of a Member State for a period of 12 months, having previously been usually resident in another Member State or a third country [21]. Immigrant is a person undertaking an immigration.

The term migrant is used with reference to all those on the Balkan route travelling to Europe, including people who intend to seek asylum and may later gain refugee status.

Regular migration is a process of migration that occurs in compliance with the laws of the country of origin, transit and destination [41, p. 175]. Irregular migrants are all those outside normal transit procedures, i.e. migrants without documentation. It is worth mentioning that although a universally accepted definition of irregular migration does not exist, the term is generally used to identify people moving outside regular migration channels.

Apart from migrants, few more terms are in use, in particular – a transit country and a destination country. Transit countries are the countries that migrants go through to their final place. Destination country is a final place for migration flows.

Literature review

UNO human rights conventions recognize the right of people to leave their country of origin, but reserve their right to admission to another country. Proponents of open borders for migrants support the idea that states should have no powers to

restrict the freedom of migrants. A utilitarian approach presupposes that migration should be governed by the rules.

The number of migration researches undertaken over the last twenty years suggests that it has been one of the most important and popular issues in political science, sociology, economics, anthropology and cultural studies. Numerous studies directly related to the Balkan migration route outline various aspects of the problem.

The researches on the topic of the Balkan route could be grouped accordingly: 1) reasons of migration, needs and vulnerabilities of migrants; 2) legal framework of the EU and the non-EU countries, ethics and politics of migration and border; 3) ways of migration, illegal and irregular migration, refugee smuggling; 4) statistics of regional and world organizations.

The first group is represented by works of scholars dedicated to obstacles and barriers on the way to Western and Northern Europe. Among them: Ahmetašević [2]; Prtorić [38]; King and Oruc [24]; Fenton, Borton, Collinson and Foley [17]; Kuschminder et al. [26]; Aslany, Carling, Mjelva & Sommerfelt [3].

Ahmetašević [2] outlined the limits to access to asylum along the Balkan route. Prtorić [38] argues that along the Balkan route, refugees and volunteers face growing hostility. The scholar pointed out that in Bosnia resentment was mounting, tension was growing in Serbia, help interrupted in Croatia and fear internalized in Slovenia. In the book "Migration in the Western Balkans" [24] edited by R. King and N. Oruc, scholars traced trends and challenges of migration in the Western Balkans, analyzed civic initiatives and grassroots responses to the refugee crisis along the Balkans route.

The journal "Refugees and Vulnerable Migrants in Europe" makes observation of the problems that migrants faced while moving through the Balkans [17]. Kuschminder et al. [26] studied the Balkan Route and the role of Turkey in the process. Additional accent was made on the Afghans' and Syrians' decision making in Turkey and on the Western Balkans route and the interaction of policies and decision making. J. Carling together with his colleagues analyzed numerous publications on push and pull factors, trying to single out the most significant ones. As a result, they finalized with 49 articles included in a systematic literature review [3].

The works of the second group explained the ethics and politics of migration and border regime. Astuti et al. [4] observed the hardships of migrants en route to Europe. Bezec, Speer, and Mitrović [5] focused on Macedonia, Serbia and the European border regime. Oruc et al. [37] analyzed the time periods and events between 2015 to 2019 related to migration along the route. Among the researchers of the issues we can highlight Greider [22], who studied the role of the Western Balkans in the European Refugee Crisis; Bonifazi et al. [7] and Kupiszewski et al. [25], who focused on the labour migration patterns, policies and migration propensity in the Western Balkans boundaries. Bisiaux and Naegeli [6] shifted attention to the rights of migrants and efforts of the EU to connect the Balkan countries' databases to Eurodac.

The third group enlisted works by Mandić [28; 29]; Cosgrave et al. [9]; Cvejić and Babović [10] who outlined the characteristics of migration in the Western Balkan countries, in particular transit, origin and destination, considering the period of 2009–2013. Abikova and Piotrowicz [1] highlighted the issue of development and changes in the migration route 2015–16. The scholars described the changes in the route and provided an analysis of transit via Balkan countries, looking at factors that influenced the shape of the corridor. Kuschminder et al. [27] focused on the issue of irregular migration routes to Europe and factors affecting destination choices.

The fourth group consists of data reports, statistics surveys, borrowed from statistics moguls, such as UNO; Gallup; Eurostat; European Commission; Frontex; Global Detention Project; EURACTIV; REACH; MPI (Migration Policy Institute); Migration Data Portal, ICMPD (International Centre for Migration Policy Development). BalkanInsight serves as a platform for the news regarding the Balkan migrant route; Belgian Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (Fedasil) [40].

Meanwhile, the Balkan migration route lacks more detailed analysis over the period of 2020-2021.

1. EUROPE AS MIGRANTS' PURPOSE

Many roads of illegal migration lead to Europe. Among them: the Central Mediterranean route, the Western Mediterranean route, the Eastern Mediterranean route, the Western African route and the Balkan route.

The Balkan route entails two major migratory movements: those of migrants who are nationals of the Western Balkan states, and those of predominantly Asian migrants who initially entered the EU through the Greek or Turkish land or sea borders and then progressed through the Western Balkans into Hungary or Romania [20, p. 20].

The Balkan route has been quite intensive from the point of view of migration. 14723 cases of illegal border crossing were registered between January and May 2021. Migrants came from Syria, Afghanistan, Morocco and Libya. In previous years, 2015-2016, the Balkan route was a dominant corridor for migrants heading to the Central and Western Europe. Greece was flooded by waves of migrants who came to the country by sea. More than 850,000 arrived to Greece in 2015, majority of whom moved farther through the Western Balkans to Northern and Western Europe [42, p. 85].

The Balkan route goes along the EU eastern external border stretching from Greece to Germany. It borders on Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, the Russian Federation and Turkey. It crosses the territory of a group of countries of the former Yugoslavia (Macedonia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Slovenia). The western Balkan route goes through Hungary, Austria and Germany and farther to the west. With the influx of migrants, it evolved into three streams: the Northern route, the “Balkan route” itself and the Southern route. All of them started in Turkey, but in this case, it was a transit country. The “Balkan route” itself started in Turkey, moved through Greece and North Macedonia or Bulgaria to Serbia, then through Croatia, Slovenia and Austria to Germany. The southern route was leading through Greece over Albania, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina to Croatia, Slovenia and Austria to the destination country, which was Germany and even farther [15].

In 2016, migrants came from Syria (37%), Afghanistan (19%), Iraq (12%), Pakistan (3%), Eritrea (3%), Nigeria (3%), Iran (2%), Gambia (2%) and others (19%). Over the last two years the proportion significantly changed. In 2021 there were Afghans, Pakistanis, Syrians, Bangladeshis, Iranians and Moroccans, while others made up 33,2% (Table 1).

Table 1. List of migrants' countries of origin

Country of origin	Source	Data date	Population	
Others	<i>UNHCR</i>	30 Apr 2021	33.2%	4,436
Afghanistan	<i>UNHCR</i>	30 Apr 2021	21.9%	2,921
Pakistan	<i>UNHCR</i>	30 Apr 2021	16.1%	2,153
Syrian Arab Rep.	<i>UNHCR</i>	30 Apr 2021	8.4%	1,126
Bangladesh	<i>UNHCR</i>	30 Apr 2021	7.1%	944
Iran (Islamic Rep.)	<i>UNHCR</i>	30 Apr 2021	6.2%	823
Morocco	<i>UNHCR</i>	30 Apr 2021	3.1%	408
Algeria	<i>UNHCR</i>	30 Apr 2021	1.3%	176
Palestine	<i>UNHCR</i>	30 Apr 2021	1.0%	129
Libya	<i>UNHCR</i>	30 Apr 2021	0.8%	107
India	<i>UNHCR</i>	30 Apr 2021	0.6%	83
Tunisia	<i>UNHCR</i>	30 Apr 2021	0.3%	45

Source: [36].

Data in Table 1 shows that people are fleeing their countries of origin just to escape active conflict, violence and insecurity, so they are migrating to Europe seeking safety and opportunities. Even in the cases where active conflict, as a matter of fact, is not the primary reason for leaving home (Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Bangladesh), the number of migrants in Europe come from major refugee-producing countries with low access to services, low income and lack of jobs.

1.1. Intended destination

Despite all the obstacles, Germany still remains the preferred destination. Analysis over time shows several trends regarding intended destination. On the one hand, the proportion of people reporting the intention to travel to Germany compared to other destinations increased consistently between December and March (from 60% in December to 80% in March), while on the other, the list of alternative destinations

became increasingly diverse. Germany hosted 1.2 mln. international migrants [18]. Today, the majority of foreign workers in Austria, Germany and other countries of destination have become permanent residents, many have become naturalized and are an integral part of the European population.

In 2016 a small minority of migrants include the UK, France, and Italy to their wish list of final destinations because of language and cultural ties. At the same time, the proportions reporting the intention to travel destinations in Northern Europe such as Holland and Sweden had decreased compared to earlier months, reflecting the introduction of stricter asylum policies in these countries compared to 2015 [34, p. 19].

1.1.1. The reasons that affect the destination countries choices

Europe, especially Western Europe, is desirable for migrants due the number of reasons. McAuliffe [31] argues that enabling factors also impact the decision to migrate of both regular and irregular migrants. Such enabling factors can include geography and the ease of movement to a certain destination; migration policies, such as asylum regulations; and online communications technology [11].

First and foremost, this region has an easy access to the European Union. Slovenia joined the EU in 2004 and Croatia in 2013. Both of them joined the European Union as independent states while the North Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro are in the process of negotiating their status and access to the EU. It is important, because if succeed migrants find their shelter and jobs.

The second factor is not less important. Due to the EU neighborhood policy former Yugoslavia republics had an easy access to visas and work permits. For example, the introduction of visa-free travel in the Western Balkans and stabilization of the area led to the Western Balkans becoming a region of transit migration for irregular migrants coming from Greece [35].

The third, irregular migrant routes consider the safety of the route and conflicts that may occur along the route. For instance, irregular migrants moving through Sudan changed their routes to avoid the Darfur conflicts in 2003. At the same time, conflict within a country can also lead to increased irregular migration flows. For example, the Libyan war led to increased numbers of irregular migrants leaving the country [27,

p.51-52]. At the same time, the Balkan route, in comparison with the Mediterranean route, is much safer, because of the short distance by sea while travelling from Turkey to the Greek islands [23].

The fourth factor considers surveillance, patrolling and push-back policies that influence migrants' routes. It can be observed at the Turkey-Greece border where increased surveillance led to a change from land to sea routes, and more recently, to irregular migrants going to Bulgaria instead of Greece [12].

The fifth, standards of life are in priority. For instance, in 2015, among all the EU country-members, only Germany and Sweden received close to 50 percent of asylum applications launched in the EU [42, p. 84]. It proves the idea that comfortable conditions of life and high payment jobs are preferred by migrants. Throughout many years, Germany remains the preferred destination of asylum-seekers and refugees. The decision to travel to Germany and other destinations in northern and central Europe was influenced by the perception that refugees were welcome there, jobs were available, and often because their friends or family members were already living there [34, p.3]. In addition, consequences of climate change – such as a lack of food and water – are forcing people to leave their homes.

The sixth reason can be explained by the social factors. The majority of migrants to Central and Western Europe originate from countries affected by conflict. Syrians still make up the majority of new asylum-seekers, though their overall proportion has decreased. People have been travelling to Europe to flee conflict and insecurity in order to find safety and opportunities. In Germany, more than 70 percent of registered asylum seekers have fled from war or violent crises, according to the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees [30]. Active conflict, violence and insecurity were the primary reported “push factors” leading people to leave their place of origin, while reported “pull factors” for travelling to Europe included safety and security, the possibility of employment, and access to services such as education and healthcare [34, p. 3].

The seventh reason is family reunion. Migrants are on the move because their friends or family members were already living there (in European countries).

A lot of migrants perceive Europe, especially Western, as more welcoming to new people. The Gallup's new Migrant Acceptance Index data list shows the least- and the most-accepting countries for migrants. According to the data provided, Macedonia is listed with the worst result while Sweden has the highest ranking among the countries of destination for migrants (see Table 2). All in all, 138 world countries were selected for the study (in 2016). In 2019 the index was based on three questions asked in 145 countries. Respondents were asked whether they think migrants living in their country, becoming their neighbors or marrying into their families are good or bad things. The index is a sum of the points across the three questions, with a maximum possible score of 9.0 and a minimum possible score of zero. The higher the score, the more accepting the population is of migrants

It is worth mention that the worst results were in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans, that is, the part of Europe, which was particularly affected by the migration crisis.

Table 2. New Index Shows the Least and the Most-Accepting Countries for Migrants

The Least-Accepting Countries	Index 2016	Index 2019	The Most-Accepting Countries	Index 2016	Index 2019
Slovenia	4,42	N/A	Sweden	7,92	7,92
Greece	3,34	N/A	Albania	7,22	N/A
Turkey	3,27	2,53	Germany	7,09	N/A
Romania	2,93	N/A	Denmark	7,09	N/A
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2,71	1,85	Austria	6,06	N/A
Bulgaria	2,42	N/A			
Croatia	2,39	1,81			
Serbia	1,8	1,79			
Hungary	1,69	1,64			
Montenegro	1,63	1,87			
Macedonia	1,47	1,49			

Source: [13; 14].

Migrant Acceptance Index scores range from 7.92 to 1.69. A lot of countries with the lowest scores on the Migrant Acceptance Index in 2019 were also on the list in 2016. As a matter of fact, only Thailand, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Turkey were added to the list in 2019. According to the poll 2016, migrant acceptance index in Central and Eastern European countries was not higher than 2.77 while the same index among Western European member-states was 6.73 [39]. EU most divided in World on Acceptance of Migrants. Non-EU Europe migrant acceptance index was 4.89 in 2019 while for the European Union it was 5.92 [ibid].

1.2. Historical background

Migrants had and have various reasons for their intentions to get to the destination place. From the historic point of view, there were five time periods of migration in Europe: 1) 1950-1974; 2) 1974-1980; 3) 1990-2012; 4) 2013-2018; 5) 2019-2021.

The first period of migration to Europe (1950s-1974) was connected with Guest Worker Schemes. After the second World War Western Europe was economically thriving. Nevertheless, local workers were not willing to do unhealthy and poorly paid jobs, so European governments initiated the process of recruiting laborers from other countries. The migrant workers were granted few rights and almost no welfare support. At that time, international migration was positively viewed due to its economic benefits [7].

The second period of migration flow (1974-1980s) coincided with the oil crisis (1973-1974) and increase of the migration control. As a result, it reduced the need for labor. European migration population significantly changed and grew during the second period of migration [43, p. 35]. Migrant workers who came under labor recruitment schemes brought their families to the country of location.

The third period (1990s-2012) was connected with the collapse of the USSR. It stimulated migration to Europe. The fourth period lasted from 2013 till 2018. Economic crisis of 2008 affected migration to European countries.

The Balkan migration route had already become popular with migrants in 2012 [44]. The Balkan migration route was the only viable pathway for the massive influx of migrants from the Middle East and Africa. According to the United Nations, 80%

of the almost one million refugees that found shelter in Germany in 2015 passed through this route by either registering at the Presevo centre in Serbia (600,000) or bypassing it and moving on [28].

The fifth migration period (the post-pandemic migration landscape) started in 2021 after the beginning of vaccination.

The Balkan countries faced a significant increase of newly registered migrants and refugees in particular in 2019 compared to 2018. During 2020 the number of registered migrants and refugees was considerably high while other countries reported a decrease in the numbers in comparison to 2019, most likely due to measures against Covid-19 and change of migration routes within the Balkans. In the first four months of 2021, 11,600 migrants were detected at the EU's border with the Western Balkan countries, nearly double the total from the same period of 2020. The two main detected nationalities were Syrians and Afghans [19].

CONCLUSION

Migration by the Balkan route still remains very dynamic, despite all the drawbacks, so it is vitally important that the route to be monitored. Migration to Europe turned out to be more complicated than it was expected. Policy of the EU signifies that this issue was underestimated by the EU experts. The Balkan migration route has a tendency to become a constant source of migrants due to the war in Syria, Afghanistan and other hot spots.

Analysis of the Balkan migration route during 2001-2021 proved that in many cases Europe remains migrants' priority due to numerous reasons. The attitude of the EU member-states citizens (destination spots) is much more positive than the attitude of in the Balkan countries (transit ones).

Taking into consideration the tendency of migration increasing in the near future it is urgent to implement new programs for migrants in the destination and the transit countries. Transit countries and countries of destination should apply new approaches in order to improve the governance of migrant integration into community life and activities. It will help local authorities better coordinate their efforts, policy areas

(housing, education, employment, health care) as well as activities of migrants and locals.

Migration is an indispensable part of the modern world, so it deserves serious analysis and attitude.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS. This article offers a preliminary sketch of the migration via the Balkan route with perspective of further research of migration into the EU considering the activity of the international, national, European and local organizations.

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