



Migration Challenges in the Western Balkans

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Aim

- To analyse the recent migration dynamics, typologies and flows in Western Balkans and in Europe.
- The role of migration (refugees) crisis
- The role of the economic crisis
- Evaluate how WB migrants are coping and their position in the labour markets of destination countries



Structure

- New migration in/within/out Western Balkans
 - Origin
 - Destination
 - Transit
- Economic Crisis and Migration
 - Labour markets
 - Austerity, gender and return
 - Working migrants situation in the labour market
- Challenges
 - Academic and Policy



Problem Statement

- ❏ Western Balkan countries are trying to manage large waves of migrants, out, in and return
- ❏ They lack the adequate institutions, legal and policy framework to manage the flows
- ❏ They have additional internal economic, social and political constraints.
- ❏ Struggling with the pressure to comply with EU law as part of their EU accession agreements

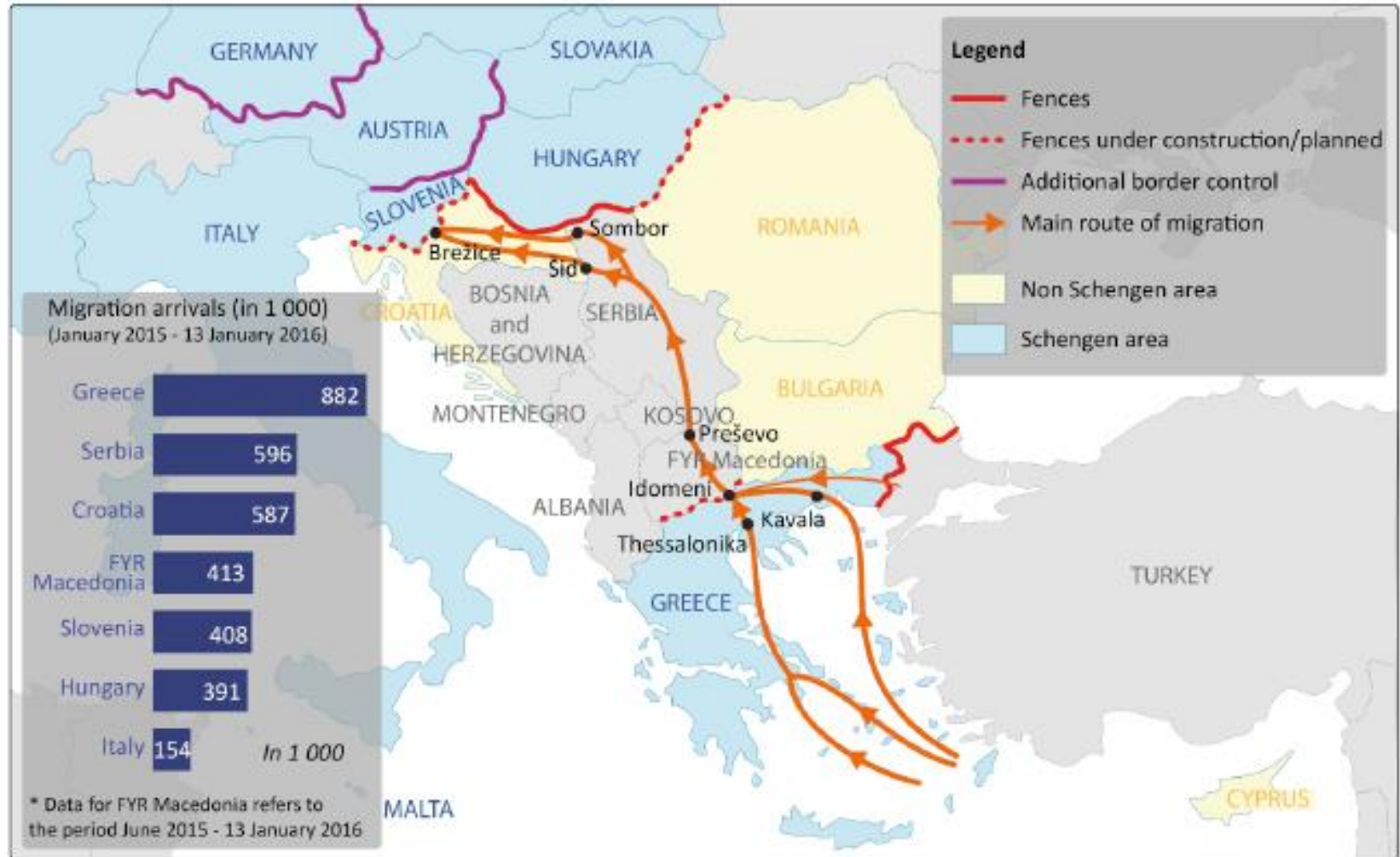


Sending and Receiving Refugees

- Receiving - growing numbers of refugees. Macedonia and Serbia as transit to Western Europe, but also Albania.
- Sending - In 2015 more than 40% of the requests for asylum in Germany were from the western Balkans nationals. 28% from Kosovo, (32% from Syria).



Figure 1 – Migration arrivals in the EU in 2015

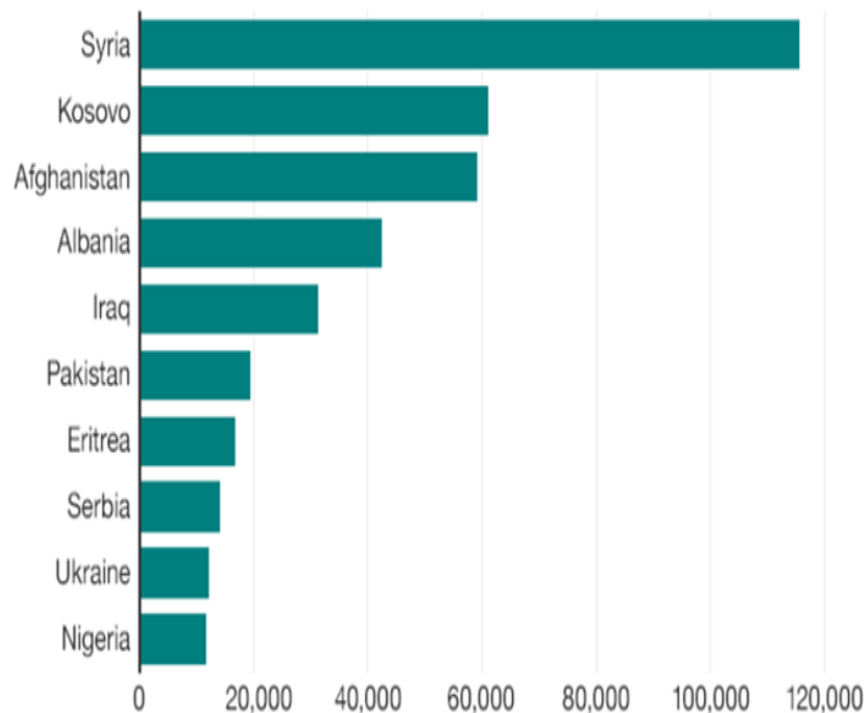


Map by Giulio Sabbati, EPRS; Data source: International Organization for Migration ([IOM](http://www.iom.int)), 2015.

Economic Migrants VS Refugees

Top 10 origins of people applying for asylum in the EU

Jan–Aug 2015



Source: Eurostat

BBC

- Kosovo
 - difficult economic conditions
 - High unemployment rates
 - Visa restrictions system which makes it difficult to legitimate travel to EU countries.
- Albania
 - triggered by the return migrants.
- Both are considered to be safe countries of origin meaning that most asylum application will not get through



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Economic Crisis and Migration

- On a global scale, the effects of the economic crisis on migration stocks and flows have been surprisingly muted:
 - Reduced immigration flows
 - Some return migration.
 - Remittances fell by 6% during 2008-09, but almost immediately recovered in 2009-10, and have grown since then.



Triple Win - Before the crisis

For the destination country

- extra supply of 'free labour', cheap and flexible, willing to do any job
- improve growth and competitiveness; increases consumer demand and tax revenues
- brings cultural and ethnic diversity → multicultural society

For the source country

- unemployment reduced; increases well-being of rest of the population
- generates remittances, important at household, community and national levels
- returning migrants bring back capital, training from abroad and new ideas ('social remittances')

For the migrants

- relief of unemployment and poverty; higher wages (worth more in home country)
- able to achieve life goals – build a house, buy land, invest in farm or business, pay health bills, educate children
- gain new experiences, broaden horizons etc.



BUT – Following the Crisis

- *For the receiving country* – immigrants ‘take our jobs’ and drive down wages; fiscal ‘burden’ of family migration; cultural ‘difference’ seen as threat to national identity
- *For the sending country* – Less remittances, emigration is socially and demographically selective; brain/skill drain; returnees find it hard to re-integrate
- *For the migrants* – unemployment; underground economy, exploitation in 3D jobs; racism and discrimination; separation from family



Labor market flexibilization

- ❏ Austerity, labour market deregulation, and non-standard forms of employment lead to segmentation of the labour market and the risk of marginalization of the labour forces based on gender and ethnicity
- ❏ Differential inclusion for labor migrants incorporated into the labor force and excluded in other spheres - welfare system; citizenship; political participation.
- ❏ The normative ties between employment, welfare entitlements and the right to stay in the country might lead vicious circle of precarity



Austerity and Gender

- Economic crisis hit mostly the male (migrants) dominated sectors of economy while migrant women did increasingly enter the labor force mainly service sector
- Migrant women in the domestic and cleaning sectors are increasingly establishing a category of gendered labour which is often the most flexible, cheap, exploitable, the least demanding and compliant



Austerity and Return

- One of the coping strategies in these hard times has been returning to origin country.
- A massive return, might, potentially have negative consequences for the countries of origin.
- but also for the returnees who might not be able to reintegrate in their origin countries



The Migrant Worker through the crisis

- Acceptance of substandard conditions of employment
- Framing: "we are better workers than natives: less complaining, cheaper, more flexible, so we should get the jobs"
- Also a strong valuation of work as a good in itself – but need to prove themselves to management/society
- Tendency to view their situations as temporary
 - Paying their dues, or earning to return
 - Up or out



Work at the University of Jyväskylä

- Academy of Finland funded project entitled “Industrial Citizenship and Labour Mobility in the EU” (2013-2017) with PI Nathan Lillie
- RRPP funded project “Industrial Citizenship and Labour Migration from Western Balkans (2014-2016) with PI Erka Caro

- Diverse migration trends, contexts and migrant population
 - Albanian, Estonian, Kosovar
 - Italy, Greece, Finland, Germany, Switzerland
 - Labor migration, labor markets, welfare regimes, austerity, gender
 - Diverse types of migration: return, permanent, temporary, circular, refugees,
 - Biographic accounts
 - Our data base 244 biographies and 192 expert interviews



Western Balkans Labor Migrants

- Western Balkans migrants in Europe have shown themselves to be flexible and adaptable during the crisis – up to a point. They trade on their reputation as ‘hard’ and ‘good’ workers, and are willing to cut costs (if in business) or accept lower wages than ‘native’ workers. They may move, partially or completely, back into the informal economy in order to survive, and as needs dictate.
- However, their options are not endless: crisis reveals their precarious nature and their lack of power in terms of defending their rights. They are individualists for the most part, and unwilling to join trade unions and associations
- For those who do return, there are challenges of reintegration, both socially and economically, as well as in terms of identity – where do I truly belong?



Western Balkan Academic and Policy Challenges

- It is a fact that a very high number of recent migrants are not located in the Western Europe, but in developing countries which are carrying the burden of providing for a high number of migrants.
- However, most of the media and academic attention is put on what is happening in the West.
- The emerging legislation, asylum systems and migration policies in Western Balkans countries are insufficient to deal with the challenges posed by this new developments
- There is a need to acknowledge the importance of migration journeys and paths, aiming to construct the scarce capacities
- It is much likely that in a not so far away future the Balkans will stop to be an emigration and transit area to become a fully immigration region



Western Europe

Academic and Policy Challenges

- ❏ Labour market management, TCN rights and rights for irregular migrants. Temporary work contracts and circular, individual migration should have opportunities to permanent residency and family reunification
- ❏ Efficient system of asylum at the EU and national level and in transit countries
- ❏ Providing for customized integration policies that take into account both the old and new realities of migration



THANK YOU



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