

ALBANIA IN THE WESTERN BALKANS ROUTE

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List of Acronyms

AfD	Alternative for Germany
BCP	Border Crossing Point
CEC	Civil Emergency Committee
CDU	Christian Democratic Union of Germany
CSU	Christian Social Union in Bavaria
EU	European Union
FRONTEX	European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union
HSS	Hanns-Seidel Stiftung
IOM	International Organization for Migration
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
SPD	Social Democratic Party of Germany
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WBR	The Western Balkans Route
WB6	The Western Balkans Six (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia and the Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia)

Foreword: the Vienna Summit and Migration

The importance of Western Balkan countries in guarding the external borders of EU became apparent in summer 2015 after the statement of Austria's foreign minister Sebastian Kurz: *"If we do not have functional border controls at the external borders of the European Union, the whole idea of a European Union without borders inside is in danger"*. The discovery of a lorry containing the corpses of 50 dead refugees on an Austrian motorway in August 2015 jolted the European politics and brought the migration component into the Vienna Summit. Migration became a mainstream EU policy, and the EU cooperation, a *sine-qua-non* condition for its success.

EU High Representative Federica Mogherini made it clear the need for collaboration in Vienna summit: *"I know that I can count – we can count – not only on our Member States, but also on our friends in the Balkans to share this responsibility and solidarity."*

Following the actuality, the challenges posed by migration pressures for the countries of the region, and the implications of the "Balkans route", were the main topics of the Vienna Summit. The principles of commitment to a European migration policy, based on criteria of solidarity and equity and the need to help the Balkan countries to manage the situation were the basis of discussion.

The Heads of States and Governments from EU and Western Balkans participating in the Summit agreed that, for a common challenge, a common response was needed.

The Berlin Process Series: a contribution of civil society in regional integration

This Working Paper analyses the context, policies and actions of the Albanian Government following the Western Balkans Route impact on the country and the respective conclusions of the Vienna Summit of August 2015. The study took place from November 2015 until June 2016 and included desk review, media monitoring, interviews and field visits.

The Berlin Process Series started in November 2015 in Tirana as an initiative of the Cooperation and Development Institute/Shtetiweb supported by Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Hanns Seidel Stiftung, and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (see: <http://cdinstitute.eu/web/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/ANGLISHT.pdf>). It is conceived as a part of a wider contribution of Western Balkans Civil Society in the Berlin Process.

A complete library on the Berlin Process and selected themes of Western Balkans 6 integration, can be consulted at the **Observatory of Regional Integration**, at <http://shtetiweb.org/studime-dhe-analiza-4/>

This Working Paper is supported by Hanns Seidel Stiftung.

I. The Start, the Tide, the Flux and the Stop

Over a million of people from Middle East, North Africa and Asia arrived in the EU in 2015, making it the biggest migration of people in Europe since Balkan Wars of the 1990s. The Western Balkans Route (WBR) emerged in the 2nd half of 2015. It started in Northern Greece and continued through Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia, and Slovenia, into Austria and then Germany and Northern Europe. While quasi-constant in its geographical path, the Route has seen wild variations of the migrant flux, following the decision-making in the end-destination countries. In its beginning, Albania was not concerned.

In August 2015, German Chancellor Angela Merkel declared that all Syrian asylum-seekers could stay in Germany – notwithstanding the EU country they had first entered.¹ *“There can be no tolerance of those who question the dignity of other people,”* she said. *“There is no tolerance of those who are not ready to help, where, for legal and humanitarian reasons, help is due.”*²

By end of 2015, the WBR itinerary was used by the large majority of migrants reaching the EU. Daily arrivals in Macedonia reached 10,000 in October 2015. Feeling the pressure mounting on its Southern border, the Albanian government prepared the *“Contingency Plan for Possible Mass Influx of Migrants and Asylum Seekers at the Albanian Border”*.

In November 2015, Slovenia decided to return the migrants from non-war countries back to Croatia. Immediately Macedonia, Serbia and Croatia introduced their own restrictive measures to selected nationalities. In early 2016 Austria and Germany limited the number of migrants entering their border to only asylum-seekers. Days later Austria added a *numerus clausus* at the asylum requests to only 80 per day while only 3,200 per day were allowed to transit to Germany.

Faced with closed borders up north, in February 2016 Macedonia erected a second fence in its Greek border. Reinforcing the “shutting up signal”, the members of Visegrad Group joined by Serbia, Croatia and Austria, sent police units to support the Macedonian border police.

By 29 February the Macedonian – Greek border was closed, causing a violent clash between migrants wanting to cross it and the Macedonian police. However, migrant boats kept reaching the Greek islands swelling their numbers. The results of the EU - Turkey Summit of March 18th 2016, effectively stopped the tide.

Albania could breathe. No mass influx of migrants had happened through its borders. In March 2016, the national contingency plan was reviewed to reflect the diminished risk.

¹The Independent, *Germany opens its gates: Berlin says all Syrian asylum-seekers are welcome to remain, as Britain is urged to make a 'similar statement’*, 24.09.2015:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/germany-opens-its-gates-berlin-says-all-syrian-asylum-seekers-are-welcome-to-remain-as-britain-is-10470062.html>

² The Guardian, *“Angela Merkel’s humane stance on immigration is a lesson to us all”*, 30.09.2015: <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/aug/30/immigration-asylumseekers-refugees-migrants-angela-merkel>

II. Albania is not a migrant destination country

In 2015 there were 2,047³ migrants registered with Albanian Authorities. The evolution of their number per month is inversely correlated with the *pull factors* outside Albania: the (i) open door policy of Germany and, (ii) the closure of the Border in Austria which caused a chain reaction down to the Macedonian – Greek border.

The “welcome” call of Chancellor Merkel resulted in lower to none entries in Albania in the 2nd half of 2015. The Macedonian government decision to issue a 72-hour residence permit to all migrants going through Macedonia made the crossing through Albania irrelevant. On the other side, the border closures spurred by the Austrian decision of 26 January 2016 were translated in relatively higher numbers of individuals trying to pass through the Albanian route. According to Albanian Border Police the illegal crossings of Syrian migrants in 2015 totaled 1,354 (while Eritrean comes second with 171 and Somalian nationals were third with 118 individuals).

According to data from the Asylum Directorate at the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the overall requests for asylum in Albania have dwindled down to a total of five during the first four months of 2016, none of them coming from Syrian nationals. There were 134 asylum seekers registered in 2014, and 106 in 2015 (out of which 80 from Syria).

The data above confirms the hypothesis that Albania is not the end destination for the migrants stranded in Greece. This conclusion is valid for the other WB6 countries.⁴

III. Albania is not a preferred transit country

The research and interviews conducted with refugees in Kozani, EKO station in Evzoni and in Idomeni, with the Albanian Border police and other Government structures involved in the control and management of migration crisis, have identified two Albanian scenarios characterizing the incoming migrant flux:

In the *Regular Transit* scenario, the migrants are registered in the Border Crossing entry Point (BCP) and then are free to enter and/or leave the country. This scenario corresponds to the pre-Macedonian border-closing period. This scenario did not materialise because of the following *Albanian endogenous factors* - all increasing the “degree of difficulty” and/or lowering the “attractiveness factor” of Albania as compared to going through Macedonia:

- access to public transport infrastructure is way more difficult than in neighboring Macedonia. Migrants must walk/travel by taxi approximately 31 km from the entry BCP to the closest city (Kapshtice - Korçe, or Kakavija-Gjrokaster) to get into the meaningful public transport. In Macedonia they can walk between three to four hours from Idomeni to the big border town of Gevgelija (circa 12 km);

³ Interview with Enkelejda Toska, Border and Migration General Directorate, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Tirana, 27.04.2016

⁴ At the Gate of Europe: A report on Refugees on the Western balkans Route, from S. Selo Sabic and S. Boric, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and Dialog SudOst Europa, Zagreb May 2016

- non-existing mass transport infrastructure: there are no railway connections with the international railway network in Albania. In Macedonian border town Gevgelija migrants can board a train that brings them up to Serbian border;
- transport cost is higher through Albania because of parceled/non-integrated public transport. Even if the train tickets to cross Macedonia from South to North went up five times (equivalent of 36 EUR), it is still cheaper and less complicated than Albania;
- the number of borders to cross before reaching an EU country is higher. From Albania migrants either would go through Blue Border to Italy (expensive), or through Kosovo/Montenegro which would add unnecessarily extra borders to cross during the itinerary.

For the first time since 1479 – the year when conquered Scanderbeg’s Albania became the faraway province of the Ottoman Empire - being situated at the periphery and not integrated in European transport networks, was beneficial to Albania.

IV. Albania is a very difficult country to reach illegally or to transit through

In the *Illegal Transit* scenario – relevant after the closure of the Greek – Macedonian border, migrants entered illegally through the Green Border (land border between BCP Albania - Greece). This path goes through rough terrain and requires the accompanying of local guides. The Green Border transit has been the preferred migration route of Albanians to Greece after the fall of the regime. Thousands and thousands have illegally crossed it in search of a better life in Greece. Still today there are reports of Albanians using it (8,932 Albanians are reported to have used it in 2015)⁵.

However even if this access road has seen its relevance increased after the Macedonian – Greek border was closed, the number of migrants using it to reach Albania has remained largely irrelevant. There are three main factors that explain the “low attractiveness” of the country as a transit destination:

- the *geography and winter weather 2015 - 2016*: the closure of the Macedonian border happened in the winter period which is characterized by cold and rainy weather. The mountainous and forestry relief of the Green Border makes it very difficult for migrants to go through, especially when the groups are composed by old people, women and children;
- *border management of Albanian government*: an increased number of Albanian border police has been allocated in the Green Border area to prevent illegal trespassing. In March 2016, the Albanian media reported a reinforcement of BCP in the Greek and Macedonian border with additional 450 Special Forces (although temporarily) from Tirana, Fieri and Shkodra⁶. Existing border police have seen their working

⁵ Annual Risk Analysis 2016, FRONTEX, <http://frontex.europa.eu/news/frontex-publishes-risk-analysis-for-2016-NQuBFv>

⁶ “Shqiperia blindon kufirin me Maqedonine”, KOHA newspaper, 4.03. 2016,

- time duration extended by at least an extra 10%. Also 25 live scanners – assuring a 24hour monitoring of border area - are fully operational, out of which 11 in Kakavija and 5 in Kapshtica BCP⁷;
- *Albanian government communication policy*: after the first mumbled messages⁸, the Albanian government has been very clear on its Border policy and the impossibility for Albania to become a transit country. The position has been coordinated with EU, and the message has been “if you came to Albania either you ask for asylum, or you will be returned” and “everything will be decided in close cooperation with our EU partners”. PM Rama stated that Albania could not hold “the entire burden. ... I have said that in case of a distribution of the burden we shall take our part.”⁹ This closed border stance has caused some frictions with some segments of political life in neighboring Greece, while the official cooperation amongst the two countries’ Border Management authorities has been stated as optimal.

V. EU Visa Liberalization hit hard the business of people smuggling

The entry in force of visa liberalization in 2011 made the illegal entry of EU borders an unnecessary act. As a result, the massive human trafficking through the sea has disappeared as a phenomenon. Every Albanian national holding a valid passport can enter the EU. So “the trafficking service” offered by Albanian mafia became un-necessary and its actors moved in other criminality sectors (drugs, etc.). The absence of existing Albanian “mafia” networks facilitating illegal transit through the country did also play an important role. Hence the eventual “trafficking supply” resulting from the migrant crisis, found no available specialized criminal market for human trafficking.

The illegal traffic through the Blue Border (i.e. from Albanian coast towards Italy through the Adriatic or Ionian Sea) has been one of the major concerns of the Albanian government. The blue border has been shut close to human trafficking - up to May 2016 zero illegal traffic involving migrants has been reported through the Adriatic Sea by Albanian or/and Italian authorities. Undoubtedly, this is a major achievement for Albanian authorities and for their cooperation with Italian authorities and FRONTEX.

For the “potential new entrants in the people smuggling market” that wanted to profit from the “available clientele of Syrian migrants”, the blockage of the Blue Border did made their work extremely difficult. To move a migrant from Idomeni to Puglia required access to migrant community in Greek camps, efficient trafficking networks for the Albania - Greece Green Border, moving the migrants through Albania, embarking them

<http://fax.al/read/news/2933195/11222196/shqipëria-blindon-kufirin-me-maqedoninë>

⁷ Interview with staff in BCP Kapshtica, 28.04.2016

⁸ “Albania would not build a wall to prevent refugees and other migrants from entering”, statement by Klajda Gjoshaj, Minister of European Integration, <http://www.balkan.eu.com/albania-not-ready-refugees/>

⁹ Ekathimerini, “Albania will not become the new route for migrants, Rama says”, 26.02.2016 <http://www.ekathimerini.com/206380/article/ekathimerini/news/albania-will-not-become-the-new-route-for-migrants-rama-says>

for Italy hoping that both Italian and Albanian coastguards will be outmaneuvered. To be efficient, the people smuggling business needs establishment of connections with refugee camps in Greece and even further in Turkey. Such a complex organization and the needed logistics makes this trajectory and its cost very un-attractive¹⁰.

An indicator of the absent structures and mechanisms to access the “available migrant supply” in Greek camps, is the seemingly relative difficulty of migrants stranded in Greece to get information and get in contact with potential traffickers. The Facebook pages (in English and Arabic) set up to create such a market show the low degree of integration of the different logistic chains needed to set up a well-organized operation (see a Facebook print-screen in Annex 1);

The last argument contributing to the low attractiveness of the Albanian route is the inconvenience for the migrants to leave an EU country such as Greece, to go through a non-EU country like Albania (or more if they choose to go north to Montenegro and/or Kosovo) in order to access another EU country such as Italy.

VI. Cost-benefit analysis of human trafficking through Albania towards Italy

Smuggling people is a lucrative business. The Migrants’ Files estimates that over the past fifteen years, refugees have paid a staggering EUR 16 billion to travel to Europe¹¹. However today a cost-benefit analysis of human trafficking through Albania does not favor this type of criminal activity when compared with other types of smuggling “available to established traffickers”. The sea transport of illicit substances, while sensibly stopped, currently offers a higher return/kg than the smuggling people into south of Italy. According to Guardia di Finanza¹² referring to the latest drug shipment caught in Puglia, the “imported marijuana costs around EUR 1,000/kg. If you move it to Milan the detail prices go up by another EUR 700-800”. So transporting a bag of 70 kg of marijuana from Vlora to Brindisi generates a return of EU 70,000 (minus the acquisition cost in Albania). For a migrant person weighting 70 kg, the asking price to move it to Puglia cannot be more than EUR 3,000 to EUR 5,000.

The complexity of transporting people makes their smuggling through the sea a high-risk low-benefit operation compared to drugs. An additional argument is that in case of being chased by the Coast Guards, the drug smugglers can throw the drugs overboard into the sea to make disappear any trace of illegal activity. With human beings, this practice is very

¹⁰ the adaptive skills and opportunistic behavior of human traffic networks, appeared early June 2016 when the UK media reported on the existence of a Albanian-smuggling ring trafficking people from northern France to UK. A boat carrying 18 Albanian migrants, including two children, was rescued off Dymchurch in Kent after getting into difficulties: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3618779/Now-desperate-Albanians-camp-storm-hit-sea-CLIFFS-Dieppe-hope-UK.html#ixzz4Anpqyn7y>

¹¹The Migrants’ File, <http://www.themigrantsfiles.com>

¹² Criminalita, nei campi fra Bari e Brindisi le piste segrete per gli aerei dei clan con armi e droga”, F. Russi, La Repubblica, http://bari.repubblica.it/cronaca/2016/05/28/news/aerei_della_droga-140756881/

risky as they will be charged with manslaughter, on top of smuggling offences.

Regarding the purchasing power of the “*target client group*”, for a family of four migrants the amount to pay to cross Adriatic will go up to anything between EUR 12,000 – 20,000. The migrants we interviewed in Greek camps told us that to cross from Turkey to Greece they’ve paid traffickers anything between USD 700 to USD 2,000 per individual. Clearly they were unprepared to disburse another significant amount to cross from Greece to Italy. Having left their country of origin before the closure of the Macedonian – Greek border, they were mentally and financially ready to pay significantly much less to reach their final destination (see illustrative photo in Annex 2).

The scenarios of massive human trafficking from Albania to Puglia shores through Adriatic have not materialized. Faced with the virtual closure of the Blue Border, the traffickers have moved from using high-powered boats into light planes, which are unappropriate for human trafficking, as well as being very expensive to operate. Currently they are specialized in moving illegally to Italy other “products” than people, as indicated by the 2015 Annual Report against the Drugs from Italian Council of Ministers¹³.

The “business model” of people smugglers is built on an imbalance between migrant pressure and border impermeability. Even if the Blue Border Albania – Italy is effectively closed, the number of asylum seekers and other migrants driven to Europe (and potentially crossing through Albania) by wars, hope and better life prospects will certainly increase. Europol estimates that this illegal market now generating a turnover of some USD 6.6 billion annually could triple in size over the next few years. With the ever-increasing demand, if the price to cross from Albania to Puglia reaches the break-even, smugglers will review their business calculation. On the long term, preventing human trafficking remains an uphill struggle.

VII. Legal framework on migration in the Republic of Albania

The Legal framework regulating the reception and treatment of migrants in Albania has evolved significantly during the last decade. After the Visa Liberalization in 2008, and based on the many International agreements signed by the Republic of Albania, it can be mention in chronological order:

- Law on Border Control and Surveillance 2008
- Law on Aliens 108/2013
- Law on Asylum 121/2014
- National Strategy on Integrated Border Management and its Action Plan 2014-2020
- By-laws/Secondary legislation, enacted mainly by the Ministry of Internal Affairs;

¹³ “La Relazione Annuale al Parlamento su droga e dipendenze 2015”,
<http://www.politicheantidroga.gov.it/attivita/pubblicazioni/relazioni-al-parlamento/relazione-annuale-2015/presentazione.aspx>

- Agreement between the Directorate of Albanian State Police and State Social Service “On joint measures for the receipt and social treatment of unaccompanied minors returned/readmitted from other countries 2014

The most used legal instrument in the situation in question is the Law on Asylum and Law on Aliens – both promulgated only 2 – 3 years ago and fully compatible with the EU legislation. Also the existences of 12 Bilateral Readmission Agreements, complemented with Implementation Protocols have facilitated the work of Albanian authorities (Border Police) in cases on illegal trespassing.

VIII. Measures undertaken by Albanian authorities: November 2015 - April 2016

In October under the lead of Ministry of Internal Affairs, was produced the “*Contingency Plan for Possible Mass Influx of Migrants and Asylum Seekers at the Albanian Border*”, to be implemented in case of a crisis situation. This document aimed mostly on the setting of the institutional landscape and respective procedures for a durable stay of a high number of migrants, up 1,000 a day, broken in two different fluxes from each main Border Crossing Point (initially though as Kapshtica and Kakavija). As a result this plan was focused mostly on setting up and operationalizing processing and transit centers.

As the expected migrant mass influx did not materialize, in March 2016 an update of this Contingency Plan was prepared, scaling back the emergency factor and putting the onus this time on the mobility and speed of response to an eventual more moderate influx.

Based on the model of the Civil Emergency Committee (CEC), it has been planned to set up a Migration Crisis Coordination Center at central level lead by the Minister of Interior and with members from all the relevant ministries. This central structure is to be complemented by Local Migration Crisis Coordination Centers established at the local government level led by Prefects (in the Qark of Korça and Vlora).

Given that during this period no relevant flux materialized, the reception capacity and management of the Centers for Asylum Seekers (in Babrru and Livadhja) and Centers for Irregular Migrants (in Karrec and Dragot) have not been put to test. Due to the importance of border management, the onus shifted from reception, registration and accompanying, to: (i) interception; (ii) interviewing - Asylum Seekers, Victims of Trafficking, Irregular Migrants; (iii) registration in the database (IT System)¹⁴; and (iv) Real time fingerprint scanning (connected to the central fingerprint database).

Also facilities have been set up in the BCPs of Kapshtica and Kakavija, complemented with services such as specific rooms for the returnees (women and unaccompanied minors), medical care, food and water, translation in migrants’ languages, access to a Social worker, and transportation if needed.

The importance of Border Management in this situation shifted the overall operational responsibility to the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The Border and Migration General

¹⁴ The identification and registration is not compatible and inter-changeable with EURODAC, the EU system

Directorate (BMGD) has been the lead institution in the overall management of this situation. It is here that the bulk of information is processed, and the data is produced. BMGD has closely coordinated with the Closed Reception Center for Irregular Migrants, the Antiterrorism Directorate, the General Directorate for Public Security, and the General Directorate against Serious Crimes on each component or expected implication. Line ministries and agencies such as the Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Health, State Social Service etc., are involved as per their sector of activity.

Other state structures actively involved in migrant management is the Center of Maritime Inter-Institutional Cooperation based in Durres, which oversees the Blue Border. NGOs such as Refugee and Migrant Services in Albania, Observatory for Children Rights, and other local citizen initiatives have been actively involved as well. On the ground local NGOs such as Dorcas Relief & Development in Prefecture of Korça and Caritas in Prefecture of Gjirokastra have been reported by the local Border Police authorities to have been very active in helping the incoming migrants¹⁵.

¹⁵ interviews with Dashmir Spaho, Director of Migration and Border Police Korca Prefecture, and Arjan Feri, , and Director of Migration and Border Police, Gjirokaster Prefecture

IX. Procedures of institutional cooperation on migration with international partners

The response of Albanian government has been coordinated with EU partners and the specialized international organizations such as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), International Organization for Migration (IOM), Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), FRONTEX, etc. The coordination efforts have been organized based on the functioning of the already-existing Civil Emergency Committee (CEC). Indicating the strategic importance of this subject, a National Coordinator has been appointed reporting directly to the Prime Minister's Office, while the institutional coordination has been put under the competencies of the Deputy Prime Minister's Office.

On top of the close cooperation with the international organizations established in Albania, the Albanian government has established and entertains very close and intense cooperation with EU structures, the regional Western Balkan 6 (WB6) structures, as well as on bilateral level with the neighbours. The most important are:

- International cooperation with EU/FRONTEX on a strategic level. The contact point is the Advisor of Prime Minister on Security, (who is the National Coordination on Migration). The procedure consists in daily exchange of information on border crossings in Albania and in other WB6 borders;
- Regional cooperation with Network of Directors of Border Police with WB6 and other neighbor countries of EU,
- Bilateral cooperation with the Center of Exchange in Macedonia, mainly to exchange data and to profit from their experience (also with Serbia).

In conclusion, the position of Albania on migrant fluxes is decided in close coordination with EU partners. The Albanian border will remain closed unless it is opened as agreed with the EU (and Germany). Below we present some hypothetical illustrating maps of migrant routes through Albania, in case the Macedonia border is closed and Albania's is open. However at this moment this scenario has a very low probability to happen.



Map 1. Greece - Albania - Montenegro Route



Map 2. Greece - Albania - Italy Route (+ Montenegro)

X. Some data on migratory flux in Albania for 2016

The total number of migrants crossing the Albanian border from the 1st of January until the 28th of May 2016 equals a total of 303. The overwhelming number comes from Greece and has reached Albania through Kakavija Border Crossing Point (137 persons). In mid-April, for the first time there have been registered entries in Tre Urat Border Crossing Point (7 persons). This Border Crossing Point being close to the new refugee centers recently opened in north-west of Greece nearby the Albanian border such as Kozani (hosting 413 refugees) and in Konitsa (hosting 150 refugees), may eventually illustrate the increasing *push factor* characterized by the: a) geographical proximity of the new refugee centers to the Albanian border; and b) the intensification of tensions in the refugee camps in Idomeni, EKO Station and other “wild refugee camp” structures set up close to the Macedonian border and the deterioration of the staying conditions in there.

The data regarding the border crossings into Albania during the first trimester of 2016 are as below:

Table 1: Number of migrants entered Albania¹⁶
January-May 2016

Year 2016	
Month	Number of migrants
January	53
February	19
March	41
April	67
May	123
Total	303

It is interesting to also notice that:

a) Four migrants were stopped while entering illegally the border of Albania with Montenegro;

¹⁶ Interview with Michael Gumprich and Christian Weiss, German Embassy in Albania.

b) Migrants move in groups: out of 36 cases, only in 10 occasions there were single individuals. The biggest group counted 18; c) Migrant groups tempting the Albanian route are normally composed by individuals of the same nationality.

Table 2: Asylum seekers in Albania from 2014 to 2016¹⁷
(Nationalities and total number)

January-December 2014		January-December 2015	
Kosovo	8	Eritrea	7
Iraq	1	Syria	80
Ukraine	1	Afghanistan	3
Eritrea	11	Sudan	4
Iran	1	Somalia	1
Sudan	2	Iraq	1
Gambia	3	Ukraine	3
South Africa	1	Gabon	1
Lebanon	1	Cameroon	2
Dagestan	1	FYROM	2
Azerbaijan	5	Kosovo	1
Afghanistan	2		1
Syria	97	Congo	
TOTAL	134	TOTAL	106

Table 3: Asylum seekers in Albania, January- May 2016¹⁸
(Nationalities and total number)

January-May 2016			
Nationality	Number	Nationality	Number
Morocco	62	Pakistan	12
Syria	63	Algeria	7
Palestine	3	Yemen	1
Iran	5	Afghanistan	68
Somalia	13	Iraq	30
Libya	2	Gambia	1
Mali	3	Nigeria	1
Sudan	1	Congo	19
Eritrea	3	Cameroon	6
Rwanda	1	Central Africa	2
Total	156	Total	147
Grand Total		303	

¹⁷ Interview with Alma Mele, Asylum Directorate, Ministry of Internal Affairs.

¹⁸ Interview with Alma Mele, Asylum Directorate, Ministry of Internal Affairs.

XI. The future of migration: persistence of push factors

a) *The push factors are expected to continue unabated.* The migration phenomenon is here to stay in a national, regional and global level. More people will keep trying to risk even their life to join Europe's shores. The indisputable pull factor is the democratic system and economic well-being. The push factors causing significant and permanent displacement of populations can be classified as below:

1. the *persisting wars* in different regions of the world, as illustrated by increasing conflicts and political unrest in Middle East and Africa;
2. *humanitarian crisis* in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Central African Republic, Somalia, Nigeria and Ukraine;
3. *weak governance, failed state projects*, unwillingness to save the human rights in South Sudan, Somalia, Central African Republic, Syria and Afghanistan;
4. *draughts*: global forced displacements (59.5 million in 2015)¹⁹, where one of the most serious is due to draughts. There is a connection between water stress and conflict in the Middle East, Libya, Gaza, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

b) *"EU will continue its passive approach".* In its Annual Risk Analysis 2016, FRONTEX Scenario 2 "Passive European Union - Fear and passivity leads to mistrust, security focus and walling-off", has been assessed as the "future image closed to the current status"²⁰. It is based on a situation where "a politically and economically fragmented world faces an increasing number of conflicts. The EU stopped enlargement and turned into a loose and economically oriented alliance of Member States with a low level of political and societal integration. Member States act completely differently on migration and asylum policies. This leads to more internal border controls even within the Schengen area. Migration pressure on EU borders is highly related to the volatile global conflicts: Numbers of refugees, countries of origin, routes and affected borders sections change permanently. Despite differing migration policies, the control of EU external borders is a common interest with high priority on security. In reality foreign policies remain passive and there are only few concerted actions in border management"²¹.

The push factors described above will face a closed up Europe, with closed societies and no willingness for integration. The political developments in major EU countries corroborate this situation:

- in Austria, extreme right has shaken the country politics. The traditional political elites were taken aback by Hofer's dramatic rise. Only a massive mobilization - by Austrians migrants voting through postal vote - barred the road to extreme right coming to power, with an extremely thin margin;
- in France, the National Front is the front runner in the upcoming presidential polls planned for 2017, with a clear anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim public discourse;

¹⁹ European Commission, Forced Displacement – refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs), April 2016, pg.2. http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/aid/countries/factsheets/thematic/refugees_en.pdf

²⁰ Annual Risk Analysis 2016, FRONTEX, 2016

²¹ idem

- in Germany, all traditional parties (CDU, SPD, CSU, Greens, etc.) are alarmed by the increasing support for the nationalist and anti-immigrant Alternative for Germany (AfD). AfD made big gains in recent regional elections, siphoning support away from conservatives and particularly from the SPD (the latest having hit a new low in opinion polls, falling to just 20 percent²²).

Under this scenario the EU would be following a slower/no WB6 integration policy, prolonging the process of the negotiating and candidate countries, and future candidate countries. This would make the process tiring for the Applicants and long, requiring a lot of human, political and economic investment by those countries trying to be part of the EU, or simply remaining in the integration path.

c) Turkey: the EUR 6 billion question! EU committed to provide EUR 6 billion (USD 6.7 billion) in return for Turkey taking back refugees who had entered the EU illegally through Greece and offer of visa-free travel for Turks entering the EU²³. Visa-free travel will bring to surface another potential mass-migration challenge: the Kurdish population. Turkish Kurds who have suffered from violations of human rights (including the right to education and security of life) are estimated by the Turkish Human Rights Foundation²⁴ at 1.64 million.

The EU-Turkey deal is hardly working. In May just 177 Syrians have been resettled from Turkey to Europe since the agreement was signed²⁵. The European Parliament and several political parties across Europe are reluctant to grant visa-free travel to Turkey until the agreed conditions are fulfilled. Turks are not very happy neither. The resignation of Turkish PM Davutoglu on the 4th of May has been interpreted as a strong signal to EU on the unhappiness of President Erdogan regarding the “accommodating position” on refugees adopted by his PM during the March negotiations with Angela Merkel.

d) Albania's position: the government, the citizen and the human traffickers. As indicated during this analysis, the Government of Albania has been a model of cooperation with its international partners regarding the component of border management in the Syrian crisis. In November 2015, amongst EU and WB6 partners, it was entertained the option of creation in WB6 of “buffer areas”: camps where migrants will be screened before continuing further into the EU. While brushed aside, this idea comes popping up in different analysis²⁶.

²² Carnegie Europe, “Merkel's Austria Problem, Merkel's Turkey Problem”, 23.05.2016:

<http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/?fa=63645>

²³ provided that Ankara changed its antiterrorism laws, which as of today has proved to be very difficult to enforce

²⁴ Human Rights Foundation of Turkey, “Fact Sheet on Declared Curfews Between August 16, 2015 and April 20, 2016 and Civilians who Lost Their Lives”, April 2016: <http://en.tihv.org.tr/fact-sheet-on-declared-curfews-between-august-16-2015-and-april-20-2016-and-civilians-who-lost-their-lives/>

²⁵ The Guardian, “Erdogan calls on Europe to take in more Syrian refugees”, 23.05.2016.:

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/may/23/erdogan-calls-on-europe-to-take-in-more-syrian-refugees>

²⁶ George Town Journal, “Migrant screening centers in the western Balkans: a necessary evil?”, 29.01.2016: <http://journal.georgetown.edu/migrant-screening-centers-in-the-western-balkans-a-necessary-evil/>

In the case of FRONTEX Scenario 2, following the no/slow integration approach of the EU, the country, Albanian officials and people will eventually feel quite unsatisfied by such a long waiting time and resource-consuming process. This will lead to less commitment to a common position with EU, or a hardening of its bargaining stance towards the EU under the rationale “guarding your southern border costs us money”. Albanian government can leverage its position as a keeper of the external border of EU and / or as a provider of “waiting areas / facilities”.

Below are some projections of probable events happening in Albania under the FRONTEX Scenario 2:

- Lower will/power of Albanian Authorities to exercise border control following a Closed EU without stronger integration perspectives and incentives;
- Increase of influx of illegal migrants entering Albania following growing global conflicts, strong economic migration pressure, and un-coordinated Border Management by individual Member States, leading to social problems;
- Exploitation of the Blue Border by human traffickers (smugglers) considering that illegal migrants would want the least possible steps to reach EU countries.

XII. Impossible conclusion

In 2015, 91% of migrants arriving in Greece originated from the top 10 countries source of refugees in the world. In Lesbos in 2015 48,1% of migrants were Syrian, 33,3% were Afghani and 10,3% were Iraqi. The average asylum acceptance rate in EU for those nationalities is respectively of 98%, 70% and 88%²⁷. It is clear that the appeal to reach EU for those populations will remain for the foreseeable future.

On 24th of May, 400 riot police entered the Idomeni camp at dawn on Tuesday to order the approximately 8,500 camp residents to leave. Elsewhere in Greece, 50,000 refugees have been stuck in limbo since March, when Macedonia blocked the border. Greece has spent circa EUR 280 million handling the refugee crisis since the start of 2015. The European Union has contributed with just under EUR 100 million in recent months²⁸.

The forced relocation of refugees from Idomeni, has resulted in desperate actions. On 29 May, the Greek coastguard has rescued 29 migrants, including two children lost in the Ionian Sea attempting to get to Puglia. Their boat seemed to have been cut adrift by smugglers around 15 nautical miles from the Greek island of Lefkada. It is the first time migrants have been picked up trying to cross to Italy by boat since the Greek land border

²⁷ Buffet. François-Noël (Sénateur), “Raport d’Information sur La Mission de Suivi et de Contrôle du Dispositif Exceptionnel d’accueil des Réfugiés”, No. 422, Le Senat Français, 24 .02. 2016 :

<https://www.senat.fr/notice-rapport/2015/r15-422-notice.html>

²⁸ The Guardian, “Idomeni: Greek riot police move in to clear refugee camp”, 24.05.2016:

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/may/24/idomeni-greek-riot-police-move-in-before-dawn-to-clear-out-refugee-camp>

with Macedonia was closed in March²⁹.

On 25 May in Durrës area, Albanian authorities (the Naval Fleet, Air force, See anti-smuggling Unit, Emigration and Border Police, Operational Inter Institutional Maritime Center and Fishing Inspectorate did a one-day naval exercise (named “Durrresi SAREX 16”) in save and rescue operations³⁰.

On 30th of May 2016 UNHCR Albania launched a tender for 1,500 units of bed linen (blankets, duvets, sheets, mattress, etc³¹). The duvet is specifically asked to be for winter. This was completed with a second tender issued the same day on bed-room and kitchen furniture for the same number³². The country seems to get prepared for the arrival and long-term accommodation of the largest asylum seeker contingent in its modern history – 2,000 mujahedeen announced during the visit of US Vice-President Kerry in February.

On 6th of June PEW Research Centre published the results of an EU-wide survey on attitudes of EU citizen towards an even closer Union. One question dealt with how citizen feel about the way EU is handling the refugee situation. *“Much of the disaffection with the EU among Europeans can be attributed to Brussels’ handling of the refugee issue. In every country surveyed, overwhelming majorities disapprove of how Brussels has dealt with the problem”* – see below the graph³³. Indeed the migration is in the center of the vote about Brexit.

Table 4: How the EU is dealing with the refugee issue

²⁹ Daily Mail, “Migrants find a new route out of Greece - as Turkey threatens deal unless their 80 million citizens are allowed free travel into the EU”, 31.05.2016:

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3616607/Turkey-threatens-tear-migrant-deal-weeks-unless-80-million-citizens-allowed-free-travel-EU.html#ixzz4AWXyDRhN>

³⁰ News Bomb, “Mbyllja e Idomenit, ushtria shqiptare zhvillon stërvitje të gjerë në det”, 26.05.2016: <http://www.newsbomb.al/aktualitet/item/41575-mbyllja-e-idomenit-ushtria-shqiptare-zhvillon-stervitje-te-gjere-ne-det>

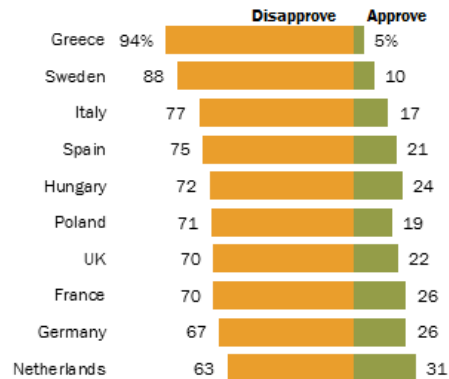
³¹ UNHCR (Albania), “Invitation to BID (ITB)”, 27.05.2016: <http://www.un.org.al/editor-files/file/ITB%20-%20Bedding.pdf>

³² UNHCR (Albania), “Invitation to BID (ITB)”, 27.05.2016: <http://www.un.org.al/editor-files/file/ITB%20-%20Furniture.pdf>

³³ <http://www.pewglobal.org/2016/06/07/euroskepticism-beyond-brexite/>

Overwhelming majorities unhappy with EU's handling of refugees

Do you ___ of the way the European Union is dealing with the refugee issue?



Source: Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey, Q50b.

"Euroskepticism Beyond Brexit"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

On 7 June 2016 the EU Commission announces a “*New Migration Partnership Framework: reinforced cooperation with third countries to better manage migration*”³⁴. The EU’s new migration policy is based on the concept of “*migration management*” implying the fact that migration flows cannot be stopped, but only better managed. In a carrot-and-stick approach, Europe is offering aid, trade and expertise to countries generating most of migrants in the Middle East and north Africa. Those that fail to comply will not get the aid or the trade.

Migration is here to stay as a phenomenon affecting the world, the Europe, the Western Balkans and Albania.

Annex 1:

Screenshot of Facebook page informing would-be illegal migrants on the Albania route

Transit Albania and Italia: <https://www.facebook.com/albantrans/timeline>

In March 2016 was created a Facebook Page called “Transit Albania and Italia” that urged asylum seekers to use the Albanian route to get to the EU. Figure 1 is a screenshot of the

³⁴ http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-16-2072_en.htm

page, which is still active, but not updated since March 29. Figure 2 shows a poster/leaflet that explains the way to transit through Albania and get to Italy by sea.

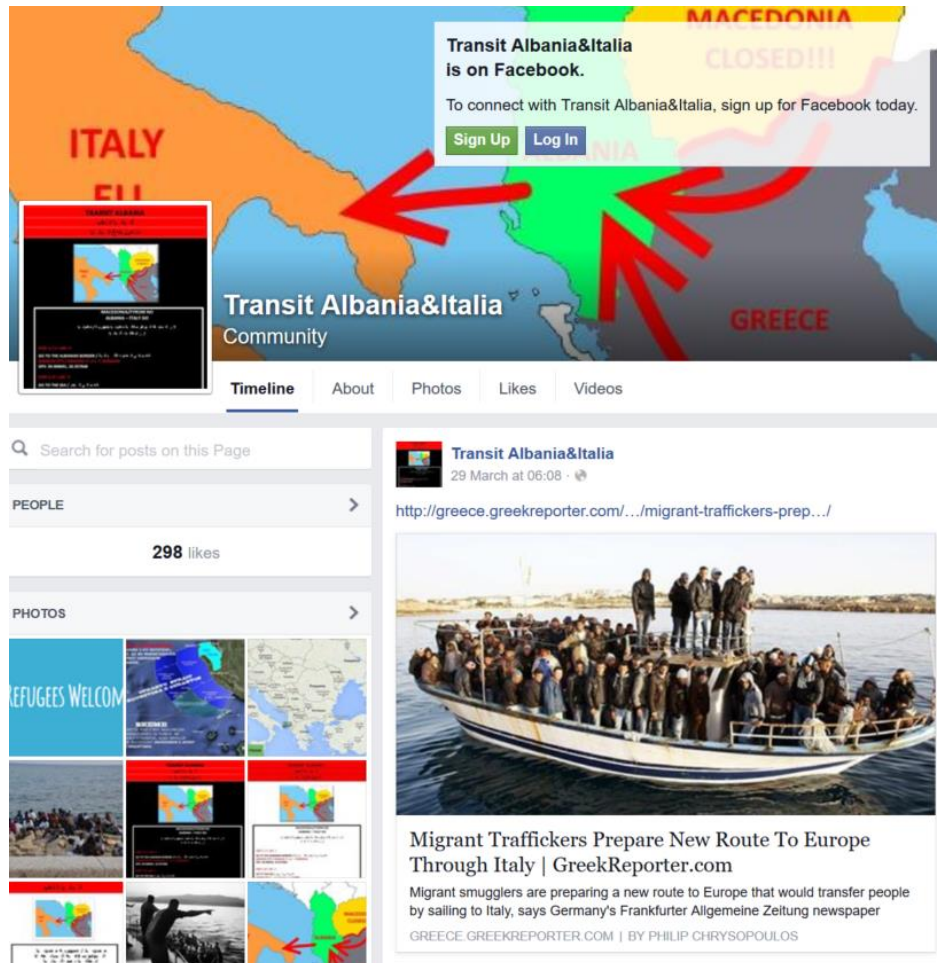



Figure 1. FB page Transit Albania and Italy

TRANSIT ALBANIA

أل بات يا الذهاب
دنهىل خهخ إل بات يا



**MACEDONIA/FYROM NO
ALBANIA – ITALY GO**

لاير ال سايقه ال بوغو سلافية مقدونية يا جمهورية / مقدونية يا
أل بل إيطال يا - أل بات يا

STEP 1 / 1 :ال خطوة

GO TO THE ALBANIAN BORDER / اذهب إلى ال حدود الألبان يا
KAKAVIA CITY / KAKAVIA / ال مدينة كاكافيا / **KAKAVIA**
GPS: 39.908691, 20.357848

STEP 2 / 2 :ال خطوة

GO TO THE SEA / اذهب إلى ال بحر
VLORA CITY / ال مدينة فلورا / **VLORA**
GPS: 40.450250, 19.480784

Figure 2. Poster, Transit Albania

Annex 2:

Photograph from the Kozani Camp with Syrian refugees

"We are broke!" - The author poses with Syrian refugees during a visit at the Kozani Refugee Centre, 22 April 2016



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