MIGRATE
Jean Monnet Network

Along the Balkan Route:
The Impact of the Post-2014 'Migrant Crisis' on the EU's South East Periphery.

Edited by Alexandra Prodromidou and Pavlos Gkasis

A publication within the EU-financed project 'MIGRATE: CTRL + Enter Europe: Jean Monnet Migrant Crisis Network'

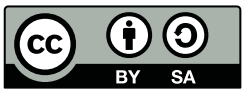
Along the Balkan Route:
The Impact of the Post-2014 'Migrant Crisis' on the EU's South East Periphery.

Edited by Alexandra Prodromidou and Pavlos Gkasis

This publication was developed within the EU-Project 'MIGRATE: CTRL + Enter Europe: Jean Monnet Migrant Crisis Network' led by the South-East European Research Centre (SEERC), Thessaloniki, Greece.

Imprint

Published by:
Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V. 2019, Berlin, Germany
Cover page image: © Mostafa Meraji/unsplash
Map (p. 10): © 123map
Design and typesetting: yellow too Pasiek Horntrich GbR
The print edition of this publication was climate-neutrally printed by
Kern GmbH, Bexbach, on FSC certified paper.
Printed in Germany.



The text of this publication is published under a Creative Commons license: 'Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 international' (CC BY-SA 4.0), https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/legalcode

Second revised edition.
ISBN 978-3-95721-603-8

This publication was developed within the EU-Project 'MIGRATE: CTRL + Enter Europe: Jean Monnet Migrant Crisis Network' led by the South-East European Research Centre (SEERC), Thessaloniki, Greece.

Edited by Alexandra Prodromidou and Pavlos Gkasis

For more information about the project visit the website of MIGRATE Jean Monnet Network www.migrate-project.com

The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

About the book

The publication 'Along the Balkan Route: The Impact of the Post-2014 'Migrant Crisis' on the EU's South East Periphery' is one of the main deliverables of the EU-financed project 'MIGRATE: CTRL + Enter Europe: Jean Monnet Migrant Crisis Network'.

The network was established in 2016 and it comprises of nine partner institutions from eight different countries along the Balkan route. The present edited volume is the result of scientific research and knowledge exchange among the project partners, academia and policy experts throughout the three year duration of the project on the topic of the impact of the post-2015 'migrant crisis' on the countries of the Balkan corridor and on EU integration as a whole.

All articles show only the opinion of the individual authors and do not represent the opinion of every network member or of the network as a whole. The same apply for the usage of specific terms and names.

The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Table of Contents

Introduction
Alexandra Prodromidou, Pavlos Gkasis,
with Iryna Kushnir, Majella Kilkey and Francesca Strumia 6

Chapter 1: Route Closed? The Impact of the EU-Turkey Statement on Refugee Migration Flows into Europe
Marcus Engler 18

Chapter 2: Turkey and the European Migration Crisis: Apprehensive Cooperation
Dimitris Tsarouhas 28

Chapter 3: The Migration/Refugee Crisis and the (Un/Re)Making of Europe: Risks and Challenges for Greece
Dimitris Keridis 44

Chapter 4: The Balkan Refugee and Migrant Corridor and the Case of North Macedonia
Zoran Ilievski, Hristina Runcheva Tasev 58

Chapter 5: Permanently in Transit. Middle Eastern Migrants and Refugees in Serbia
Armina Galijaš 78

Chapter 6: The Construction of the Refugee Other in Hungary During the 2015 'Migration Crisis'
András Szalai, Gabriella Göbl 104

Chapter 7: Who said Quotas? The Role of Serbia in Burden Sharing of the 'migrant crisis'
Stefan Surlić 118

Conclusion
Alexandra Prodromidou, Pavlos Gkasis 130

The Authors 134

Chapter 4

The Balkan Refugee and Migrant Corridor and the Case of North Macedonia

Zoran Ilievski, Hristina Runcheva Tasev

Abstract

From its inception the European Union has been a preferred destination for refugees fleeing violence and persecution, as well as economic migrants from all over the world. This analysis explores the political consequences of the mixed migration flows moving from the Middle East, through the Balkans on their way to Central and Western Europe in 2015–2016. In addition to the refugees from the Syrian war, displaced persons originating from other parts of the Middle East, Africa, Afghanistan, and elsewhere were joined in Greece by migrants and refugees who were previously settled there, mostly unregistered people, outside the official temporary protection and asylum procedures. This migration phenomenon has encouraged nationalist political forces in the Western Balkan region and in the EU to portray it as a threat to national identity and core values, presenting competing visions about the future of the EU itself. Analyzing the extent to which such nationalistic reactions were evident in the countries along the Balkan mixed migration corridor, a particular focus is placed on the case of the Republic of North Macedonia[132].

Introduction

From its inception, the European Union (EU), especially the countries which are its leading economic and political motors have faced continuous inflows of economic migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. The last large waves of inflows were the people fleeing the wars in former Yugoslavia during the 1990's. Those ended at the turn of the century, to be followed by a substantial and steady influx of people from the very same region, seeking asylum status, mostly without any justification for political persecution, rather only as attempts to gain residence, access to social protection and the labor market. By the time Germany speeded up the deportation of these persons with full unjustified asylum claims,[133] a new crisis, more substantial and with a higher 'political explosiveness' emerged. The years of 2015 and 2016 were marked by a wave of over a million refugees and migrants arriving in the European Union through the Western Balkan Route. Although the old continent has always been an attractive destination for refugees and economic migrants, this last human influx has created unprecedented fears of 'serious long-term consequences', inspiring populist political forces to claim that it 'will change the demographic map of Europe', especially since these people came from countries outside Europe, the vast majority of them being Muslim. The bulk of this large number of people were refugees which made their journey across the Mediterranean, crossing from Turkey to the Greek islands, as a result of the after-shocks of the war there that shook that entire region. These people were joined within Greece by migrants and asylum seekers who were previously settled there, mostly unregistered people, outside the official temporary protection and asylum procedures. Therefore, hundreds of thousands of Afghani, Iraqi, Pakistani, Sudanese, Eritrean and other economic migrants and refugees, joined a massive mixed migration flow towards Western Europe.

The Balkan mixed migration corridor extended from the Eastern Mediterranean Route going from Turkey through Greece, the countries of former Yugoslavia, continuing through to Hungary in the North and Austria in the West. This route was previously used by displaced persons originating from the Middle East, as well as a substantial number of refugees and migrants originating from North Africa, Pakistan and Bangladesh. It became more intensively used after

the EU visa liberalization for Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and North Macedonia in 2009–2010, with numbers of people peaking from 2014–2016.

The authors refer to migrants and refugees, two groups that have a different level of assistance and protection under international law. Making a distinction between them is not always a clear-cut process. A refugee[134] is an asylum seeker[135] whose claim has been approved. However, the UN considers people fleeing war or persecution to be refugees even before they officially receive asylum. The 'umbrella term' migrant can refer to refugees, economic migrants[136] and asylum seekers. These groups of migrants can overlap, as in the case of this crisis where mixed-migration flows were formed: asylum seekers and economic migrants making their way to Western Europe together.

We place our research focus on the refugee and 'migrant crisis' along the Balkan human corridor in the period between September 2015 and March 2016, when the Western Balkan Route was effectively closed, after North Macedonia sealed its designated entry point for these people at the border with Greece, upon the unanimous decision of the EU Council.

The EU itself was at a crossroad, torn between its core democratic values and the protection of human rights, the need to reinforce the area of freedom, security and justice in the Union and the need to counterbalance nationalists whose leaders took stances ranging from advocating for 'stronger nation-states' at the expense of a weaker Union, down to outright racism.

This migration phenomenon has encouraged some of the right-wing political actors, as well as others in the region to present it as a threat to national interests, using this momentum to promote nationalistic policies, rallying for the 'defense of the nation.'[137]

We place a particular focus on the case of the Republic North Macedonia, presenting an analysis of the implications of the migration crisis in domestic politics, within the wider context of the Balkan mixed migration corridor, which we call the 'Balkan Human Corridor.' We analyze the salience of the country's role as 'border-keeper' in this context, along with the responses of its state and non-state actors.

The State of Play, Initial Policy Responses and Reactions of Civil Society

The registration process of the people arriving at the improvised southern border crossing to Greece started as late as June 2015. Previously, waves of people had been allowed to enter and leave the country unregistered, in addition to the illegal crossings through other entry points in the country. Therefore, the actual number of refugees and immigrants who entered Europe between 2014 and 2015 is much higher than the official numbers, amounting to an estimated figure of over 1 million people.[138]

On August 19th 2015, the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia adopted a decision for declaring a 'state of crisis' on the southern and northern border of the country, based on the Law on Crisis Management ('Official Gazette of Republic of Macedonia' No.29/2005) due to the influx of refugees in the country. With the Parliament's decision, the crisis was extended until June 2016 and was further extended until the end of 2016 at a session shortly before the unconstitutional dissolution of Parliament. During October 2016, the Government once again decided to extend the declared 'state of crisis' until the end of June 2017.

The country is a party of the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951 and the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees of 1967.[139] It is also a state party of the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1997 European Convention on Nationality.

The basis of the national legal framework for the treatment of refugees and asylum-seekers is the Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection,[140] which was adopted in 2003, and amended in 2007, 2008, 2009, 2012, 2015 and 2016 to fully meet high international standards, in line with the EU. The law governs the conditions and procedure for granting and cessation of the right of asylum to an alien or a stateless person, seeking recognition of the right to asylum, as well as the rights and duties of the asylum seekers and persons who have been recognized the right of asylum (Article 1, Paragraph 1), and governs also the conditions under which the Republic can grant temporary protection as well as the rights and duties of persons under temporary protection (Article 1, Paragraph 2). Furthermore, other laws on the various aspects of the treatment of refugees and asylum-seekers include the Law on Social Protection, Law on Foreigners, the Law on Health insurance from 2010 which regulates the healthcare rights of the persons recognized as refugees, and others.

The Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection defines an asylum seeker as 'an alien who seeks protection in the Republic of Macedonia, and has submitted an application for recognition of the right to asylum, in respect of which a final decision has not yet been taken in the procedure for recognition of the right to asylum' (Article 3, Paragraph 1) and recognizes refugee as 'an alien who, after examination of his claim, has been found to fulfil the requirements set out in the Convention of Article 2 Paragraph 1 of the law, that is, a person who owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or his political opinion, is outside the state of his nationality and is unable, or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that state, or who, not having a nationality and being outside the state in which he had a habitual place of residence, is unable, or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it' (Article 4, Paragraph 1). Persons under Subsidiary Protection are defined in Article 4-a of the law as 'an alien who does not qualify as a recognized refugee but to whom the Republic of Macedonia shall recognize the right of asylum and shall allow to remain within its territory, because substantial grounds exist for believing that if s/he returns to the state of his/her nationality, or if he is a stateless person, to the state of his previous habitual residence, he would face a real risk of suffering serious harms.'

The main amendments of the Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection, made in 2015 and 2016, were aimed at approximating the law with EU asylum instruments by legislating improvements in the areas of access to territory and asylum procedures, as well as the conditions detaining people that are seeking international protection. Amendments include a procedure for registration of the intention to submit an asylum application at the border, which protects asylum-seekers from the risk of refoulement and allows them to enter and be in the country legally for a short timeframe of 72 hours, before formally registering their asylum application.[141] Therefore, refugees were no longer treated as 'illegal migrants' and they, and the people providing them with transport (at a high price) did not have to be on the run from state authorities, making their transit through the country within the 72 hours' time-frame legal, safe and organized.[142]

Ensuring the rights of asylum-seekers and persons who have been granted the right of asylum is a responsibility of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (Article 48 of the Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection). In this regard, in 2008, (North) Macedonia adopted an Integration Strategy for Refugees and Foreigners for the period 2008–2015[143] and a corresponding National Action Plan (NAP)[144]. In this context, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, in partnership with UNHCR, established the Center for Integration of Refugees and Foreigners responsible for facilitation of main activities outlined with the NAP. During the crisis two transit centers were in operation (Vinojug near Gevgelija/the border with Greece and Tabanovce near Kumanovo/the border with Serbia) in addition to the older, already operational reception centers located in Vizbegovo and Gazi Baba in the capital Skopje. It is noteworthy to mention that the 2008–2015 strategy was primarily aimed at facilitating the local integration of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians (RAE) from the region, who were granted international protection, without special consideration for refugees from outside the region.[145] In July 2016, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy published a Strategy for Integration of Refugees and Foreigners 2017–2027 and the National Action Plan for Integration of Refugees 2017–2027, which caused a significant domestic political disturbance.

A number of bodies of domestic and international character, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), believe that 'the country does not as yet meet international standards for the protection of refugees, and does not qualify as a safe third country', and even advises 'that other states should refrain from returning or sending asylum seekers to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, until further improvements to address these gaps have been made, in accordance with international standards.'[146]

While the North Macedonian administration attempted to keep out people trying to cross its border with Greece, 'ordinary citizens mobilized to help the refugees by donating food, clothes and medicines. In the absence of adequate aid or coordinated government support, donations from NGOs and individual volunteers proved life-saving for refugees waiting at the borders.'[147]

'Legis' is one of the few civil society organizations working with migrants and refugees in North Macedonia. Mersiha Smailovikj, one of the founders of Legis, provided a complex picture of the situation in the country back in 2015: 'Macedonia has the dramatic record of 30 migrants hit by trains while walking along the railway lines they used to get their bearings. In most cases it happened in tunnels or on bridges where the victims, even if they saw the train arriving, had no room to get away. As Legis we have been looking for solutions, taking as an example the fact that in Serbia asylum seekers were not dying on the roads because there was a law permitting refugees to travel legally through the country for 72 hours. We applied pressure for the same law to be adopted in Macedonia. From June 19, 2015 a law came into operation authorizing refugees to circulate in the country for 72 hours and use public transport.' She explains furthermore how the country copes with the situation: 'In Macedonia, the state does not run the refugee camps (while Serbia has many) or provide aid to refugees – this is only given by non-governmental organizations. Policemen are not paid overtime. Refugee centers are at present empty because the migrants hurry to leave Macedonia. So Macedonia has, in effect, no expenses. It even earns a million Euro a month from tickets the refugees buy, the price of which has recently doubled. Before the migrants arrived, the trains were empty.'[148]

Legis has published a Public Policy Document on Improvement of Access to Rights and Protection of Refugees and Migrants with Focus on Vulnerable Groups where they had presented their work, their expectations and recommendations.[149]

The North Macedonian President Gjorge Ivanov presented an analysis of the budget costs of the state in the following way: 'the truth is that Macedonia did not receive any financial assistance from the EU to tackle the crisis, while the insignificant equipment received was largely inappropriate and inadequate for the actual needs. State institutions did not receive anything. The only donations as funds were allocated to international organizations and NGOs for the humanitarian aspect of the crisis. The state has no insight in the money. For the deployment of the army and police only we spend over €1.5 million a month. So far, the Republic of Macedonia has spent about €30 million from the budget. The reallocation of €10 million from the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) funds for 2016, 2017 and 2018 (necessary for European reform of North Macedonia) to deal with the 'migrant crisis' speaks of the hypocrisy of Brussels. It is misleading the public that the Union has met our requirements.'

The Helsinki Committee for Human Rights of the Republic of Macedonia in its Annual report for 2018 indicates that:

'In the Republic of Macedonia, the official number of refugees and migrants present in the camps was relatively low compared to the number of refugees and migrants, men, women and children, traveling on unregulated roads, which has significantly increased compared to last year. Refugees and migrants who travel via on unregulated routes are invisible to the country's protection system and are left solely at the 'mercy' of smuggling crime groups or on their own survival instinct. Regarding the actions undertaken by responsible institutions, an improvement has been noted in comparison to the previous years, especially in relation to the detection and prosecution of the smuggling groups operating in the country. However, in certain instances, responsible institutions have continued the already established practices that are contrary to the principles and standards of human rights prescribed in international documents.'[150]

The Impact of the Migration Crisis on National Politics

Due to the dramatic internal political crisis, the migrant and refugee issue had only a tributary role on the North Macedonian political scene between 2015 and 2016. The beginning of 2016 created conditions for tensions along the Western Balkan Route, especially when the Visegrad Group of countries (Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia), together with Austria and Slovenia decided to close the Western Balkans Route, which prompted North Macedonia to follow by shutting down its designated border crossing with Greece and to construct a fence along the Southern border, following the Hungarian and Slovenian examples. These border closures along the Western Balkan Route gave German Chancellor Angela Merkel some maneuvering space, in light of her isolated political position at home and in the EU, due to her welcoming policies for these large numbers of people.[151] Anti-immigrant and islamophobic groups further flared the rise of the populist right in Germany, Austria and Hungary.

The North Macedonian-Greek crossing was in the focus of international attention again in March 2016 when the refugees confronted the border guards at Idomeni, sparking a bilateral diplomatic dispute. Greek President Prokopis Pavlopoulos accused the North Macedonian

authorities of ill treatment of refugees while they were attempting to cut the fence and cross over through the crossing near Idomeni from the Greek side.[152] North Macedonian President Gjorge Ivanov accused Greece of irresponsibly channeling more than a million people, including as Greek Defense Minister Panos Kammenos stated: possible 'jihadists' to Western and Northern Europe.[153]

Tensions decreased when the EU officially decided to close the Western Balkans corridor and the EU-Turkey agreement was reached. The number of migrants passing through North Macedonia as a transit country dropped dramatically.

The North Macedonian political scene lacked a substantial public debate during the peak of this crisis because of three main reasons: the domestic context, the cacophony of opposing positions of the two 'blocks' of EU countries plus the ones from EU institutions, and public opinion.

The Domestic Political Context

The last North Macedonian political crisis started at the beginning of 2015 with a wiretapping scandal, when then opposition leader of Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM) and later Prime Minister Zoran Zaev publicly released a large number of secretly recorded phone conversations by the Ministry of Interior, which involved the highest-ranking government officials, including the former Prime Minister and leader of VMRO-DPMNE (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unit) Nikola Gruevski. Following an array of lawsuits, large protests and political struggle, the so-called Przino Agreement was reached, with the assistance of the US and the EU.[154] Nevertheless, the internal turmoil continued, reaching its pinnacle on 27 April 2017 when the North Macedonian Parliament was violently stormed by angry protestors, and many members of Parliament from the opposition were physically attacked, while the police was not intervening for several hours. Therefore, the country was in a state of severe political crisis from the end of 2014 until June 2017 when a new Government was formed with Zoran Zaev as Prime Minister, taking the 'migrant crisis' out of the stage of prime public interest. Certainly, political opponents used the 'migrant crisis' as an opportunity to attack each other but only as attempts to gain public attention as such, rather than manifesting real difference in concepts and ideologies.

The main reason why the theoretically leftist opposition was posturing, rather than actively opposing the government's and the President's decisions, was the strong support of public opinion to the so-called 'protective measures' taken by the state. These meant facilitating a transit of these people through the country as fast as possible in the first stage, while at the later stages, reducing the inflows of people through quotas coordinated with countries to the North along the route, and finally, shutting down the entry as requested by a joint decision of the EU Council.

Within the country, certain actions were rejected by the opposition simply because the governing party suggested them. The main opposition party at that time, criticized the amending the Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection, claiming it would not solve the problem of abysmal conditions in the refugee centers.[155] However, they did not do more to stop or slow down the parliamentary legislative process on this issue. Furthermore, the opposition criticized the decision to build a border fence in November-December 2015, arguing that it will not

solve the problem,[156] but they did not protest against the building the fence once construction started, nor did they go against the decision to build another parallel fence in February 2016. When several NGO's were signing a petition demanding that the fence be removed in March 2016,[157] the conservative media accused Zoran Zaev's SDSM of being behind that initiative,[158] a thesis that seems very far-fetched, as the opposition focused its energy on issues that would bring them more fresh votes, rather than possibly inflicting political damage on itself (as the public opinion polls demonstrate below).

The North Macedonian political scene witnessed the migration crisis (2015–2016) as a horizontal political issue on which the government had no substantial political obstacles, across the party spectrum, to manage the transit of migrants along the short corridor. Ironically, the largest political disturbance related to the migrant and refugee crisis occurred well after the peak of the crisis, and it was used by the opposition party VMRO-DPMNE (which was a governing party during the peak of the crisis) mainly as a short-term proxy issue to spur anti-government sentiment, rather than a substantial policy standpoint.

The EU Institutions and the Crisis

Different groups of actors- the European Commission (EC), Germany's policies (supported by Greece) and the Visegrad group, emitted messages which were conflicting at worst and dissonant at best. This revealed a striking lack of capacity, cooperation and solidarity, as well as necessary communication between the countries along the route.[159] The EC adopted a plan of action for immediate implementation, on how to cooperate, and what to achieve collectively to better manage the flows of migrants and refugees, especially regarding quotas for receiving asylum applicants, reception capacities and border management.[160] However there was serious push-back by the Visegrad group supported by Austria, Slovenia and Croatia.

The migrants did not consider the countries along the Western Balkan Route as their final destination. However, even as transit stops, Western Balkan countries were trying to limit the number of incoming persons, on the request of some recipient countries at the end of the corridor. As the numbers of people coming through the corridor increased, pressure from the latter group of countries increased, ultimately leading to a domino effect of border closures and increasing restrictions on movement.[161] These countries refused to participate in any proposed mechanism for influx management which made a mutually acceptable solution for migrant management by the EU an even more distant prospectus.

Thus, this crisis has created two 'ideological blocks.' A part of EU member states supported managed migration, which was a German proposal.[162] The other group stood in support to the 'Visegrad Four' that proposed closing borders along the Western Balkan Route.

Hungary at the beginning of September 2015 witnessed thousands of people that were blocked at Keleti train station in Budapest for several days. The Hungarian right-wing government led by Viktor Orban had many attempts to contain and restrain migrants in camps once they entered Hungary. However, the migrants decided to move towards the Austrian border, following the so-called 'March of Hope', as people reclaimed their mobility and filled a two-lane motorway marching westward.[163] Throughout just one weekend, at least ten thousand people arrived in Germany[164] as the events in Hungary pushed the German government to declare, on 5 September 2015, that it would not close its borders to those wishing to seek asylum. Subsequently,

buses were organized to shuttle people from Hungary, across Austria, to Germany[165]. Hungary closed the border to Serbia immediately afterwards, and the migrants were prevented from crossing by a massive fence and an enormous number of security forces. The Hungarian decision to reintroduce border controls forced refugees coming up from Serbia to steer through Croatia which created a politically manufactured humanitarian crisis at the Bapska-Berkasovo crossing on the Serbo-Croatian border in the second half of September 2015.[166]

The state of crisis in summer 2015 in North Macedonia resulted with measures undertaken by the army that was deployed and in November 2015 began to erect a fence along the border with Greece for limitation of migrant influx. The bilateral tensions between Greek-North Macedonian relations were a reflection of the divisions between the so-called 'Merkel vs Orban' positions. They were also reflected at other points of bilateral conflicts along the Western Balkan corridor, such as the Serbian-Croatian tensions.

At the beginning of 2016, the Schengen Area was under intense pressure and some border controls, albeit partially, were restored.[167] Austria and Slovenia supported the block which advocated for the closure of borders along the Western Balkan Route, receiving support by the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk.

Western Balkan countries increasingly coordinated migrant policy and action, both logistically and politically. In November 2015, Croatia, North Macedonia, and Serbia took their first joint restrictive measure; they began to allow transit only to migrants from Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq. This was a result of Slovenia's request to redirect migrants from non-war-torn countries back to Croatia.[168]

Restricting the numbers of migrants became a trend at the beginning of 2016 in many countries throughout the EU. Slovenia and Croatia adjusted their policies and introduced restriction on migrants by limiting entry only to those who intend to seek asylum in Austria and Germany.[169]

Austria put a cap on the number of refugees: it limited the number of asylum claims to 37,500 in 2016, and a total of 127,500 up to 2019. The latter number represents 1.5 percent of Austria's population of 8.5 million.[170] Afterwards, Austria decided to limit the number of new arrivals, created a plan for repatriating over 50,000 asylum seekers of three years and to construct new fences along its border with Slovenia. Finally, in February 2016, Austria introduced new measures for limiting the number of asylum applications to 80 per day[171], and the number of transits to Germany to 3,200 per day. This measure followed the meeting between the heads of police services of Austria, Croatia, North Macedonia, Serbia and Slovenia in Zagreb, whereby collaboration was reached to significantly reduce migration flow to the greatest possible extent[172]. This was an introduction to the closure of the Western Balkans Route. At this meeting several other measures were adopted, such as standardization of migrant registration (unification of form and procedure) and allowing entry only on the basis of refugees fleeing war zones and in need of international protection (basically refugees from Iraq and Syria).

Following these decisions, North Macedonia passed new controls that restricted Afghan refugees from crossing its border. As well, Iraqis and Syrians would now be subject to further regulations, which included language tests to try to determine the person's city, region and country of origin.[173] North Macedonia explained these heightened measures as a response to the decisions taken by countries further along the route.[174]

North Macedonia decided to construct a second fence along the border on February 8, 2016.[175] It was positively accepted by the countries of the Visegrad Group that offered their support for the country and sent police forces in late 2015 to the border with Greece, making a paradoxical case of policemen from several EU states protecting a border crossing from the side of a non-EU state from people coming from a EU and Schengen zone state.

Austria hosted a summit in Vienna at the end of February 2016 for the ministers of foreign affairs and ministers of interior of Austria, Slovenia, Croatia, and the Western Balkan countries. Greece was not invited, and in a clear sign of diplomatic protest, it called its Ambassador back to Athens on consultations. Official Athens also added that this meeting was 'nonfriendly and anti-European'.[176] The European Commission also criticized the restrictions along the Balkan Route 'as unlawful and contrary to an EU-wide approach.' Austria's foreign minister, on the other hand, heavily criticized Germany's refugee policy, calling it contradictory. 'Last year, Austria accepted per capita twice as many asylum applications as Germany,' Austrian Foreign Minister Kurz said, adding that 'it won't happen a second time.'[177]

That dramatic period was also marked by a meeting of EU interior ministers in Brussels to discuss the crisis, at which point the EU Commissioner for Migration warned that, 'the EU has ten more days to reduce the number of migrants or else there is a risk the whole system will completely break down.'[178] The following days Slovenia capped the number of migrants allowed to enter the country at 580, a step followed by Croatia and Serbia. In the last days of February 2016, there were approximately 500 new arrivals in North Macedonia. The new entry restrictions quickly aggravated the already tense situation at the Greek-North Macedonian border, which culminated in protests on 29 February 2016. Migrants stranded on the Greek side of the border broke the barricade and were quickly barraged with teargas by the North Macedonian police.[179] During the following days the border was entirely closed, giving impetus to the EU-Turkey summit, and the official shut down of the Western Balkan Route, with a unanimous vote of the EU Council.

After the closure of the Western Balkan Route, inflows were significantly reduced. The International Organization for Immigration reported that 172,000 migrants reached Europe by sea in 2017 compared to 363,000 in 2016.[180]

The EU Council's request for the closure of the North Macedonian-Greek designated crossing point gave the domestic managers of the processes a solid political and societal legitimacy, that they have done an efficient job in implementing an important requirement of the EU, much to the distaste of liberal political and academic circles throughout Europe.

Public Opinion and Media

At the peak of the crisis, in October 2015, a survey conducted by the Institute for Political Research – Skopje (IPRS), showed that the majority of respondents (66.2 percent supported it, while 25.4 percent opposed) supported building a fence on the southern border.[181] Additionally, citizens of North Macedonia evaluated EU's handling of this crisis as highly negative, as reported by the public opinion poll of the International Republican Institute from January 2016, when 59 percent of the respondents answered that the effects of EU's handling of the crisis on North Macedonia are negative. That same poll also showed that 28 percent of the respondents thought that the government is providing 'too much support to refugees', while

another 37 percent responded that the government support is 'sufficient.'[182] According to Balkan Barometer 2017: Public Opinion Survey,[183] only 7 percent of the Macedonians viewed refugees as the most important problem that Southeast Europe was facing at that moment. This is a significant drop, compared to the Balkan Barometer 2016: Public Opinion Survey,[184] according to which 18 percent of the North Macedonians believed that refugees were the most important problem, which was more than four times more than the regional average of 4 percent. In general, the 2017 survey concludes that attitudes towards refugees are less hostile than before.

The regional average shows that the proportion of the population with a negative (40 percent) and a neutral (41 percent) attitude towards refugees is equal. Compared with 2015, when the problem of refugees was significantly more relevant, there has been a change in attitude towards them: the number of those who regard them as a threat to their economy has decreased (from 47 to 40 percent). Nevertheless, according to the 2017 survey, North Macedonia was the only country where a majority of respondents found that refugees had a negative impact on the economy. In North Macedonia, 57 percent of the population gave negative responses to the question 'What do you think about refugees coming to live and work in your city? Is it good or bad for your economy?', compared to Albania with 29 percent, Kosovo with 17, Bosnia and Herzegovina with 44, Montenegro with 37, Croatia with 43, and Serbia with 47 percent. Only 8 percent believed that refugees are good for the economy, whereas 29 percent were neutral. In 2015, 66 percent had considered the arrival of migrants to be bad for the economy.

Furthermore, the survey established respondents from North Macedonia as the least supportive of affirmative government action in favor of displaced persons and refugees. Only 47 percent of the respondents from North Macedonia agreed that the Government should provide affirmative measures to promote opportunities for equal access of displaced persons and refugees, whereas this number was 74 percent in Albania, 89 percent in Kosovo, 82 percent in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 75 percent in Montenegro, 67 percent in Croatia, and 71 percent in Serbia. Similarly, only 43 percent supported affirmative measures for displaced persons and refugees when applying for a public-sector job, compared to Albania with 68 percent, Kosovo with 79 percent, Bosnia and Herzegovina with 81 percent, Montenegro with 71 percent, Croatia with 54 percent, and Serbia with 64 percent. Furthermore, North Macedonia had the lowest support for better housing conditions for displaced persons and refugees compared to the other countries of the region. Only 51 percent believed that the Government should do more in order to ensure better housing conditions, compared to Albania with 77 percent, Kosovo with 90 percent, Bosnia and Herzegovina with 84 percent, Montenegro with 72 percent, Croatia with 61 percent, and Serbia with 65 percent.

Such negative public perceptions of migrants and refugees are tied to the characteristics of the country's political culture, and thus are highly resistant to snap changes. Luckily, North Macedonia does not have significant far-right populist movements which would actively work on spreading anti-migrant sentiments and propaganda.

As Marina Tuneva notes, during this crisis, the media poorly fulfilled its role to publish and broadcast relevant, topical news while also reflecting on the actions of government. 'Media covered and interpreted the events in ways that revealed deep political divides within their ranks. Reports by outlets on one side of the divide could be seen as legitimizing government policies and helping spread the message that refugees did not belong in the country'. 'On

the other side, several media outlets voiced criticism of the government's policies towards refugees, while presenting the main problem in the frame of humanitarian crisis and the suffering of the refugees. Human-interest stories in these outlets in effect called for vulnerable groups to be helped. These media to some extent presented the views of civil society, unlike the pro-government media which portrayed NGOs mostly as groups that opposed the government's efforts to deal with the crisis and contributed to the endangerment of national security. Media in both groups, however, often ran news articles that lacked information needed for a good understanding of the context.'[185]

The Strategy for Integration of Refugees and Foreigners 2017–2027 and the National Action Plan for Integration of Refugees 2017–2027

Ironically, the largest political disturbance related to the migrant and refugee crisis occurred well after the peak of 2015–2016. Namely, the new North Macedonian Government lead by SDSM, i. e., the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, drafted the Strategy for Integration of Refugees and Foreigners 2017–2027 and the National Action Plan for Integration of Refugees 2017–2027, which were presented to the general public for comments before the final version was approved by the Assembly. According to the Ministry, the Strategy was drafted in coordination with UNHCR and other relevant institutions. It was aimed at dealing with four significant areas for asylum seekers: housing, education, employment, and integration, revising shortcomings of the previous strategy and improving the integration process.

The draft Strategy and Action Plan were met with severe antagonism from VMRO-DPMNE, the leading opposition party. It accused the ruling SDSM of threatening the overall security, the economy and the health system of the country with the permanent settlement of 150,000 to 200,000 migrants on its territory. 'These strategic documents will mean enormous costs totalling billions of Euros in the next ten years for accommodation and construction of buildings and settlements for migrants. That means enormous costs in the field of employment, social programmes, and funds that North Macedonia does not have any resources for.' stressed VMRO-DPMNE MP Vlatko Gjorcev, adding that North Macedonia would be transformed from a transit country into a final destination for refugees.[186] Furthermore, the VMRO-DPMNE pointed out that granting citizenship to tens of thousands of migrants and their permanent settlement would cause serious distortion of the labour market and significantly worsen the already difficult situation regarding the high unemployment, which has forced many North Macedonian citizens to move to other countries in order to secure work and livelihood.[187]

The Government categorically disputed these accusations, claiming that VMRO-DPMNE was trying to halt reforms by unfounded accusations and false news. According to SDSM, the Strategy was based on international standards and the Convention on the Rights of Refugees, which North Macedonia has ratified. The party said it had a document that serves as a roadmap and contains no binding acts concerning any ministry or institution. According to SDSM, 'the draft Strategy, which VMRO-DPMNE is abusing in its attempt to fuel fear and scare the citizens, is just a continuation of the same strategy for the period 2009–2015, adopted by the former government led by VMRO-DPMNE'.[188] Furthermore, SDSM pointed out that the number of migrants interested in permanently settling on the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia was negligible. Official statistics support this stance. Namely, the Helsinki Committee recently published a report stating that, in the Republic of Macedonia, in the period from 2015 to June 2017, a total of 2243 requests for granting the right to asylum had been

submitted by 2,717 persons, only five of which had been granted official refugee status, and only 11 subsidiary protection.[189] This shows that North Macedonia is merely a transit country for refugees, and hardly a country of final destination.

The public debate regarding the Strategy and the Action Plan instigated numerous instances of xenophobic hate speech towards refugees, and several civic initiatives organizing citizens petitions against migrants were set into motion. These civic groups were inspired and exploited by political forces in their populist hunt for votes. Furthermore, following the deadline for submitting comments on the Strategy and the Action Plan, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy reported that it had received identical comments from several VMRO-DPMNE-led municipalities, stating that accepting refugees and foreigners in North Macedonia 'will destabilize the region and the country as a whole.'[190]

The opposition's disapproval of the Strategy culminated when VMRO-DPMNE filed an interpellation motion against Minister of Labour and Social Policy Mila Carovska, who, according to VMRO-DPMNE, had consulted neither citizens nor municipalities when drafting the strategic documents.[191] The interpellation did not pass in the Assembly. As the local elections scheduled for 15 October 2017 were approaching, twelve VMRO-DPMNE-led municipalities announced their decisions to call for a referendum for the citizens to voice their opinion regarding a permanent settlement of migrants in their respective municipalities. The decisions of the municipalities to hold referendums were annulled by the State Inspectorate for Local Self-Government Units.[192]

It is noteworthy to mention that, even though the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy initially planned for the Strategy for Integration of Refugees and Foreigners 2017–2027 and the National Action Plan for Integration of Refugees 2017–2027 to be adopted by the end of 2017, they have not been approved by the Assembly to this day.

Nationalist Backlashes in the East and West

The crisis has affected national politics along the Balkan migrant and refugee corridor and European politics in general, creating a momentum to present the wave of migration as a threat to national interests and ideals, cultural attitudes, social structures and demographical balance.

As Charles Kupchan states, Europe has 'historically embraced more ethnic than civic approaches to nationhood, unlike the United States.'[193] This is clearly visible during the 'migrant crisis' when leaders of Eastern European states like Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic have all expressed a strong preference for non-Muslim migrants.[194] Slovakia came out with a statement that it will only accept Christian arrivals and that Muslims should not move to Slovakia because they will not integrate easily with the country's majority Christian population.[195] This wave of statements was additionally encouraged by Hungary, whose Prime Minister Viktor Orban said that his country did not want to accept Muslim refugees and he did not want to create an impression that Hungary is ready to accept everybody. According to Orban, 'the moral, human thing is to make clear: please don't come.'[196] Poland was one more country in a row that encouraged Syrian Christians to apply for asylum because 'religious background will have impact on the refugee status applications.'[197] The selection of migrants based on religion as main criteria is an openly discriminatory policy, and a strong indicator

of the growing nationalism. The issue about Muslim migrants was one of the key topics for debate at national elections, debating on 'how many people should be accepted' and what the most suitable EU mechanisms for dealing with the crisis are.

The 2016 French presidential elections were affected by the 'migrant crisis', strengthening the position of Marine Le Pen's National Front. Even incumbent French President Macron stood for controlled migration.

The pressure over this issue made changes to German policies, which initially promoted its 'welcoming culture' for the migrant policies. In later stages, in order to avoid the breakup of government 'due to immigration fight' with her coalition partner, Chancellor Angela Merkel reached a compromise on immigration policy with Christian Social Union (CSU). The deal proposed new screening at the Germany-Austria border to 'prevent asylum seekers whose asylum procedures are the responsibility of other EU countries from entering the country.' A network of 'transit centers' would serve as processing points from which ineligible migrants would then be sent back to relevant countries, but only if those countries consent. If those countries do not agree, Germany's rejected migrants would be sent to Austria, 'on the basis of an agreement.'[198] Certainly, this 'deal' had to do much more with political maneuvering and crisis public relations than substance. Germany's so called 'open door policy' maintained cautious support at the last elections in 2017, although damaged on its right flank. Chancellor Angela Merkel at her first speech at the beginning of latest mandate said that 'there is no question that Germany is historically Christian and Jewish. It is also true that Islam has in the meanwhile become part of Germany', acknowledging that some Germans find that hard to accept.[199]

The Italian elections campaign of 2018 was heavily based on narratives connected to migration and refugees. The former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi claimed that there are 600,000 illegal migrants living in Italy who are a 'social time bomb',[200] promising mass deportations. The new Italian government mounted heavy criticism 'to Brussels' for the way it dealt with the 'migrant crisis', promising to roll back liberal policies and 'take back control' over the migration movements through its land and seas.

Generally, the 'migrant crisis' has created numerous divisions along Europe. It affected internal divisions in the European states and activated populist parties. After the 'empty chair' crisis in 1965 and the Euro crisis in 2009, the issue of these mixed migration flows has created the deepest divisions between EU Member States. The political leaders aimed to preserve the 'core European values', disagreeing on the hierarchy of values in need of protection and the methodology how to proceed, even if something is vaguely agreed.

Nevertheless, it is interesting to explore the different historical experience with immigration in post-communist countries compared to Western member states of the EU. After World War II, Western European countries took in large numbers of non-Christian migrants from multiethnic backgrounds, particularly from former colonies. France saw an influx of Algerians fleeing the civil war from 1954 to 1962. In Britain, immigrants arrived from the Indian subcontinent and the Caribbean. In general, from the 1960s onward, the majority migrants to Western Europe came from outside the Continent, including people arriving as guest workers.[201]

Post-communist countries, on the other hand, historically have had fewer migrants of diverse ethnicities, religions and cultures. And since the collapse of the Berlin Wall, there have been no large waves of non-European migrants to Eastern Europe.[202] These circumstances affected

the population of Eastern Europe to have less contact with people from different ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural backgrounds, making populist parties sound 'relevant' when presenting migrants as a 'serious threat for the counties and its nations.' What none of these populists can answer is how their societies will maintain the demographic power for their needed economic and societal development, in the context of their rapidly aging populations and galloping brain-drain towards the West.

The second reason anti-immigration parties have a stronger presence in post-communist Europe is that those parties typically reject liberal social values that are more prevalent in Western member states and instead support Christian-based values.[203] The re-emergence of these values in politics is related to the fall of the communist ideology, a sacred victory for these newly re-established democracies.

As Ivan Krastev says, just three decades ago 'solidarity' was the symbol of Eastern Europe.[204] Today it suffers from disappointment, distrust, demography and democracy. He points out that 'faced with an influx of migrants and haunted by economic insecurity, many Eastern Europeans feel betrayed by their hope that joining the European Union would mean the beginning of prosperity and an end to crisis, while many government leaders fear that the only way to regain political support is by showing that you care for your own, and not a whit for the aliens.'[205] So, at the core of moral panic provoked by influx of migrants lies fear of Islam, terrorism, rising criminality and a general anxiety over the unfamiliar. In addition to this, as Krastev points out, the demographic panic is one of the least discussed factors shaping Eastern Europeans' behavior because the alarm of 'ethnic disappearance' could be felt in many of the small nations of Eastern Europe.

To paraphrase Krastev, while the issue of large influx of people politically divided Western European societies, the very same issue united many in Central and Eastern European states against the prospects of these people coming to their countries. Whereas one in seven Germans found a way to volunteer or assist the people coming in their country, many of the latter group of countries saw volunteers for the exact opposite.[206]

Conclusions

The 'migrant crisis' of 2015–2016 has created numerous internal and external divisions in countries along the corridor, from its starting points, up to the receiving end in Europe. These divisions have been manipulated to the effects of strengthening of populist forces that are threatening the core values of the European Union. The clear divisions among member states of the Union on this issue point to deeper cleavages in political cultures, with strategic consequences, and a continuing cacophony about which political values take precedence, highlighting competing visions for the future of the EU.

These anti-immigration sentiments gave wind in the sails of nationalists in the EU, sending along signals to their Western Balkan counterparts to follow suite. The phenomenon of migration was presented as a threat to national identity, interests and ideals, cultural attitudes, social structures and way of life. Such sentiments and policies, in general, have stronger standing in post-communist countries compared to Western EU member states. This became clearly visible when leaders of Eastern European states like Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic all expressed distaste for receiving these people, whereas for the numbers that they would agree to host, a strong preference for non-Muslim migrants was openly displayed.

The (North) Macedonian political scene witnessed the migration crisis (2015–2016) as a horizontal political issue on which the government had no substantial political obstacles, across the party spectrum, to manage the transit of migrants along the short corridor. Ironically, the largest political disturbance related to the migrant and refugee crisis occurred well after the peak of the crisis, and it was used by the new opposition mainly as a short-term proxy issue to spur anti-government sentiment, rather than a substantial policy standpoint.

Regarding the media, as Marina Tuneva notes, 'very little attention was given to the background of stories or to push factors that were driving the population flows. A paucity of information from state bodies, lack of human resources, and journalists' lack of specialized knowledge and experience have been mentioned as some underlying causes of these defects … the capacity of Macedonian media to provide quality journalism in general is hampered by heavy influence from powerful political and economic actors, including the government. These factors, together with the commercialization of the media, combine to worsen the overall very sick state of Macedonian journalism.'[207]

Public opinion which is a reflection of the country's political culture maintains a frightened and uninformed view on incoming migration, a topic on which all political and societal stakeholders need to address with an honest, analytical and objective approach, breaking harmful stereotypes, prejudice and daily propaganda.

Authors

Zoran Ilievski
Department of Political Science, Faculty of Law 'Iustinianus Primus', University Ss. Cyril and Methodius, Skopje, North Macedonia
z.ilievski@pf.ukim.edu.mk

Hristina Runcheva Tasev
Department of Political Science, Faculty of Law 'Iustinianus Primus', University Ss. Cyril and Methodius, Skopje, North Macedonia
h.runchevatasev@pf.ukim.edu.mk

132 Following a historic agreement with Greece, the country renamed itself to North Macedonia in January 2019. Since the paper treats events preceding this date, the new addendum to the name of the country is not used in quotations before 2019.

133 DW, Germany's list of 'safe countries of origin' and what it means, https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/13284/germany-s-list-of-safe-countries-of-origin-and-what-it-means, Latest update: 13/11/2018.

134 The primary and universal definition of a refugee that applies to states is contained in Article 1(A)(2) of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, as amended by its 1967 Protocol, defining a refugee as someone who: 'owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it. See more at: https://emergency.unhcr.org/entry/250585/refugee-definition.

135 An asylum seeker is defined as a person fleeing persecution or conflict and therefore seeking international protection under the 1951 Refugee Convention on the Status of Refugees. In the global context it is a person who seeks protection from persecution or serious harm in a country other than their own and awaits a decision on the application for refugee status under relevant international and national instruments.

136 According to UNHCR Master Glossary of terms economic migrants are persons who leave their countries of origin purely for economic reasons not in any way related to the refugee definition, or in order to seek material improvements in their livelihood. Economic migrants do not fall within the criteria for refugee status and are therefore not entitled to benefit from international protection as refugees.

137 See more at Mendelsohn, Rebecca. 'The European Refugee Crisis: Nationalist Backlashes within the European Union' MJUR 2017, p.150–176. Available at: https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwjJm8WeptXgAhUs1eAKHcz8Aa8QFjAAegQICxAC&url=http%3A%2F%2Fresearch.monm.edu%2Fmjur%2Ffiles%2F2017%2F05%2FMJUR-2017-Part-13-Mendelsohn.pdf&usg=AOvVaw3u6LbcJidH9sXd0LoH_y1Y.

138 Irregular Migrant, Refugee Arrivals in Europe Top One Million in 2015: IOM, 22/12/2015. Available at: https://www.iom.int/news/irregular-migrant-refugee-arrivals-europe-top-one-million-2015-iom. Accessed on 25/23/2018. Personal interviews with officials from the Ministry of Interior, the Army of the Republic of (North) Macedonia and with international organizations working on the issue (September 2016 – April 2017).

139 The Convention relating to the Status of Refugees was adopted on 28 July 1951 by the United Nations Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons convened under General Assembly resolution 429 (V) of 14 December 1950 and entered into force on 22 April 1954. The Protocol of 1967 is attached to United Nations General Assembly resolution 2198 (XXI) of 16 December 1967. They are the critical global legal documents covering the most important aspects of a refugee's life, defining the term 'refugee' and outlining the rights of the displaced, as well as the legal obligations of States to protect them. According to their provisions, refugees deserve, as a minimum, the same standards of treatment enjoyed by other foreign nationals in a given country and, in many cases, the same treatment as nationals. The 1951 Convention also recognises the importance of international solidarity and cooperation in trying to resolve any issues with the status and the legal position of refugees. The Convention defines a refugee as a 'person who is outside his or her country of nationality or habitual residence; has a well-founded fear of being persecuted because of his or her race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion; and is unable or unwilling to avail him – or herself of the protection of that country, or to return there, for fear of persecution'. The core principle is non-refoulment, which asserts that a refugee should not be returned to a country where they face severe threats to their life or freedom. Convention and Protocol available at http://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10.pdf.

140 The latest version of the Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection available at http://www.refworld.org/docid/53072d144.html. Accessed on 26/03/2018.

141 Koshevaliska, Olga, Tushevska Gavrilovikj, Borka, and Nikodinovska Krstevska, Ana, Migration Crisis: Macedonia on crossroads http://eprints.ugd.edu.mk/16515/1/Migration%20crisis.%20Macedonia%20at%20crossroads.pdf accessed on 25/03/2018.

142 Refugees Rights: National and international standards vis-a-vis the situation on the ground, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights of the Republic of Macedonia, 16/01/2017 http://www.mhc.org.mk/analysis/518?locale=en#.WtS5HPluapp. Accessed on 25/03/2018.

143 Strategy available at http://mtsp.gov.mk/WBStorage/Files/strategija_begalci.pdf Accessed on 25/04/2018.

144 National Action Plan available at http://e-demokratija.mk/documents/10157/26941/Национален+акционен+план+-+Стратегија+за+интеграција+на+бегалци+и+странци+во+Република+Македонија+2008+-+2015?version=1.0 Accessed on 26/03/2018.

145 Gerovska Mitev, Maja, Providing adequate social services for refugees: a challenge in FYR Macedonia, ESPN Flash Report 2016/36, July 2016. Accessed on 25/04/2018.

146 Observations on the situation of asylum-seekers and refugees in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, UNHCR, August 2015, http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/55c9c70e4.pdf Accessed on 03/07/2018.

147 Marina Tuneva, Media Coverage of the Refugee Crisis in Macedonia, SEENPM, http://seenpm.org/wp-content/uploads/Crisis-reporting-Macedonia_Final.pdf, p.6.

148 Interview with Mersiha Smailovikj, Legis for OBC Transeuropa 23/9/2015. https://www.balcanicaucaso.org/eng/Areas/North-Macedonia/Macedonia-the-Refugee-Emergency-164182 Accessed on 25/04/2018.

149 Public Policy Document on Improvement of Access to Rights and Protection of Refugees and Migrants with Focus on Vulnerable Groups, Legis, November 2017. Available at: http://www.legis.mk/uploads/Legis_Istrazuvanje_Finalna%20verzija%20EN%20-%20Copy%201.pdf Accessed on 20/05/2018.

150 Annual report for 2018: The rights of refugees, migrants and asylum seekers in the Republic of Macedonia of The Helsinki Committee for Human Rights of the Republic of Macedonia: http://mhc.org.mk/system/uploads/redactor_assets/documents/3292/Help_On_Route_-_ANG_2018_final.pdf Accessed on 20/12/2018.

151 Karnitschnig, Matthew, Austria does Angela Merkel's dirty work, Politico, 01/21/2016. Available at: https://www.politico.eu/article/austria-refugees-germany-angela-merkel-asylum-migration/ Accessed on 03/07/2018.

152 Harris, Mary, President Pavlopoulos: Greek Veto on FYROM's EU-NATO Bid is Non-Negotiable. Greek Reporter, 05/08/2016. Available at: http://greece.greekreporter.com/2016/05/08/president-pavlopoulos-greek-veto-on-fyroms-eu-nato-bid-is-non-negotiable/ Accessed on 25/03/2018.

153 'If they deal a blow to Greece, then they should know the migrants will get papers to go to Berlin,' he said. 'If Europe leaves us in the crisis, we will flood it with migrants, and it will be even worse for Berlin if in that wave of millions of economic migrants there will be some jihadists of the Islamic State too.' 'If they strike us, we will strike them. We will give to migrants from everywhere the documents they need to travel in the Schengen area so that the human wave could go straight to Berlin.' Waterfield, Bruno, Greece's Defence minister Kammenos threatens to send migrants including jihadists to Western Europe, The Telegraph, 03/09/2015 https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/islamic-state/11459675/Greeces-defence-minister-threatens-to-send-migrants-including-jihadists-to-Western-Europe.html accessed on 03/22/2018 Diekmann, Kai, Ronzheimer, Paul and Biskup, Daniel, Macedonian president settles a score here. Bild, 05/10/2016. Available at: https://www.bild.de/politik/ausland/gjorge-ivanov/Macedonian-president-settles-a-score-here-44888176.bild.html accessed on 25/03/2018.

154 Statement by Commissioner Hahn and MEPs Vajgl, Howitt and Kukan: Agreement in Skopje to overcome political crisis, European Commission, 07/15/2015 http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_STATEMENT-15-5372_en.htm Accessed on 26/03/2018.

155 Мигрантите ги скараа СДСМ и ВМРО ДПМНЕ, Faktor, 06/15/2015 http://faktor.mk/2015/06/15/migrantite-gi-skaraa-sdsm-i-vmro-dpmne/ Accessed on 26/03/2018.

156 СДСМ: Кризата со мигрантите не се решава со огради туку со системски решенија, Nova TV, 09/11/2015 http://novatv.mk/sdsm-krizata-so-migrantite-ne-se-reshava-so-ogradi-tuku-so-sistemski-reshenija-2/ accessed on 03/26/2018.

157 Отворено писмо од 16 организации: Итно да се урне бодликавата ограда за бегалците, A1 on, 03/17/2016 http://a1on.mk/wordpress/archives/591992 Accessed on 26/03/2018.

158 Невладините на СДСМ и СОРОС бараат да се тргне оградата, Kurir, 03/17/2016 http://kurir.mk/makedonija/vesti/istite-levichari-i-nvo-i-vo-grtsija-gi- sozdavaat-problemite-so-migrantite/ Accessed on 24/03/2018.

159 European Commission, Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the Follow-Up to the Leaders' Meeting on Refugee Flows Along the Western Balkans Route, Strasbourg, 15.12.2015, COM(2015) 676 final. Available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52015DC0676&from=EN, Accessed on 15/6/2018.

160 ibid.

161 Greider, Alice. 'Outsourcing Migration Management: The Role of the Western Balkans in the European Refugee Crisis', Migration Policy Institute, 17.8.2017. Available at: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Outsourcing%20Migration%20Management_%20The%20Role%20of%20the%20Western%20Balkans%20in%20the%20European%20Refugee%20Crisis%20_%20migrationpolicy.pdf Accessed on 15/6/2018.

162 This managed migration included EU-Turkey agreement, under which, Turkey was obliged to take back Syrian migrants who reached Greece illegally in return for the relocation in Europe of Syrian refugees to Turkey. This agreement intended to stem the migrant inflow in Europe, but the Western Balkan route closure was not included in its content.

163 March of Hope, Hungary and the Long Summer of Migration, 9/9/2015, Bordermonitoring. Available at: http://bordermonitoring.eu/ungarn/2015/09/of-hope-en/ Accessed on 03/07/2018.

164 ibid.

165 Santer, Kiri and Wriedt, Vera. '(De-)Constructing Borders: Contestations in and around the Balkan Corridor in 2015/16'. Movements Jg. 3, Heft 1/2017 Available at: https://movements-journal.org/issues/04.bewegungen/10.santer,wriedt--de-constructing-borders.pdf. Accessed on 03/08/2018.

166 ibid.

167 More than 160,000 asylum seekers arrived in Sweden in 2015, more per capita than any other country in Europe. Swedish Government Struggling Over 'migrant crisis' – BBC News. BBC News. Available online: http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-35549169 Accessed on 12/6/2018.

168 Senada Šelo Šabić, Sonja Borić. 'At the Gate of Europe: A Report on Refugees on the Western Balkan Route', p.4. Available at: http://www.irmo.hr/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/At-the-Gate-of-Europe_WEB.pdf. Accessed on 20/6/2018.

169 Slovenia Limiting Refugee Flow, The Slovenia Times, 22/1/2016. Available at: http://www.sloveniatimes.com/slovenia-limiting-refugee-flow Accessed on 20/6/2018.

170 Balkan states attempt to limit numbers of refugees claiming asylum, The Guardian 20/1/2016. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/20/balkan-states-attempt-to-limit-numbers-of-refugees-claiming-asylum Accessed on 20/6/2018.

171 'migrant crisis': Austria asylum cap begins despite EU anger, BBC News, 19/2/2016. Available at: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-35609823 Accessed on 20/6/2018.

172 Joint Statement of the Heads of Police Services from the Meeting held in Zagreb, Croatia, on 18th February 2016. Available at: https://www.mup.hr/UserDocsImages/topvijesti/2016/veljaca/migranti_sastanak/joint_statement.pdf Accessed on 25/03/2018.

173 European Council on Refugees and Exiles. Western Balkans News Brief February 16–29, 2016. Available at: http://us1.campaign-ar-chive2.com/?u=8e3ebd297b1510becc6d6d690&id=-8fac50c411 Accessed on 25/03/2018.

174 Senada Šelo Šabić, Sonja Borić. 'At the Gate of Europe: A Report on Refugees on the Western Balkan Route', p.4. Available at: http://www.irmo.hr/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/At-the-Gate-of-Europe_WEB.pdf. Accessed on 20/6/2018.

175 Europe builds another wall: Macedonia erects second barrier of razor wire to stem the human tide from Greece, Daily Mail. 8/2/2016. Available at: https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3437717/A-second-wall-razor-wire-stem-human-tide-Macedonia-builds-fence-border-Greece-send-message-migrants-attempts-cross-illegally.html Accessed on 27/03/2018.

176 DW, Austria hosts Balkan refugee conference without Greece, 24/02/2016. Accessed on 30/3/2019 https://www.dw.com/en/austria-hosts-balkan-refugee-conference-without-greece/a-19069784.

177 ibid.

178 EU has 10 days to see progress on 'migrant crisis' or Schengen unravels: EU commissioner, Reuters, 25/2/2016. Available at: https://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-avramopoulos-idUSKCN0VY22T Accessed on 27/03/2018.

179 Macedonia police fire teargas at migrants while Europe bickers, Reuters, 29/2/2016. Available at: https://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-greece-Macedonia-idUSKCN0W2188 Accessed on 26/03/2018.

180 In Europe, as Migration Falls, Nationalism Rises, Geopolitical Futures, 17/5/2018. Available at: https://geopoliticalfutures.com/europe-migration-falls-nationalism-rises/ Accessed on 25/04/2018.

181 The perceptions on the 'migrant crisis' unpublished public opinion poll, Institute for Political Research-Skopje (IPRS), November 2015, available at http://ipis.org.mk/ . Accessed on 12/6/2018.

182 IRI, Survey of Macedonian Public Opinion, p.32–33 https://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/iri_Macedonia_survey_april_2016_0.pdf.

183 Balkan Barometer 2017: Public Opinion Survey, Regional Cooperation Council, Sarajevo, 2017 https://www.rcc.int/seeds/files/RCC_BalkanBarometer_PublicOpinion_2017.pdf, accessed on 03/22/2018.

184 Balkan Barometer 2016: Public Opinion Survey, Regional Cooperation Council, Sarajevo, 2016.

https://www.rcc.int/seeds/files/RCC_BalkanBarometer_PublicOpinion_2016.pdf , accessed on 03/22/2018.

185 Marina Tuneva, Media Coverage of the Refugee Crisis in Macedonia, SEENPM, http://seenpm.org/wp-content/uploads/Crisis-reporting-Macedonia_Final.pdf, p.21.

186 Dukovska, Jugoslava, Kontraspin: VMRO-DPMNE so dvojni standardi okolu begalcite, Vistinomer, 08/11/2017.

http://vistinomer.mk/kontraspin-vmro-dpmne-so-dvojni-standardi-okolu-begaltsite/ accessed on 03/25/2018.

187 VMRO-DPMNE: Strategijata za migranti i begalci gi zagrozuva bezbednosniot i ekonomskiot sistem na državata, Press 24, 08/09/2017.

http://press24.mk/vmro-dpmne-strategijata-za-migranti-i-begalci-gi-zagrozuva-bezbednosniot-i-ekonomskiot-sistem-na accessed on 03/25/2018.

188 SDSM: The refugee strategy is a continuation of the one that was adopted in 2008, Meta.mk, 08/07/2017 http://meta.mk/en/sdsm-the-refugee-strategy-is-a-continuation-of-the-one-that-was-adopted-in-2008/ accessed on 03/25/2018.

189 Reaction to the xenophobia against refugees, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights of the Republic of Macedonia.

190 Xenophobia and calls for a referendum from the municipalities on the strategy for refugees, Meta.mk News Agency, 08/09/2017 http://meta.mk/en/xenophobia-and-calls-for-a-referendum-from-the-municipalities-on-the-strategy-for-refugees/, accessed on 03/26/2018.

191 VMRO-DPMNE files Interpellation motion Against Minister Carovska, MKToday, 09/11/2017 http://mktoday.mk/index.php/2012-12-21-14-28-05/7895-vmro-dpmne-files-interpellation-motion-against-minister-carovska, accessed on 03/26/2018.

192 Referendum za migrantite nema da ima, ALFA TV, 09/29/2017 http://www.alfa.mk/News.aspx?id=124254#.Ws0vq_luapo, accessed on 03/26/2018.

193 Europe's Migration Crisis. Council on Foreign Relations. Available at: https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/europes-migration-crisis Accessed on 15/6/2018.

194 EU states favour Christian migrants from Middle East. EUObserer, 21/8/2105. Available at: https://euobserver.com/justice/129938. Accessed on 27/03/2018.

195 Slovakia to EU: We'll Take Migrants – If They're Christians, Foreign Policy, 19/8/2015. Available at: https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/08/19/slovakia-to-eu-well-take-migrants-if-theyre-christians/ Accessed on 20/6/2018.

196 Amid refugee crisis, Hungary prime minister says Muslims not welcome, AlJazeeira America, 3/9/2015. Available at: http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/9/3/hungary-prime-minister-says-muslims-not-welcome-amid-refugee-crisiMoreover,tml Accessed on 20/5/2018.

197 Poland favors Christian refugees from Syria, Financial Times. Available at: https://www.ft.com/content/6edfdd30-472a-11e5-b3b2-1672f710807b#axzz3ktymzs8n Accessed on 20/5/2018.

198 Germany's Angela Merkel prevents the breakup of her government with immigration deal, The Washington Post, 2/8/2018. Available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/germanys-angela-merkel-may-have-won-fight-over-migration-but-her-coalition-is-in-doubt/2018/07/02/d4e02b60-7da2-11e8-a63f-7b5d2aba7ac5_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.757ce4af7a98 Accessed on 20/5/2018.

199 Merkel insists Islam is part of Germany in the first speech of her new term, Quartz, 21/3/2018. Available at: https://qz.com/1234662/angela-merkel-says-islam-is-part-of-germany-in-her-first-major-speech-of-her-new-term/ Accessed on 28/03/2018.

200 Silvio Berlusconi says illegal migrants are 'social time bomb', as race dominates Italian election campaign. The TELEGRAPH. 5/2/2018. Available at: https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/02/05/silvio-berlusconi-says-illegal-migrants-social-time-bomb-race/ Accessed on 20/6/2018.

201 In Europe, as Migration Falls, Nationalism Rises, Geopolitical Futures, 17/5/2018. Available at: https://geopoliticalfutures.com/europe-migration-falls-nationalism-rises/ Accessed on 25/09/2018.

202 ibid.

203 ibid.

204 Eastern Europe's Compassion Deficit by Ivan Krastev, The New York Times, 8/9/2015, Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/09/opinion/eastern-europes-compassion-deficit-refugees-migrants.html Accessed on 27/03/2018.

205 ibid.

206 Refugee crisis: 'Not the same values in East and West', Ivan Krastev, Deutche Welle, 8/3/2016. Available at: https://www.dw.com/en/refugee-crisis-not-the-same-values-in-east-and-west/a-19102868 Accessed on 29/03/2018.

207 Marina Tuneva, Media Coverage of the Refugee Crisis in Macedonia, SEENPM, http://seenpm.org/wp-content/uploads/Crisis-reporting-Macedonia_Final.pdf, p.21.