

History of Illegal Immigration in the Western Balkans Associated with Socio-Economic and Political Developments in the Region

Dr. Eva Teqja

"Aleksander Moisiu University"; eva.allushi@gmail.com

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Abstract

Illegal immigration from the Western Balkans towards EU countries now is considered the number one concern for the EU institutions. This phenomenon has increased significantly in late 2014 and during 2015. The key driving factor towards emigration is primarily the high level of unemployment, and unstable economic situation of these countries. The low level of democracy, as well as conflicting policies, is another important factor. Some EU countries, such as Germany, Italy and Greece are directly confronted with this phenomenon, which has created substantial costs for its management, not only in humanitarian terms. Italy and Greece are affected more by political emigration, immigrants coming from conflict areas. Germany is affected by migration from countries of the Western Balkans, in particular Kosovo and Albania. A study of immigrant's preferences argues that about 34% of them select Germany as the primary destination for a better economic future. The paper tries to argue that policies that lead to the coordination of economic cooperation are concrete steps towards deepening European integration. Deepening the integration and enlargement of the EU cannot be threatened by a wave of illegal immigrants from the Western Balkans; on the contrary, these policies will lead to the reduction of this phenomenon.

1. Introduction

Illegal migration of the Western Balkan countries towards EU Member States does not constitute a new phenomenon, but given the trends, now is considered the number one concern for the EU institutions, and especially some of its countries. This phenomenon has increased significantly in late 2014 and during 2015. Frontex organization oversees immigration statistics since 2008, but according to their influx has never been greater than during this year.

Der Spiegel, 27 August 2015 in an article entitled "Mass emigration, what is urging Balkan exodus" publishes a map with the number of immigrants from every country of the Balkans, who entered Germany during the first seven months of 2015 and applied for asylum. In this map, as can be clearly seen, Albanian nationals seeking asylum in Germany for the period 1 January-July -31 are 29 353. It seems that the Kosovo Albanians account for a larger number just 29,997 people. Macedonia, for the same period have sought asylum in Germany 5514 nationals, while 11,642 nationals from Serbia and from Bosnia-Herzegovina 2981 nationals. According to German media, 7500 Albanian nationals applied for asylum only in July.

Meanwhile, it is pretty clear that member states of the EU does not provide asylum for economic, financial or social reasons. International Organization for Migration defines illegal immigration as "Crossing borders without complying with the necessary conditions for legal entry. In the context of the EU, "asylum is granted to persons fleeing persecution or serious injuries in own place, and therefore need international protection " in other words, the status of asylum was granted only to those illegal immigrants who have fled their own countries because of persecution or the threat of danger to life (Haxhikadrija, Gashi, 2012).

In certain international organizations, research institutes and academic circles the term "illegal immigration" is looked upon unfavourably and the terms "irregular migration", "undocumented migration" or "unauthorized migration" are used instead (Đorđević, 2009:4). According to these references, in this paper the term "illegal migration" is used where the decisions from the Pact and the Directive are quoted.

The nature of irregular immigration in the member states of the EU is unlikely to return in numbers. In addition to personally decide immigrants flee from their countries, with thousands of other people are trafficked each year to the EU. The Eurostat data show that in 2013 the number of illegal immigrants caught within EU Member States was about 429,000, a figure that represents a 30% decrease from 2008, defines The Institute for Development Policy, 2015.

The World Bank data comparison of refugee population by country or territory of origin of Western Balkan countries emphasizes the fact that the Western Balkan region has a very high level of refugee population by country or territory of

origin. Particularly, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania have the highest refugee population level. Montenegro has the lowest refugee population by country or territory of origin (Aliu, 2013: 7).

Aliu found that numerical results of Western Balkans are as such: During 2000-2010 according to the World Bank data, Albanian net migration (total migration) numbers are as follows: -270245 (2000) -72243 (2005) and -47889(2010). During 2000-2010 according to the World Bank data, Macedonian net migration numbers are as such: -9000 (2000) -4000 (2005) and 2000 (2010).

During 2000-2010 according to the World Bank data, Montenegro net migration numbers are as follows: -32450 (2000), -20632 (2005) and -2508 (2010). During 2000-2010 according to the World Bank data, Bosnia and Herzegovina net migration numbers are as such: 281795 (2000) 61825 (2005) and -10000 (2010). During 2000-2010 according to the World Bank data, Serbia net migration numbers are as follows: -147889 (2000) -338544 (2005) and 0 (2010) (Aliu, 2013: 8).

Over the last 15 years Albania has experienced massive migrant outflows, primarily to Greece and Italy, driven by economic hardships during the transition process and fostered by geographic proximity and the liberalization of migration (Mendol, Carletto, 2012:871). Estimates suggest that Greece and Italy together account for approximately 80% of the migrants, with Greece as the leading destination because of its geographical proximity (Vullnetari, 2007).

Mariapia Mendol Calogero Carletto (2012) states that "there are about three million Albanians who continue to live in the country and almost the same number left the country already". Albania is ninth in the rankings of the World Bank country level immigrants compared with the population. According to a study of the Foundation "Friedrich Ebert", two-thirds of young Albanians want to leave the country.

The emigration of Albanians to European Union countries and beyond has been a historical process of post-communist Albania, with a significant impact on the Albanian demographic and socio-economic development of the country. According to the Institute of Statistics (2011, p.14), the last decade of the Albanian population has decreased by 7.7% (from 3,069,275 people in 2001 to 2,831,741 people in 2011) where the main reason of population migration remains. The main destinations of the Albanian emigration are two neighboring countries, Italy and Greece, over the years although migration map has been expanded to other non-European countries (IOM, 2008).

Given the size of the Albanian population (3 million in 2001), this implies that more than one-quarter of Albanians have moved abroad since 1990. Looking more closely at the host-country stock figures for 2006 for Greece and Italy, these two countries alone accounted for 858,000 Albanian migrants: 482,000 in Greece, where Albanians make up approximately 60 percent of all immigrants; and 376,000 in Italy (King, Piracha & Vullnetari, 2010: 3-16).

Due to the massive and irregular character of Albanian emigration, there are no accurate official figures on the distribution of Albanian immigrants. Statistics show that about half of the immigrants are not equipped with proper documentation (Ibid).

The International Organization for Migration, Albania (2009) underline that "Migration remains a complex phenomenon that has affected many decades Albania. Many studies have been undertaken to explore the distribution of Albanian international migration after the fall of communism in 1990". According to INSTAT (2004), 700,000 Albanians fled the country during the 1989-2001 periods and in 2005 the number of immigrants rose to 864.485, which represents 27.5% of the total population in the country (World Bank, 2005).

The first wave of migration slowed during the stabilization of the political and economic (1992-1995) characterized by the reduction of unemployment (12%), inflation rate (<10%) and higher levels of GDP growth (from -7.2% to 9% in the period 1993-1996) (Carletto et al , 2004). However this growth and economic stability had short life and the collapse of pyramid schemes in 1996 prompted another wave of migration.

Third wave of migration (1998-1999) happened during the Kosovo crisis that pushed many Kosovars to seek refuge in Albania. An estimated influx of 500,000 Kosovars demographic outlook changed again to Albania, even though it was a temporary state of imbalance. After a short stay in Albania, many Kosovars sought refuge in other countries of Western Europe, the United States, Canada and Australia. Albanians tried to migrate posing as Kosovo. Albanian migration during this time considered "invisible" (IOM, 2006; Vullnetari, 2007) because the Albanian authorities during that time were less involved in the identification and prevention of the consequences of this wave of migration. In subsequent years (2006 and later) migration became more difficult for Albanians (application of the rules for crossing the border) and the influx of recent international migration has to do with the Albanians who moved from primary place of destination (such as Italy, Greece) in other countries, mainly the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada. In a profile of recent migration (IOM, 2007) countries like Greece and Italy have been identified as the primary destination countries (ie migrant 434.810 in 2003 and 348.813 migrants in 2006). Other countries at high levels are the United States, United Kingdom, Canada and Germany.

The end of 2014 and the first month of 2015 is marked a period of exodus, where the European Union has experienced a rapid growth in the number of Kosovo citizens who have entered its territory through the border of Serbia – Hungary, and then to Western Europe. Still, we do not have reliable data on the number of people who left the country during that period, but according to estimates are about 50.0000 Kosovo citizens who have fled from the country illegally. Other sources give a number of other illegal immigrants, this figure reaches 100,000 people. This sudden wave of illegal immigration shows that the country is facing serious difficulties in economic and social development.

In April 2013, the government of Kosovo and Serbia reached an agreement in areas as: regional representation, recognition of diplomas, trade and customs, etc. In this context, the Serbian authorities agreed to lift restrictions and rules and procedures to facilitate travel at border points. The latest wave of illegal migration followed immediately after the easing of travel regulations, enabling them to reach the limits Kosovars the EU through Serbia.

These are some datas according to the Institute of Development Policy (2015) on Kosovo illegal immigration:

Table 1



Source: Institute of Development Policy , 2015. Kosovo.

Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Macedonia and Moldova – have rates of emigration equating to between 22 and 45% of their in-country populations. These ratios are amongst the highest, not only in Europe, but in the world. For post-Yugoslav countries, however, the migration data need to be interpreted with caution: high rates of emigration from BiH and Macedonia and high numbers of migrants from Croatia and Slovenia reflect a history of internal migration which the events of the 1990s and the break-up of Yugoslavia turned into 'international' migration (King, Frykman & Vullnetari, 2013: 131).

2. Why They Leave?

Poor countries like WB, characterized by low rates of economic growth and high unemployment, see immigration as the main settlement against poverty. Migration is a phenomenon with multilateral development implications, often contradictory in all areas of social, economic, and political, especially in countries that are more exposed to "flow". (Dervishi, 2003: 1-2).

Several factors may be temporary, but the main push factor to migration, the decline in positive expectations, fueled by high levels of unemployment and poverty will remain non-current. People who migrated to the stage from 2000 to the latest wave of illegal migration left the country for three reasons: 1. migration for the purpose of family reunification; 2. Legal migration for the purpose of education and temporary work, and 3. encourage illegal migration due to widespread poverty, corruption, high unemployment, and lack of prospects for the future.

German newspaper has interviewed enough asylum seekers from the Balkans to try to discover the causes of the exodus. According to "Der Spiegel" the economic reasons are more or less those pushing Western Balkan nationals seeking asylum. Exodus continues, it shows that the wounds of the Balkan wars are not yet healed. The consequences are: lack of investment, social welfare systems failed, corruption, organized crime, high unemployment and poverty. "Der Spiegel", 2015, quotes and hope is that changing the rules would encourage fewer people migrate to Germany from the

Balkans.

In the same way analyze King, Frykman and Vullnetari, (2013), when stressing the economic reasons say that yet within this shifting migration landscape of migrant stocks and flows, the fundamental economic geography of different wealth levels and work opportunities is what drives most migration, now as in the past. This article contends that immigration into the EU, and more specifically access to the labour markets of the EU for citizens of southeast Europe and the western Balkans in particular, may be an answer to the problem of organized crime by curtailing the Balkan mafias' access to its key resource – labour (Glenny, 2004:250). The data show that the economic weight of remittances is especially strong in Albania, BiH, Moldova and Serbia, accounting for between 10 and 21% of Gross National Income. (World Bank 2011).

According to Ivaivo Izvorski, “the first transition started in the 1990s and its ultimate completion will help advance the second. Progress on the second transition, the EU integration, will unleash the EU convergence machine that has seen all but two countries in Europe achieve and sustain high income status. He argue (Table 2) that the third transition, overcoming the middle-income trap, remains the most important long-term strategic policy challenge for the Western Balkans. Judged by the past experience of others in Europe and East Asia, even that demanding transition could be achieved in one or two” (Izvorski, 2015).

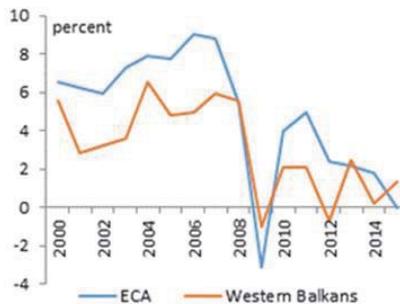


Figure 1. Real GDP growth has weakened (EBRD transition index)*

Sources: National sources and Bank staff calculations and projections.

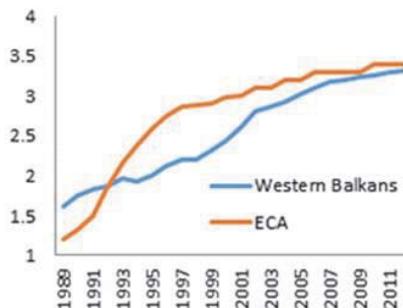


Figure 2. Progress on structural reforms has stalled (percent change year-on-year)

Sources: EBRD. ECA = Europe and Central Asia

Armando Aliu in 2013 found that comparing inward and outward remittance flows of the Western Balkan countries, the graphs illustrate dynamic trends. For example, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina have high level of inward and outward remittance flows. Albania has the lowest level of outward remittance flows. Axiomatically, migration flows from Western Balkan to the EU have also economic consequences and dimensions. Incrementally, in Albania, there is an increase at both inward remittance flows and outward remittance flows. Another economic consequence of migration flows is workers' remittances: in 2009, Albania received \$1.1 billion worth of remittances per year, Bosnia and Herzegovina \$1.4 billion, FYR Macedonia \$260 million and Serbia \$3.8 billion (Aliu, 2013:7-8).

In recent years, all types of migration have declined, possibly due to improved economic conditions in the country (World Bank 2007). Migrant remittances have played an important role in rebuilding the economy of Albania after the collapse of "pyramid" then. According to a report compiled by the IOM (2006) the amount of remittances sent home by immigrants is three times the foreign direct investments and nearly double the development assistance received from the Government of Albania. In general, migrant remittances have played an essential role in the Albanian economy and in particular by preventing and alleviating poverty.

In a Statement made by U.S. Department of State, 2015 is shown that more work it has to be done on the corruption perceptions and climate of doing bussines in Albania (Table 4).

Table 4

Measure	Year	Index or	
		Rank	Website Address
TI Corruption Perceptions index	2014	110 of 174	transparency.org/cpi2014/results
World Bank's Doing Business Report "Ease of Doing Business"	2015	68 of 189	doingbusiness.org/rankings
Global Innovation Index	2014	94 of 143	globalinnovationindex.org/content.aspx?page=data-analysis
World Bank GNI per capita	2013	USD	data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY
		4,710 GNP.PCAP.CD	

Source: Climate Statement 2015 U.S. Department of State 2015 Investment Climate Statement June 2015 p 10.

According to International Organization for Migration, Albania (2009), the reasons for removal from Albania (push factors), are as shown below in Table 3. The most important factor that has driven the country migration has been economic factors, where 67% said that economic difficulties (eg poverty, economic problems, unemployment) were the primary reason for the removal. Other important factors were poor living conditions in the country (9%), reunification with other family members (7%) and the opportunity for a better life in Western Europe and in other countries (7%).

Table 3: Reasons for leaving (push factors)

N%
Economic difficulties 730 67%
Poor living conditions in Albania 103 9%
Family reunification abroad 82 7%
Better opportunities in destination countries 78 7%
Perceived lack of security in Albania 49 4%
Education 32 3%
Medical reasons 10 0.9%
Other 9 0.8%
Personal Conflict 2 <1%
Ethnic conflict 1 <1%
Political reasons 1 <1%

One of the main reasons for migration is employment opportunities, with the majority of those who were unemployed in Albania (53%) intending to migrate for a short spell abroad (European Training Foundation, 2007). The main factor for migration is the lack of demand for labor, particularly in the formal sector.

In the raport of IOM, 2009 it is stressed that Albanian international migration can be examined through the main push and pull factors that characterize this phenomenon. In his study 2004 Barjaba identifies unemployment and poverty as major driving factors that influence migration decisions and experience of Albanian migrants. Other factors include poor living conditions, lack of personal and political security (De Sotto et al., 2002).

A recent study of INSTAT, 2013, gives the reasons that push Albanian citizens to migrate: higher wages, the financial support of the family, better conditions of work, better conditions of life, better conditions of education, more security and order in the country.

INDEP (2015) offer analyses to understand the reasons why the people of Kosovo are more likely to migrate. It found that we need to take a look at the leading indicators of economic well-being of citizens in the country. Living standards in Kosovo are significantly disadvantaged compared with the standards of the member states of the EU. Kosovo is considered as one of the poorest countries in Europe with a GDP per capita of € 2.894, is 11% of the EU average. During the nineties have been several factors that have impacted negatively on the economy country, as poor economic policies, ethnic conflict, sparing approach to foreign trade and finance, as well as sanctions (Indep, 2015: 3-4).

In recent years, economic growth has brought about 4% (Table 1), and that this increase was driven mainly by public and private investments, which do not involve any product or any improvement in labor market conditions. The growth rate is insufficient to cope with the challenges it is facing currently Kosovo.

Reducing poverty and improving the welfare of Kosovo can not be imagined without a strategy to create jobs in the meantime what we see on the horizon does not look promising. The most worrying situation in the labor market in Kosovo is the high rate of unemployment. The average unemployment rate in Kosovo is 35.1%, while unemployment among young people, aged 15-25 years, is even higher and is about 55.3%. An estimated shows that 34% of the population living in poverty by 45 euro per month, which in other words means that live around 1.4 euro per day. (INDEP, 2015:6).

In February 2015 a survey was conducted by IVS Union (Initiative for Social Action) in some municipalities where the main motives were identified last wave of migration illegal. The reasons listed are: economic instability (69.66%), frustration (confidence in the institutions of the state (54%), lack prospects for a better life (41%), social reasons (26.33%) and political reasons (27.66%).

USAID in 2014 showed that only 21% of citizens were satisfied with the overall performance of government. Other issues related to the lack of prospects for a better life have to do with the level of corruption, lack of rule of law, and inefficient justice system. All these have caused frustration to the citizens of Kosovo and as a result have led to illegal immigration. Regarding the perception of investors of Kosovo in relation to the business environment in the country, the responses obtained from a survey of current and potential investors show that the main obstacles to investment in Kosovo are: lack of rule of law, corruption, and economic instability and political .

Biljana Đorđević argue that is necessary to respond to EU labour market needs and to attract highly qualified workers into the EU, to facilitate the reception of students and researchers, to favour temporary and circular migration. But on the other side she stress that if the most qualified citizens leave, the developmental prospects for developing countries will only worsen, thereby reinforcing the pattern of irregular migration to the EU. In other words, if the EU wants to tackle the problem of irregular immigration seriously, it has to open more channels for regular migration. Short-term migration organized and regulated considered as a mechanism to reduce the high unemployment rate (AFP: 45.5%) and the lowest employment rate that is 26% in Kosovo. (Haxhikadrija, Gashi, 2012:2).

Authors like Glenny, (2004) underline that despite all "yet from a practical point of view, the economic stabilisation of SEE brings the EU more benefits more quickly than would similar processes elsewhere". The economic requirements of the SEE and the EU are complementary – the latter needs to replenish its labour force, the former needs to alleviate unemployment and find ways of injecting liquidity into local economies. The integration of SEE into European structures represents a massive challenge but also an opportunity for both the region and the EU (Glenny, 2012:5).

Glenny argue that "as opinion both in the western Balkans and, more slowly, in Brussels and member state capitals comes round to the idea that the Stabilisation and Association process needs to offer greater incentives to the region if it is to help galvanize local social and economic development, the issue of increased labour market access should be integrated into any revision of the relationship between the EU and SEE. One is hardly likely to underestimate the difficulty in persuading Brussels or member states that increased market access for SEE citizens would be a good thing".

In the same line King, Piracha & Vullnetari (2010) say that for the time being, emigration is still occurring, but the return migration trends are unclear. The stress that in the future, economic and social planning, and a more ethically sound political culture, are the exogenous inputs that can help frame a more beneficial impact of emigration. For these authors "there needs to be substantial infrastructural improvement, notably in roads, public transport, electricity, and water supply. (King, Piracha & Vullnetari, 2010: 8) From an economic planning perspective, another priority is to develop import substitution industries (foodstuffs, building materials, and furniture are some examples), given that so much of the remittance income generated by migrants circulates immediately abroad to purchase basic necessities and consumer durable goods".

3. Conclusions

Migratory experiences are influenced by factors such as unemployment, poverty, lack of individual and collective security (push factors) as well as economic premises, education and a better life (pull factors).

Some EU countries, such as Germany, Italy and Greece are directly confronted with this phenomenon, which has created substantial costs for its management not only in humanitarian terms. Italy and Greece are affected more by political emigration, immigrants coming from conflict areas. Germany is affected by migration from countries of the Western Balkans, in particular Kosovo and Albania. Statistics of Germany argue that most emigrate for a better economic future.

Debates on how to reduce illegal immigration from the Balkans to the EU, separates leaders of the main countries and institutions of the EU into two groups. A group emphasizes accelerating the integration of the Western Balkan countries and another group that seeks restoration of the visa wall.

Countries in Eastern Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall wanted to be part of EU, and are working on implementing a set of reforms. Experts think that free trade agreements, customs union, single market and the euro are concrete steps to deepen European integration.

Studies have argued that the EU-15 countries are beneficiaries of this process. EU, although it is mainly extended to the poorest countries that they founded, by extending its only managed to be the biggest economic bloc and the second for the rate of per capita income.

The question is how to deepen integration based on four fundamental freedoms of the EU enlargement?

There is a need for more effective policies in cooperation with the Balkan countries, which will be possible by increasing equality of opportunity for the Balkan countries.

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