



IN DIALOGUE WITH ACADEMIA: UNIVERSITY DISCUSSION PAPERS

Migration in the Western Balkans: Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue for an Inclusive Region

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**DIALOGUE
FORUM**

IN DIALOGUE WITH ACADEMIA:
UNIVERSITY DISCUSSION PAPERS – 001

In Dialogue with Academia: University Discussion Papers aim to bridge the gap between academic research, policymaking, and implementation of good practices by leveraging the critical contributions of religious and faith leaders. By engaging university professors and students in key themes related to social cohesion, the initiative explores how interreligious and intercultural approaches can help identify common ground, fostering an inclusive social pact that aligns religious values with secular policies. This effort seeks to cultivate European societies where everyone feels a sense of belonging. The series of Discussion Papers will inform KAICIID's future actions.

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Executive summary

The Western Balkans, a region marked by historical divisions and ongoing demographic challenges, faces critical migration and integration issues that demand effective and inclusive responses.

The region's significant emigration and labour shortages, coupled with the influx of migrants and refugees, create a pressing need for effective integration strategies. The presence of refugees and migrants could be harnessed to address skill gaps, revitalise economies, and counteract declining populations. However, effective integration responses are hindered by long-standing fractures, insufficient services, and negative public perceptions shaped by media narratives and politicisation of migration issues.

Religious leaders and actors are critical in countering xenophobia and fostering mutual understanding between newcomers and host communities. Their close ties to communities enable them to support positive attitudes towards newcomers, offer spiritual support and inclusive spaces, promote evidence-based policymaking, and strengthen social bonds through interreligious and intercultural dialogue.

By leveraging enhanced cooperation between religious leaders and local authorities, the Western Balkans region has the opportunity to embrace its potential as a long-term destination, rebuilding fractured communities, fostering economic resilience, and ensuring inclusive development and shared prosperity.



Migration and integration: a crisis of perception and political will

Sovereign states have legitimate reasons for controlling their borders, defining membership, and determining eligibility for voting, taxation, and access to public services like education, healthcare and social security. This necessitates migration and integration policies to regulate who – as a non-national – may enter, stay, work and access services, including the potential acquisition of citizenship.

Modern migration and integration policymaking is called to balance competing needs: addressing labour and talent shortages, sustaining welfare systems in ageing societies, fulfilling international obligations to protect the displaced, and safeguarding the rights of newcomers, including the freedom of religion or belief. Yet, the increasing complexity of migration drivers is blurring the distinction between “refugees” – those fleeing persecution – and “migrants” – those who voluntarily move to improve their lives – making that distinction less relevant for effective policy design. Separating voluntary migration from forced displacement often oversimplifies the interconnected realities of migration and tends to overlook structural drivers of migration flows and the economic needs of open societies.

While progress has been made, standing divergences persist when discussing migration and integration at the international, regional and bilateral levels. Often, demagoguery and migrant scapegoating prevail despite economic evidence that could



stir better-informed debates and more effective policies.¹ Too often, migration policy choices are reduced to the simplistic option of open or closed borders, which ignores the many nuanced aspects of migration policymaking. Similarly, there are different perspectives on how to ensure equal opportunities for refugees and migrants in host communities, although often undermined by systemic discrimination and exclusion.

The European Union's Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion for 2021–2027 views integration as a “two-way process that involves the mutual adaptation of migrants and the host society”. This approach recognises that newcomers and host communities mutually influence each other, creating a new, shared social environment through their interactions.

This multifaceted process can be navigated by reimagining integration processes as comprising two essential components: the so-called “hardware” and “software”. The hardware consists of policies, laws, and services – the tangible structures enabling participation in a new society. These include access to housing, healthcare, education, and employment, which lay the foundation for economic and social inclusion. The software refers to the emotional and spiritual infrastructure that welcomes diversity and fosters mutual respect. This includes the attitudes, values and cultural openness of hosting communities. Welcoming attitudes rooted in solidarity and common human dignity create an environment where newcomers are not merely accommodated but recognised as persons of value and active contributors to the common good. Without this acceptance, even the most robust policies risk failing.

The essence of modern migration and integration policies is, therefore, how to balance the prerogatives of States with individual rights, multilayered needs, challenges and dilemmas in relation to the structural causes of people's movements.

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

1. **Persons not categories:** It is now widely recognised that drawing clear distinctions between different categories of people on the move has become increasingly difficult in today's geopolitical landscape. Even the long-established institutional separation between “refugees” and “migrants” – with refugees' protection solidly enshrined in international law – is becoming less clear-cut. While States and intergovernmental systems have developed mechanisms to classify and triage these groups, in the current European context, marked by depopulation trends and labour shortages, a more pragmatic approach would call for greater flexibility between these categories, ensuring that people on the move can access protection and livelihoods under international human rights norms.

This is one of the main lessons that can be drawn from the Ukrainian displacement and the application of the EU Temporary Protection Directive, despite demarcating an additional categorisation between class-A and class-B displaced people as a side-effect. Religious leaders and actors are best positioned to focus on persons

rather than categories, transcending legal distinctions to emphasise the shared human dignity inherent to all members of the human family, and serving as common ground for building cohesive and inclusive communities.

2. **Understanding migration and integration:** The migration and integration debate is often filled with inaccuracies and misconceptions, generating more heat than understanding. The present reality shows that we cannot divorce debates about immigration from broader reflections about inequality, labour, social justice and, most importantly, the kind of society we want to live in. Religious leaders, deeply connected to their communities, are pivotal in fostering understanding and dispelling harmful stereotypes about migrants and refugees.
3. **Making migration work for all:** Migration and integration are as hotly debated as they are poorly understood. The fear of mass migration has fuelled the rise of extreme nationalist parties and populism throughout Europe. There is an urgent need to see migration as an intrinsic part of economic growth and societal change instead of primarily as a problem that must be solved. Open societies will inevitably experience substantial immigration in the future as a vital force for learning, expanding opportunities, and exploring different ways of living.

Therefore, rather than asking how we can stop migration – which is unrealistic – the question should be: how can we make migration work for all? How can we shift the perception of migrants and refugees from competitors for limited resources and jobs to partners in expanding economic opportunities for the entire community? Quality, multidisciplinary research into the economic, cultural, and communal impacts of migration and integration is essential to counter misconceptions and guide policy. The Western Balkans Migration Network (WB-MIGNET), a consortium of migration research think tanks, provides a strong foundation for creating a Regional Observatory on Social Cohesion. This Observatory would bring together academics, religious leaders, and civil society – particularly faith-based organizations – to design and implement migrant integration initiatives rooted in interreligious dialogue.

Religious leaders, civil society and faith-based organizations are able to contribute unique grassroots perspectives critical for improving evidence-based policymaking in migrant and refugee integration. The Observatory would also evaluate how interreligious dialogue methods contribute to building cohesive and inclusive communities in the Western Balkans, influencing regional and local migration and integration policies and practices, and ensuring migrant integration becomes a mutually beneficial process for both migrants and host communities.

MAP: THE WESTERN BALKANS REGION

Source: Sajin, R., Ristović, I., Čepelak, B. (2022) – Adapted



The Western Balkans: a region of fractures and divisions

The social fabric of the Western Balkans (see Annex for a description of the region) has been deeply scarred by one and a half decades of traumatic events. The conflict in Bosnia (1992–1995) and NATO’s 1999 bombing of Serbia resulted in widespread violence, displacement and fractured communities. In addition to sparking a massive flow of “regional”¹ refugees and migrants fleeing outside and within the former Yugoslav

¹ This text refers to “regional” refugees to distinguish them from “international” refugees arriving in the Western Balkans from outside the region.

While refugees are typically defined as individuals seeking protection in a country where they do not hold citizenship, and internally displaced persons (IDPs) are those who are displaced within their country of citizenship, the case of “regional” refugees in the Balkans was more complex. Initially all nationals of the same state, they progressively became refugees across newly formed borders, complicating both their legal status and access to protection. As a result, individuals within former Yugoslavia’s borders suddenly found themselves with different nationalities or even stateless, as their country of origin ceased to exist. For instance, Croats from Bosnia were registered as refugees in Croatia, while Croatian Serbs were expelled from Croatia.

For decades, the concept of “refugee” in the Balkans remained deeply tied to the challenges of nationality recognition following Yugoslavia’s dissolution, further entangled with unresolved ethnic tensions and the distinction between nationality and ethnic identity. Referring to “regional” refugees in this context, therefore, reflects the unique circumstances of the Balkans in the 1990s, where displacement due to war and persecution coincided with the dissolution of Yugoslavia. (See International Crisis Group (ICG). (1999) [The Balkan Refugee Crisis: Regional and long-term perspectives.](#))

Federation, these events created deep ethnic divisions, long-standing tensions, and mistrust, further compounded by the dissolution of Yugoslavia, including the most recent separation of Montenegro from Serbia (2006), which entrenched national identities and intensified ethnic discord.

Furthermore, the region has been facing significant demographic challenges, including a 10% depopulation due to emigration. By 2020, over a fifth of the region's population lived abroad, with high youth emigration rates, exacerbating labour shortages and undermining economic recovery, with Bosnia and Herzegovina leading at 1.69 million, followed by Albania (1.25 million), Serbia (1 million), North Macedonia (690,000), and Montenegro (over 130,000).ⁱⁱ

Meanwhile, the influx of migrants and refugees – particularly during the 2015 migration crisis and ongoing arrivals from Asia, Africa and the Middle East – added complexity to an already fragile environment. In addition to the persistent unresolved situations of “regional” refugees and migrants due to the Balkan wars of the 1990s, the number of “non-regional” refugees and migrants from outside the region transiting through the Balkan countries reached an unprecedented number of over 2 million. The main nationalities included Syria (nearly 710,000), Afghanistan (over 300,000) and Iraq (over 140,000). In Serbia, in 2015, almost 580,000 persons expressed the intention to claim asylum, but only 583 filled in an official application. A positive decision was issued for 16 asylum seekers, while subsidiary protection was granted to 9 others.ⁱⁱⁱ

Between 2018 and 2023, the Western Balkans received 31,155 asylum applications, with the most received by Albania (13,259) and Montenegro (6,155). During this same period, 26 decisions granting refugee status and 63 decisions offering complementary protection were issued in the region. Since 2022, upon the escalation in the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, more than 350,000 Ukrainians have passed through Serbia, with over 58,000 registering their residence in the country.^{iv}

Fuelled by economic pressures, cultural differences, and resource competition, initial local solidarity towards newcomers shifted, giving way to fatigue and resentment.

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

1. **Re-shaping narratives about migrants and refugees:** A criminalisation narrative of refugees and migrants paired with a securitisation approach to migration governance strengthens the idea that migration is not a reality of interconnected economies, but a permanent emergency. In this discourse, prejudices are strengthened, and xenophobic stereotypes grow. Religious leaders and actors are uniquely placed to promote a better understanding of the real-life concerns of migrants and refugees, shape counter-narratives, including by drawing upon their religious traditions, and prevent hate speech and xenophobia.

2. Interreligious cooperation as a healing force: Over the last decade, tensions between local community groups and migrants have been exploited by political leaders appealing to nationalist sentiments, further deepening the rifts between communities by politically-driven scapegoating of migrants and refugees. This volatile context poses ongoing challenges for rebuilding social cohesion and fostering inclusive communities in the Western Balkans. Religious leaders can offer host communities and migrant groups spaces and opportunities for mutual understanding and appreciation, fostering eye-opening experiences that promote a shared sense of belonging. By leveraging interreligious dialogue to rebuild a sense of community grounded in shared values and human dignity, this process can help address existing fractures and reimagine the common values that support dynamic and harmonious living together.

Re-thinking refugee and migrant integration in the Western Balkans

Economic and demographic trends, coupled with urbanisation and emigration, have significantly impacted the labour market in the Western Balkans, contributing to skill shortages and labour gaps. Current evidence highlights a pressing need for workers in the region. In 2022, the working-age population (15–64 years) continued to decline across most Western Balkan countries, with Montenegro as the exception.^v

On the other hand, data show that the Western Balkans is a viable destination region for a global labour force. The presence of migrant workers contributes to counteracting the most detrimental effects of a declining population while fostering sustainable growth that benefits local economies.

In 2022, the Western Balkans hosted 79,978 temporary foreign workers, with Serbia (35,173) and Montenegro (29,319) leading the region, followed by Albania (7,930), Bosnia and Herzegovina (3,780), and North Macedonia (800).^{vi} In 2021, official statistics showed that Albania hosted 14,921 foreign residents, the majority of whom came from European countries (59.1%), followed by Asia (28.3%), North America (8.5%), and Africa (3.8%).^{vii}

In 2023, Bosnia and Herzegovina issued 4,586 work permits, most notably to citizens of Turkey (17.47%), Serbia (13.61%), Nepal (8.74%), Bangladesh (8.59%), and India (5.36%).^{viii} Together with migrants from other countries, in 2023, Serbia issued 45,664 temporary residence permits to Russian citizens who have moved since the start of the war in Ukraine. Following this new flow of people, over 11,000 companies, primarily in the IT sector, were founded, boosting the country's economy. Additionally, given the current labour force shortage, 12,157 workers from the People's Republic of China were posted in Serbia in the same period.^{ix}

These trends suggest that migrants and refugees in the region could play a pivotal role in revitalising local economies. However, the question of how best to ensure equal access to services and livelihoods for migrants and refugees remains contentious. In this process, cities and local governments are uniquely placed to harness the contribution of refugees and migrants for socio-economic development. It is at the local level where the economic potential of newcomers can be leveraged to foster socio-economic opportunities for both host communities and migrants. Capable of dealing with problems more pragmatically, cities and local powers have greater potential to ensure that community members are actively engaged in solutions. Local religious leaders are key to fostering mutual understanding and promoting cohesion at the local level. Yet their actions have been still marginal. Their role in shaping and implementing suitable solutions to the challenges posed by the presence of refugees and migrants in Western Balkans' societies is yet to be fully unlocked.



FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

1. **Promoting secular-religious cooperation at the local level:** Integration processes unfold at the sub-state level with distinct local factors causing significant policy variations. Local authorities are dynamic hubs, able to identify pragmatic solutions based on a greater participation of local communities. Promoting secular-religious cooperation at the local level requires targeted dialogue initiatives, such as KAICIID's "Cities for Inclusion", which promotes opportunities for reflection with religious leaders in the Western Balkans aimed at mobilising their active engagement for the benefit of migrant and host communities, as well as "University Talks with KAICIID", which assist by providing opportunities for fostering innovative reflections by bringing together secular and faith actors.

Such initiatives build bridges across different and complementary roles, boosting common visions for the benefit of local communities. This mutual collaboration is vital for fostering inclusive governance, enabling authorities to better engage with religious communities, and ensuring that local policies are sensitive to cultural and religious differences. At the same time, increasing understanding of the role religious leaders can play in migrant integration and anti-discrimination policies can motivate them to advocate for inclusive practices, mediate between diverse groups, and challenge prejudices within their communities. Together, these efforts can help migration work for all.

2. **Human dignity as the key to making migration work for all:** Decades of policies geared towards economic and labour market liberalisation have fuelled the growth of precarious jobs that local workers won't take. The Western Balkans are no exception, especially in the current process of economic convergence for the establishment of a Common Regional Market. Cheap, underpaid, and informal labour – often employing refugees and migrants – not only violates international standards and national laws but creates a downward spiral, lowering working conditions for all workers and weakening local economies – due to tax losses – while fostering tensions across local and foreign labour forces.

Protecting the dignity and labour rights of refugees and migrants safeguards the rights of all workers, promoting a transparent and dynamic labour market that drives prosperity for the entire community. By harnessing their respective religious traditions, values and foundational principles, religious leaders and actors are in the privileged position of using sacred narratives to convey to their communities the understanding of how we are all interconnected with each other, offering a better understanding of why it is important to protect and preserve the rights of refugees and migrants. Reminders about the Golden Rule of treating others as one would like to be treated could help mobilise the host community towards fair practices and equal rights for everyone, including migrants and refugees, promoting cohesive and inclusive communities.

Beyond legal frameworks: the power of interreligious and intercultural dialogue

Considerations pertaining to migration are politically loaded. Concepts related to refugee and migrant inclusion and integration are often contested and understood differently across Europe. Some countries favour assimilation, expecting newcomers to conform to the cultural and social norms of the host community. In contrast, others advocate for social inclusion, designing policies and actions to ensure equal access to public services and encouraging all citizens to engage in decision-making processes that impact their lives.

Building a sense of belonging goes beyond physical relocation. It taps into something deeper: the universal need for love, recognition, and genuine human connection. It's about creating meaningful relationships with community members, breaking down barriers, and finding common ground. But this isn't a one-way street. It's a participatory process – a chance to come together and reimagine the values that form the foundation of our communities. Every voice matters in this dialogue, especially those from more vulnerable groups, whether due to ethnicity, culture, religion or social circumstances.



Today, we witness many vehement assertions of identity and are constantly exposed to the formation of group identities against a common enemy. The problem with identity occurs when it is made into an absolute with a high risk of religious sentiments being misused. Religion speaks for some of the deepest feelings and sensitivities of individuals and communities; it carries profound historical memories and often appeals to uncritical confessional solidarities. Interreligious relations and dialogue are meant to help free religion from such misuse, and to present opportunities for religious people to serve together as agents of healing and reconciliation.

Factored in this way, interreligious and intercultural dialogue is a powerful method to transform fear into mutual respect, fostering understanding and acceptance between host communities and newcomers. It is, therefore, an indispensable approach to promote effective integration. Far from being an abstract theological exercise, interreligious dialogue addresses an urgent social need: grounding the social pact on common values that underpin cohesive and inclusive societies. It creates spaces for respectful exploration of differences, celebrating shared humanity, and addressing misconceptions that divide. By fostering mutual recognition, dialogue builds bridges between newcomers and hosting communities, enabling them to create a shared sense of belonging, essential in fostering the necessary spiritual and emotional infrastructure that serves as the foundational ‘glue’ for cohesive communities.

The standing challenge remains how willing the religious leaders are to venture out of their own liturgies and sacred spaces to offer a multi-religious setting to meet the spiritual needs of everyone in their communities, locals and newcomers alike. In the Western Balkans, promoting such an approach would offer unparalleled opportunities for healing the fractures of the past, making migrant inclusion an opportunity to address long-standing divisions and build more resilient and inclusive communities for everyone.

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

1. **Religious leaders as key players of cohesive communities:** Despite theological differences, religions and faiths fundamentally share core principles that value the foreigner as an integral member of the overall human family, supporting social cohesion and communal life. These include caring for those in need, fairness, mutual love and social justice. In the Western Balkans, there is a strong need to involve more systematically religious leaders in addressing the challenges and needs of both host communities and refugees. Religious leaders and communities must take a decisive role as architects of unity and key contributors to civil society. Their involvement is crucial in creating collaborative platforms – both formal and informal – where leaders from diverse traditions come together to discuss shared values and common concerns. These spaces lay the foundation for joint initiatives that engage both migrants and host communities, fostering cohesion and mutual understanding.

2. **Religious leaders advocating for inclusive policies:** Religious leaders and actors, working alongside local authorities, can advocate for evidence-based policies that support social cohesion, and counteract discrimination. They can amplify the voices of migrants and support fair, inclusive policies that address the needs of all community members. An example is the KAICIID-supported Network for Dialogue;² A community of faith-based and secular actors dealing with migrant and refugee inclusion by harnessing the transformative power of interreligious and intercultural dialogue. These kinds of engagement would offer a unique opportunity to build alliances across religious denominations and foster common approaches, contributing to more cohesive and inclusive communities. In the Western Balkans, such an approach would contribute to healing the scars of past interethnic conflicts.



² The [Network of Dialogue](#) is a European-wide platform established by KAICIID in 2019 to bring faith and civil society actors together to promote the use of dialogue and develop more effective recommendations for social inclusion policies for migrants and refugees in Europe.

Conclusions

Considerations regarding migration and integration policies are politically loaded, often overshadowing the positive impact of the presence of refugees and migrants on demographic and socio-economic trends in host communities. In the fractured and fragile context of the Western Balkans, the integration and inclusion of refugees and migrants require a comprehensive and collaborative approach. Religious leaders, with their deep-rooted influence and close ties to local communities, are uniquely positioned to collaborate with local authorities for the benefit of all community members. Their active engagement can help bridge divides, counter prejudice, and foster social cohesion by promoting narratives of mutual understanding and shared belonging. Greater mobilisation of religious leaders as key players and advocates for inclusion and integration not only aligns with their moral and ethical traditions but also reinforces a whole-of-society approach essential for addressing the region's divisions and the complex interplay of majorities and minorities, following the decades of conflicts and interethnic tensions. By harnessing their leadership, the Western Balkans can move towards more resilient and inclusive communities, where refugees and migrants are recognised as valuable contributors to the region's social and economic fabric.



ANNEX

Annotated Glossary

- **Migrant:** An umbrella term, not defined under international law, for a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country (internal migrant) or across an international border (international migrant), temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons. The term includes a number of well-defined legal categories of people, such as migrant workers (ILO Conventions and the UN Convention of the Rights of Migrants Workers and the Members of their Families); persons whose particular types of movements are legally defined, such as smuggled migrants (Supplementary Protocol on Smuggling of Migrants to the UN Convention on Transnational Organized Crime); as well as those whose status or means of movement are not specifically defined under international law, such as international students. (IOM (2019). [Glossary on Migration](#).)
- **Refugee:** According to the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Additional Protocol, a refugee is someone who has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group, which prevents their return to their home country and compels them to seek protection in a host country. (UNHCR (2005). [What is a Refugee?](#).)
- **Internally Displaced Person:** Internally displaced people (IDPs) have been forced to flee their homes by conflict, violence, persecution or disasters. However, unlike refugees, they remain within their own country. (UNHCR. [Who we protect](#).)
- **Asylum:** The protection granted by a state to a foreign citizen because of one of the reasons stated in the 1951 Refugee Convention (race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, and political opinion). A person seeking asylum has the right to request protection from a safe host state. Under the principle of non-refoulement, the sheltering state is obligated to assess the asylum request but is not required to recognise a person's refugee status or grant them protection. However, in line with their sovereign powers and prerogatives, as well as national asylum policies, host states may provide alternative forms of protection distinct from those associated with the recognition of a person's refugee status. (Britannica. [Asylum](#).)
- **Migrant worker:** The term migrant worker refers to “a person who is to be engaged, is engaged or has been engaged in a remunerated activity in a State of which he or she is not a national.” This definition includes refugees and stateless persons. According to the convention, the labour and social rights of migrant workers must be protected at all times, including in cases where migrant workers arrive irregularly or, reside without documentation in the host country or are engaged in contractual arrangements in violation of international and national labour standards. (IOM (2019). [Glossary on Migration](#).)
- **Integration:** While there is no internationally agreed definition of integration, according to the EU Action Plan on integration, the term “integration” identifies a dynamic process of mutual adaptation where both migrants and host societies bear some responsibilities in its fulfilment. Integration is a long-term investment in human capital, offering all community members equal opportunity to participate in the nation's social, cultural and political life, encouraging a sense of togetherness.” (Council of Europe (2023). [Integration of migrants and refugees: benefits for all parties involved](#).)

- **Social Cohesion:** Despite the lack of a common definition, the conceptualisation of social cohesion outlined by major international organizations revolves around creating conditions that allow a sense of belonging, participation, recognition and legitimacy within diverse communities. These conditions are described as being made up of two dimensions: horizontal and vertical. The horizontal dimension is the recognition and respect for diversity – bridging ethnic and religious divisions as well as fighting discrimination. The vertical dimension requires transparency and accountability of authorities, civil society organizations, as well as market institutions that work for the well-being of all the members of the community, tackling inequalities and enabling upward social mobility, particularly of the most excluded. (UNDP (2020). [Strengthening social cohesion: Conceptual framing and programming implications](#); OECD (2012). [Society at a Glance: Asia/Pacific 2011](#); Colletta, N. J., Lim, T. G., Kelles-Viitanen, A. (2001). [Social Cohesion and Conflict Prevention in Asia: Managing Diversity Through Development](#), World Bank Publication.)
- **Western Balkans region:** Historical scholars have discussed the Balkans as a region that covers territories spanning from the current Romania to European Turkey. From a geopolitical perspective, currently, the Western Balkans is a term associated with countries that were part of former Yugoslavia, while the process of accession to the European Union has further reduced the region's geographical and historical significance to the territories involved in the so-called "Berlin process" under the guidance of the Regional Cooperation Council. (Çela, A., Domaradzki, S., Lubarda, B., Radić Milosavljević, I., Stefanovski, I. & Trajanovski, N. (2020). [Western Balkans 2030 Trends](#).)

Endnotes

- ⁱ Clemens, M. (2011). [Economics and Emigration: Trillion-Dollar Bills on the Sidewalk?](#), Summer 11(3) *Journal of Economic Perspectives*.
- ⁱⁱ OECD (2022). [Labour Migration in the Western Balkans: Mapping Patterns, Addressing Challenges and Reaping Benefits](#); United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2020). [International Migrant Stock 2020](#).
- ⁱⁱⁱ Frontex (2016). [Western Balkans Annual Risk Analysis 2016](#).
- ^{iv} IOM (2024). [Mješoviti migracijski tokovi na Zapadnom Balkanu](#); Radar (2024). [Između ljubavi, stereotipa i politike Ukrajinke u Srbiji](#).
- ^v World Bank Group (2024). [Western Balkans Labor Market Brief 2022](#).
- ^{vi} OECD (2024). [Western Balkans Competitiveness Outlook 2024: Regional Profile](#).
- ^{vii} IHD (2023). [Country Profiles Albania](#).
- ^{viii} Ministry of Security (2024). [Bosnia and Herzegovina Migration profile for the year 2023](#).
- ^{ix} KIRS (2024). [Migracioni profil Republike Srbije za 2023. godinu](#); EUpravo zato (2024). [Od početka rata u Ukrajini, Rusi u Srbiji onovali oko 11.000 firmi: Preovladava IT sektor, ali i uslužne delatnosti](#).

Agenda

Migration in the Western Balkans:

interreligious and intercultural dialogue for an inclusive region

University of Belgrade, Faculty of Geography, Library Room | 30 October 2024, 14:00–18:30

14:00–15:00 – **Opening remarks**

Prof. dr. Danica Šantić, Full Professor at the University of Belgrade and Executive Board Member of the Western Balkans Migration Network

Dr. Aleksandra Djurić Milovanović, Network for Dialogue Coordinator, International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID) and Principal Research Fellow, Institute for Balkan Studies SASA

Ms. Leyla Kayacik, Independent Expert and Former Special Representative on Migration and Refugees, Council of Europe

Ms. Brankica Janković, Commissioner for the Protection of Equality of the Republic of Serbia

Prof. Dr. Merita Zulfiu Alili, Dean of Contemporary Social Sciences Faculty, South-Eastern European University, Tetovo

Prof. Dr. Natalija Perišić, Full Professor, Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Belgrade

Prof. Dr. Theodoros Fouskas, Assistant Professor, University of West Attica and EPLO Summer School on Migration

Moderator: **Ms. Teresa Albano**, Senior Programme Manager, International Dialogue Centre KAICIID

15:00-16:15 – The role of local and regional authorities in creating inclusive spaces for refugees and migrants in the Western Balkans

Dr. Nermin Oruč, Coordinator of the Western Balkans Migration Network

Dr. Ankica Tomić, Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina to Migration Asylum Refugee Regional Initiative Regional Centre (MARRI RC)

Mr. Vladimir Petronijević, Migration Expert

Ms. Jelena Ilić, Asylum and Migration Programme Coordinator, Belgrade Centre for Human Rights

Ms. Ivana Stanković, Advisor, Social participation of people on the move and local population in host regions of the Western Balkans GIZ

Moderator: **Ms. Ružica Banda**, independent expert and former National Human Rights Officer at OSCE Mission in Serbia

16:15-17:30 – Roundtable session: sharing experiences of migrant inclusion through interreligious dialogue

Dr. Andrej Jeftić, Director of Commission on Faith and Order, World Council of Churches

Pastor Samuil Petrovski, Pastor and Director Evangelical Student Association

Ms. Nejra Kadić Meškić, Executive Director of the Centre for Cultural Dialogue/Islamic community, member of the Network for Dialogue (N4D)

Mr. Igor Mitrović, Director of ADRA Serbia and Network for Dialogue member (N4D)

Moderator: **Ms. Emina Frljak**, Deputy Coordinator of the International Youth Committee of Religions for Peace

17:30-18:00 – Conclusions and main take aways

Prof. Dr. Danica Šantić, Full Professor at the University of Belgrade and Executive Board Member of the Western Balkans Migration Network

Ms. Teresa Albano, Senior Programme Manager, International Dialogue Centre KAICIID

Mr. Armen Rostomyan, Programme Officer E-learning, International Dialogue Centre KAICIID (on KAICIID e-learning programmes)

Moderator: **Dr. Goran Svilanović**, Expert on Human Rights and Economy and Former Secretary General of the Regional Cooperation Council

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