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## Past and Current Trends of Balkan Migrations

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### Référence électronique

Corrado Bonifazi et Marija Mamolo, « Past and Current Trends of Balkan Migrations », *Espace populations sociétés*

[En ligne], 2004/3 | 2004, mis en ligne le 22 janvier 2009. URL : <http://eps.revues.org/index356.html>

DOI : en cours d'attribution

Éditeur : Université des Sciences et Technologies de Lille

<http://eps.revues.org>

<http://www.revues.org>

Document accessible en ligne sur : <http://eps.revues.org/index356.html>

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# Past and Current Trends of Balkan Migrations

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## INTRODUCTION

There is hardly another region of the world where the current situation of migrations is still considerably influenced by the past history as in the Balkans. Migrations have been a fundamental element in the history of the Balkans, accompanying its stormy events [Heršak and Mesić, 1990] and obviously continuing to do so, even at the start of the new millennium. For centuries, invasions, wars, military defeats and victories have been a more or less direct cause of population movements, in a continuous and still ongoing transformation of the distribution and the overlapping of religions, languages, ethnic groups and cultures [Sardon, 2001]. Since the arrival of the Slav populations in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, the Ottoman expansion, the extension of the Hapsburg domain, the rise and growth of national states, the two World Wars and the ethnic wars of the past decade, there have been numerous population movements caused more or less directly by political and military events.

In some cases, the legacy of migrations that took place centuries ago is still tragically relevant, and weighs on the destiny of the Balkan peoples. The forced migrations from Kosovo or Krajina are the most significant examples, although certainly not the only ones. Long-term historical factors still seem to enhance the specific and particular

aspects of the Balkans [Prévélakis, 1994], affecting their specific nature also with regard to migration. However, the migration outlook of the Balkans does not just involve these flows, which in some respects tend to reflect the movements *de l'histoire de longue durée*, but it is rather much more structured and complex. Focusing for the moment on the most recent period, together with the forced migrations caused by the ethnic conflicts in the former Yugoslavia and the ethnic migrations followed by the collapse of the regimes created by “real socialism”, we find both forms of labour migration and transit migration. Therefore, the Balkans are also characterised by many of the typical elements of the current forms of mobility in Eastern and Central Europe [Okólski, 1998; Bonifazi, 2003].

With regard to the positioning of the individual countries in continental migration, in a short period of time the situation in the Balkans has undergone extraordinary changes. As late as the second half of the 1980s, the Balkan situation was characterised by the presence of two traditional sending countries, such as Yugoslavia and Turkey, together with a country which was changing into a receiving country, such as Greece, and other three countries that were substantially detached from the European

labour-migration flows, such as Albania, Romania and Bulgaria. Currently, however, these latter three countries should be considered as being among the most important sources of European emigration. Turkey has substantially maintained its role, although its range of destinations is much broader. Greece has definitely become a receiving country, while most of the former Yugoslavia is still far from having reached a completely normal condition in the migration field. This paper will seek to provide a general overview of developments in international

migrations in the Balkans as from the end of World War II. This survey will regard the Balkan countries that have experienced "real socialism", and where, for obvious reasons, the most radical and interesting changes and innovations have occurred. The purpose is above all to highlight the internal differences in the Balkans and those between the Balkan countries and the rest of the continent, also taking into due account the recent context characteristics briefly examined in the last section of this paper.

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## 1. BALKAN MIGRATION IN THE DECADES OF THE COLD WAR

By and large, the statistical measurement of international migration is one of the most difficult tasks in the domain of demographic data collection. Limitations and difficulties of measuring spatial movements of population are well known. Besides, concepts, definitions and data collection systems differ across countries and times, making spatial and temporal comparisons a really fuzzy task. Wars, conflicts, economic and social turmoil contribute to largely increase the difficulties in migration statistics collection, reducing their quality and affordability. Last but not least, in many cases the lack of flow data compels to refer to stock data. Notwithstanding these limitations, available data offer interesting information on Balkan migration when proper caveats are considered.

The international migrations involving the countries with planned economies in the Balkan peninsula from the period after World War II up to the 1990s can be attributed to two main types of flows: ethnic and labour migrations. The former concerned the German, Turkish, Hungarian and Slav Moslem minorities settled in several Balkan countries, the Italians of Yugoslavia, the Jews as well as Gypsies of Romania (Table 1). Labour migrations, on the other hand, have exclusively regarded Yugoslavia.

With the end of the war and the peace treaties, 360,000 Germans left Yugoslavia for Germany and Austria. Some of the Hungarians from Vojvodina and Romania moved to Hungary and 200,000 Italians left

the territories ceded to Yugoslavia [Fassmann and Münz, 1995]. These are, of course, approximate estimates, not at all precise and rigorous, and above all agreement does not always exist on these figures. For example, in the case of the Italians, other sources consider 250,000 to be a more realistic estimate of the size of the migration flow [Donato, 2001]. The data starting from 1954 on the flow of the Turks from Yugoslavia to Turkey are considered to be more accurate. The creation of a socialist State was not welcomed neither by the population of Turkish origin nor by the Moslems in general, so that after relations were restored between the two countries, a population flow started, involving 151,000 people between 1954 and 1960, with 30,000 in the subsequent decade and just over 4,000 between 1970 and 1990 [Kirişçi, 1995]. These figures, besides the Turks, also include many Albanians and Moslems from Bosnia and Sandjak who declared a different national origin in order to be able to emigrate to Turkey.

The ethnic migrations from the Balkans to Germany did not end in the years immediately after the conclusion of the war. In the period surveyed, a large number of people of German origin emigrated from Romania. In particular, starting from the 1970s, Germany promoted the emigration of Romanian citizens belonging to the German minority as a result of bilateral agreements signed with the Romanian government. From then up to 1989, approximately 230,000 people of

**Table 1. Ethnic international migration in some Balkan countries in the period 1945-1992/93, absolute values**

Country of origin	Country of destination	Amount	Period	Ethnic group
Yugoslavia	East and West Germany, Austria	360,000	1945-50	Germans
Yugoslavia	Italy	200,000	1945-50	Italians
Slovakia, Romania, Yugoslavia	Hungary	315,000	1945-50	Hungarians
Romania	West Germany	402,000	1950-92	Germans (Aussiedler)
Yugoslavia	West Germany	90,000	1950-92	Germans (Aussiedler)
Bulgaria	Turkey	630,000	1950-92	Turks and Slav Muslims
Yugoslavia	Turkey	300,000	1950-66	Turks and Slav Muslims
Romania	Israel, USA	500,000	1960-92	Jews
Romania	Western Europe (mainly West Germany)	240,000	1991-93	Mainly gypsies
Yugoslavia, Romania	Hungary	124,000	1988-93	Mainly Hungarians

Source: Fassman and Münz (1995).

German origin emigrated from Romania [Fassmann and Münz, 1995]. Between 1960 and 1992, most of the Romanian Jews also left the country, moving mainly to Israel and the United States. Furthermore, after 1987 approximately 60,000 Hungarians left Romania legally, most of them settled in Hungary [Dövényi and Vukovich, 1994]. With regard to information on other minorities, in the period 1950-53 approximately 250,000 Turks obtained permission to emigrate from Bulgaria, and later, on the basis of the 1968 agreements, over 95,000 Turks were granted the right to emigrate to Turkey. Out of the latter, only 14.1% decided to remain there [Bobeva, 1994].

With regard to Yugoslavia, starting from the 1960s, migrations were also due to strong economic motives. Yugoslavia was the only country with a socialist regime, not only in the Balkan Peninsula but in the whole of East-Central Europe, to tolerate and even promote this type of emigration. Between the 1960s and 1970s, the country became one of the major sources of labour force, thus contributing to the industrial development of North-Central Europe. Germany, Switzerland and Austria were the main host countries. Yugoslav researchers estimate a continuous growth in the stock of migrant

workers living in Western Europe between 1964 and 1973, the year when the figure of 850,000 people should be recorded [Malačić, 1994]. The policies to stop immigration, introduced in the major receiving countries, led to a definite reversal in trends, stopping only in 1985 when labour emigration stock was reduced to 500,000 people. In the last five years of the 1980s, the values grew once more, also due to the effect of the profound economic, social and political crisis under way in Yugoslavia, with a stock of 550,000 emigrant workers being estimated in 1990 [Malačić, 1994]. The statistical sources of the most important European receiving countries generally refer to the foreign population, considering together workers and inactive population. According to these data, in the early 1990s the overall number of Yugoslavian labour migrants and their family members exceeded 1.3 million people [Fassmann and Münz, 1995]. A large part of the discrepancy between these two estimates of Yugoslavian emigration is the result of the different groups of population considered (workers vs. workers and family members), but it also reflects the different interest and ability of receiving and departure countries in measuring the two sides of the same migration flow.

## 2. SIZE ESTIMATIONS OF MIGRATION SINCE THE END OF THE COLD WAR

For the Balkans, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the conclusion of the cold war represented the end of the longest period of stability and peace in their recent history [Prévelakis, 1994]. In the region, the transition process had two main types of consequences on the migration dynamics. Firstly, by triggering the ethnic conflicts it led to the conditions producing forced migrations from the countries of the former Yugoslavia, which represent undoubtedly the most dramatic and characteristic element of all the European migrations in the last decade. Secondly, it created the political and economic basis (as well as in the rest of East-Central Europe) for the continuation or start-up of a series of migration flows that were previously strictly controlled by the State. Therefore, since 1989 there has been a further revival of the ethnic migrations already considered in the previous paragraph and labour migration flows from countries that were previously totally excluded from these dynamics developed as well. Finally, most of the Balkan region has become highly characterised as a migration transit zone, as a place of origin, as well as a land of passage for various forms of illegal migration [Bonifazi, Conti and Mamolo, 2003].

The quantification of these processes is far from being satisfactory. In fact, in addition to the already mentioned problems in mea-

suring international migration specific factors have contributed to make even more difficult the data collection in the Balkan area in the last fifteen years. Ethnic wars in former Yugoslavia have been a powerful factor in reducing, directly and indirectly, the availability and the quality of migration statistics. Besides, as in all Eastern and Central Europe, the economic and social problems of the transition period have determined a climate not particularly favourable to the organisation and implementation of a complex recording system for a phenomenon that up to a few years ago hardly existed. Finally, other problems arise from the new characteristics of migration processes, with the increasing importance of informal, irregular or illegal flows. Thus, the available statistics describe, though not always fully, the legal component of migration, providing limited data on the flows going along different paths.

In order to have a general idea of the extent of the migrations, reference has been made to two different estimates of net migrations in the countries considered in the 1990s (Table 2). The first estimate is based on migration statistics, in particular those concerning the receiving countries, and the second estimate on the calculation of the migration balance as the difference between the total growth of the population and the natur-

**Table 2. Net migration levels in Balkan countries, 1990-2000 (a)**  
(annual rates per thousand, annual absolute values in thousands)

Country	Net migration rate		Net migration rate as residual			Net migration as residual absolute values	
	1990-1995	1995-1998	1990-1995	1995-1998	1995-2000	1990-1995	1995-2000
Albania	-2.5	-8.4	-24.7	-21.0	-19.0	-80	-60
Bosnia and Herzegovina	-43.2	1.3	-52.0	27.1	27.0	-200	100
Bulgaria	-1.1	-0.7	-4.7	-4.9	-4.9	-40	-40
Croatia	8.9	9.7	5.5	0.1	-	25	-
Romania	-3.5	-1.2	-4.6	-0.3	-0.5	-106	-12
Serbia and Montenegro	-15.0	-1.4	3.9	-2.3	-1.9	28	-15
Slovenia	0.1	0.3	6.9	0.6	0.5	14	1
TFYR Macedonia	1.5	-3.7	-3.2	0.6	0.5	-6	1

Source: UN (2002a and 2002b).

Notes: (a) In the first two columns, net migrations are based on the official migration statistics. The last five columns show the residual of the demographic balance equation (total population growth minus natural growth).

al balance. Both values are calculated by the United Nations and highlight considerable differences, which are in any case also useful to illustrate the main trends.

The highest migration loss of the decade is the one recorded in Bosnia between 1990 and 1995, with an annual rate of -43.2 per 1000 according to the migration statistics and -52 per 1000 according to the estimates of the net migration as residual. According to the latter source in absolute terms, the total loss would have been one million people in a country with a population of just 4.3 million at the start of the decade. Again according to this measurement of the migration balance, half of this loss would have been recovered in the subsequent 5-year period. In fact, from 1996 the process of return from asylum countries started, leading after 1997 to the returns exceeding the departures [UN, 2002a]. The sharp difference in the period 1995-98 between the values shown in the two different methods of calculation induces us to consider the information available with great caution, until more reliable measurements are obtained.

Although Bosnia recorded the highest levels of migration loss, the major sending country of the region seems to be Albania. Also in this case, the differences in the measurement of the net migration are considerable, and should mainly be attributed to the high number of undocumented migrants moving to Italy and above all to Greece. According to the statistics of the receiving countries, the average annual rates are -2.5 per 1000 and -8.4 per 1000, while in the estimates using the residual method the figures are -24.7 per 1000 and -21 per 1000. The latter values would signify a total migration loss of

700,000 people in the 1990s. This figure, as we shall discuss later, is in basic agreement with the most recent evaluations of Albanian immigration formulated by the official Greek and Italian sources.

Bulgaria and Romania are two other sending countries although at much lower levels. The data available show, in the two 5-year periods examined, a constant loss for Bulgaria and a declining loss for Romania. In the former case, the migration loss would have been 40,000 people per year, and in the latter it would have fallen from 106,000 to 12,000 people. In both countries, emigration in the early 1990s was strongly ethnic in character, though in subsequent years it tended more towards labour migrations.

With regard to the other countries of the former Yugoslavia, Slovenia and Croatia record a positive migration balance, while Macedonia and Yugoslavia reveal an alternation between positive and negative balances. Slovenia, which entered the European Union in May 2004, highlights the best economic performance among the countries surveyed, and the positive balances recorded are most probably the signs of a coming transition of its role in the European migrations, with the transformation into a receiving country. For Croatia, this type of role still seems far away, and the positive balances recorded are related to the dynamics of forced migrations caused by the conflicts. The same reasons have also considerably influenced the migration dynamics in Serbia and Montenegro, with a highly potential underestimation of the arrivals of displaced people, also leading to contrasting evaluations of net migration rates. Migration has been modest in Macedonia and is also largely due to conflicts.

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### 3. FORCED MIGRATIONS AND STOCK OF BALKAN EMIGRANTS IN WESTERN EUROPE

Moving on from an estimate of migration balances to a complete reconstruction of the various flows characterising the countries considered in the past 15 years seems to be a rather difficult task. In a number of cases, in fact, the measurement of Balkan migra-

tions appears to be insufficient, inaccurate or wholly lacking. If, however, we refer to the number of displaced people hosted in a country of the former Yugoslavia and to the number of citizens of a Balkan country resident in a country of Western Europe, these

two sets of stock data can be used to determine some important characteristics of the main migration flows of the period.

The greatest flows of displaced people, with regard to those remaining within the borders of the old socialist Yugoslavia, moved from Croatia and Bosnia to Yugoslavia and from Bosnia to Croatia (Table 3). The stock data available, despite all the limits, show three migration streams, which, at their maximum peak, have led to a displaced population with a similar size. The values reached 287,000 people in 1993 for Bosnian displaced persons to Croatia, 349,000 in 1992 for the Bosnians hosted in Yugoslavia and 299,000 in 1999 for the forced migration from Croatia to Yugoslavia. On the whole, the data follow the trends of the conflicts and reflect the persistence of certain situations being still far from a satisfactory solution, especially with regard to the Croatian and Bosnian Serbs displaced in Serbia and Montenegro. Despite their dramatic nature, the data shown in Table 3 only partially reflect the intensity of forced migrations in the former Yugoslavia. To these figures we should add the internally displaced persons and flows directed beyond the borders of the

former Yugoslavia. These flows were especially heavy during the most violent phases of the conflicts and stopped only when most of the host countries significantly restricted entries to asylum seekers. For example, the number of internally displaced persons at the end of 2002 totalled 367,000 in Bosnia and 262,000 in Serbia and Montenegro, figures to which we should add some 85,000 people under the protection of the UNHCR in Kosovo. Between 1992 and 2002, the total number of asylum applications lodged in industrialised countries exceeded one million, of whom 850,000 from people originating in what is today the Federation of Serbia and Montenegro and 194,000 from people coming from Bosnia-Herzegovina [UNHCR, 2003].

In the early 1990s, the number of immigrants coming from the Balkans residing in a country of Western Europe was especially high in Germany, Austria and Switzerland and almost exclusively involved the Yugoslavs (Table 4). In 1991, they reached a total of 663,000 people in Germany, 198,000 in Austria and 141,000 in Switzerland. In relative terms, and also considering the other Balkan countries, migration from this area

**Table 3. Refugees in former Yugoslavia countries by country of origin and asylum, 1992-2002.**  
Absolute values in thousands

Country of origin	Country of asylum	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Bosnia Herzegovina	Croatia		287.0	183.6	193.5	158.7	68.3	28.7	25.0	20.9	20.4	7.7
	TFYR Macedonia	..	28.7	12.8	9.0	5.1	3.5	0.8	0.2	0.2	0.1	..
	Slovenia	72.4	44.3	29.2	18.8	8.3	4.6	3.5	3.1	2.8	2.4	..
	FR Yugoslavia	349.3	200.9	98.2	84.7	250.7	241.4	200.9	198.2	190.0	143.1	121.4
Croatia	Bosnia Herzegovina	..	..	..	..	..	40.0	30.0	39.6	24.9	23.6	22.1
	FR Yugoslavia	166.9	147.8	72.1	232.7	297.1	293.2	296.6	298.5	289.9	245.3	228.7
TFYR Maced.	FR Yugoslavia	..	1.9	0.2	0.2	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	11.3	3.6
Slovenia	FR Yugoslavia	..	28.4	14.8	12.8	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2	0.7	..
FR Yugoslavia	Albania	3.0	3.0	3.0	4.0	4.0	0.0	22.3	3.9	0.5	0.3	..
	Bosnia Herzegovina	..	..	..	..	..	..	10.0	26.1	13.3	9.1	6.0
	Croatia	..	..	..	5.1	6.7	0.5	0.4	3.4	1.5	1.4	..
	TFYR Macedonia	..	..	..	..	..	..	0.9	21.0	8.9	4.3	2.8

.. not reported by the source  
Source: UNHCR (2002, 2003)

**Table 4. Stock of foreign population from the Balkan countries in some European countries, 1st January. Absolute values in thousands**

Country of residence	Country of citizenship								Total	% For.
	Albania	FR Yugosl.	Slovenia	Croatia	Bosnia Herz.	TFYR Maced.	Bulgaria	Romania		
Austria										
1991	0.9	197.9 (a)	..	..	..	..	3.6	18.5	220.9	42.7
1996	..	332.4 (a)	..	..	..	..	..	..	332.4	45.8
2001 (b)	..	341.6 (a)	..	..	..	..	..	..	341.6	45.1
Denmark										
1991	-	10.0 (a)	..	..	..	..	0.1	0.8	11.0	6.8
1996	-	11.1	-	0.4	16.2	0.4	0.3	1.2	29.6	13.3
2001	0.1	12.8 (c)	-	0.5	20.2	1.5	0.4	1.1	36.6	14.2
Germany										
1991	..	662.7 (a)	..	..	..	..	14.7 (d)	60.3 (d)	737.7	13.8
1996	10.5	797.8	17.3	185.1	316.0	34.0	38.8	109.3	1508.8	21.0
2001	11.8	662.5	18.8	216.8	156.3	51.8	34.4	90.1	1242.5	17.0
Greece										
2001(e)	438.0	3.8	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.7	35.1	22.0	500.2	65.6
Italy										
1991	1.9	29.8 (a)	..	..	..	..	2.9	7.5	42.0	5.4
1996	33.2	48.8	1.3	10.6	6.7	7.4	2.9	11.8	122.8	16.6
2001 (f)	163.9	60.1	2.0	16.6	14.1	26.1	6.8	62.3	351.8	24.0
Sweden										
1991	-	41.1 (a)	..	..	..	..	1.1	5.3	47.5	9.8
1996	0.1	38.4	0.4	3.8	53.9	0.9	1.9	4.2	103.6	19.5
2000	0.2	22.7	0.6	7.2	34.2	1.8	1.1	3.0	70.7	14.5
Norway										
1991	..	4.2 (a)	..	..	..	..	0.3	0.3	4.8	3.4
1996	0.1	6.4	-	0.1	11.2	0.1	0.3	0.4	18.7	11.6
2001	0.1	8.8	-	1.6	11.6	0.3	0.4	0.5	23.3	12.7
Switzerland										
1991	-	141.4 (a)	..	..	..	..	0.6	2.4	144.5	12.8
1996	0.6	186.0	3.2	42.6	24.7	39.5	1.1	2.6	300.4	22.0
2001	1.1	196.4	2.8	43.9	45.1	56.1	1.7	2.7	349.9	24.6

.. not available; - less than 500.

Source: Eurostat (2003)

Notes: (a) Data refer to former Yugoslavia. (b) Data from OECD (2003). (c) Our estimate. (d) Data from OECD (1995). (e) Census data from National Statistical Office. (f) ISTAT data.

represented 12.8% of the entire foreign population in Switzerland, 13.8 in Germany and 42.7 in Austria. In subsequent years, these countries have continued to be three of the main destinations of Balkan emigration. In Germany, the foreigners from the Balkans exceeded 1.5 million people in 1996, i.e. 21% of the total, falling to 1.2 million in 2001 due to the effect of the return of many displaced persons; in Switzerland, they totalled 350,000 in 2001 and accounted for a quarter of the entire foreign population. In Austria, they totalled 342,000 in 2001 and accounted for 45% of the total. Most of these figures still refer to immigrants coming from

the countries of the former Yugoslavia; only in Germany, a considerable Romanian community has settled down totalling approximately 90,000 people in 2001.

In the 1990s and in the early part of this decade, Greece and Italy have emerged as two other major countries of destination of the Balkan emigration, especially from Albania. According to the data of the last Greek census, all the Albanians resident in Greece totalled 438,000 in 2001, to which we should add 35,000 Bulgarians and 22,000 Romanians, while there were practically no immigrants from the countries of the former



Yugoslavia. Overall, the Balkan component represented 65.6% of the total immigration and the Albanians alone formed 4% of the total population of Greece. In Italy, during early 2001, the resident Balkan immigrants totalled 352,000, i.e. 24% of the foreign population. Also in this case, the Albanians were the largest community, tending towards a gradual stabilisation [Bonifazi and Sabatino, 2003]. The Romanian component was growing: this trend is also confirmed by data of the last regularisation, since out of the 700,000 applications Romanian citizens submitted 143,000. The number of applications submitted by the other Balkan nationalities was 54,000 for the Albanians, 9,100 for the Bulgarians, 6,700 for the Yugoslavs, 5,800 for the Macedonians, 4,200 for the Croatians, 2,700 for the Bosnians and 500 for the Slovenians.

Also in some countries of Northern Europe, the percentage of immigrants from the Balkans exceeded 10% of total immigration in the 1990s. In absolute terms, these values exceeded 23,000 people in Norway and 36,000 in Denmark in 2001, while the figures for Sweden in 1996 exceeded 100,000. In the latter country, the fall between 1996 and 2001 is due to an increase in the number of naturalisations, totalling 35,800 for citizens of the former Yugoslavia in the 2-year period 1998-99 [Bonifazi, Conti and Mamolo, 2003].

The data considered reflect only the regular component of migration from the Balkan area to Western Europe, whilst the size of irregular or illegal migration can be relevant for some flows. The same magnitude of regularisation processes shows the gap existing between the official and the actual size of international migration. In this respect, data for Romanians in the last Italian amnesty are really significant. They give evidence for the presence of an important flow of labour migration in the last years, while according to UN estimations in table 2 net emigration of Romania largely decreased in the second half of the nineties. It is possible that trends in Romanian migration have abruptly reversed at the turn of the century with the emerging of new destinations, as it is possible that UN fails to capture all migration flows. Waiting for new and updated data, the impression is of a renewed importance of labour migration from Balkans along different and in many cases informal paths. These developments are a sign of the more general evolution of international migration in Central and Eastern Europe, with the beginning of new forms of mobility characterised by short-term movements [Okolski, 1998]. This situation can create a sound and large base for more traditional migration movements if new channels of entry and stronger pull factors should appear.

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#### 4. CONTEXT FACTORS AND MIGRATIONS IN THE BALKANS IN THE 1990S

In the 1990s, various socio-economic and demographic factors regarding Balkan migration have emerged, adding new significance to population movements in the area. These elements have not always been considered sufficiently important, with attention being focused on the impact of the forced migrations caused by the conflicts. It seems that the development of migration flows has also followed the guiding lines of consolidated historical and cultural links and the more recent trade flows between the Balkan sending countries and the European receiving countries. All of these factors as a whole have become increasingly important in

guiding migration flows in the region. This section will focus on some of these context factors in order to seek to provide some elements to think of when exploring the present and the future prospects of the migratory process in the region.

At the start of the current decade, the amount of the population of the 8 Balkan countries considered was approximately 15% of the population of the 15 EU Member States (Table 5). Romania showed the largest population with approximately 22.5 million, while Macedonia and Slovenia had the smallest populations, with approximately 2 million citizens. In the 1990s, some

Balkan countries experienced a significant fall in the population, generally blamed on migration losses, which in some cases also added to the natural negative balance. The economic and social crisis of the 1990s and the military conflicts also determined strong repercussions on the volume of the working-age population. In the 1990s, the average annual growth rate was negative in Albania, Bosnia, Bulgaria and Croatia. Whereas, the population aged between 15 and 64 increased in all the other countries. This trend is basically due to the migration

dynamics characterising these countries, rather than to natural population dynamics. In this respect, Albanian age structure appears the most affected by emigration, when we consider the very high potential of demographic growth of the country. As an example, 600,000 Albanian immigrants were officially recorded in Greece and Italy at the beginning of the present decade. This value represents something more than one sixth of the whole population of the country; it mainly regards the working age population and can heavily affect the age structure.

**Table 5. Some basic demographic and economic indicators for the Balkan countries, 2000**

Country	Tot. pop. (in mill.) (1)	Pop. aged 15-64. Av. ann. growth (%) (2)		GDP p. c., PPP (\$) (in th.) (3)	Tot. unempl. (%) (4)
		1990-2000	2000-2010		
Albania	3.4	-0.13	1.24	3.5	18.2 (a)
Bosnia					
Herzeg.	4.0	-0.62	0.99	5.7	16.4 (b)
Bulgaria	8.2	-0.51	-0.42	6.5	16.3
Croatia	4.6	-1.05	-0.31	8.7	16.1
Romania	22.5	0.03	0.04	5.5	7.1
Slovenia	2.0	0.51	-0.10	16.5	7.2
TFYR					
Macedon.	2.0	0.73	0.59	6.4	30.5 (b)
Yugoslavia					
FR	10.6	0.36	0.19	..	21.2 (c)
EU-15	376.4	0.32	0.09	23.7	7.9

Source: (1) Council of Europe (2002); (2) our elaboration on data from UN (2003);

(3) World Bank (2003); (4) ILO (2002).

Albania: UNDP (2000), Bosnia Herz.: UNDP (2003); EU 15: Eurostat (2002)

Notes: (a) 1999; (b) 2001; (c) Work applicants.

At the end of a decade of crisis, there still exist some characteristics of the population dynamics and structure that could have an effect on the migratory process in the near future. First of all, the natural population gain is especially significant in Albania, which in 2000 had a natural growth rate of 12.2 per 1000. At the end of the 1990s, births also exceeded the number of deaths in Bosnia and Macedonia, with a natural growth rate of 3.1 and 6 per 1000 respectively, while in the other countries this rate is negative or almost zero. The natural dynamics are also reflected in the differences observed in the age structure of the population. The Albanian population shows a high percentage of young people aged under 15, who represent almost one third of the total population, while people aged 65 and above

were about 6% at the end of the 1990s. In Bosnia and in Macedonia, the percentage of young people was about 20% in 2000, and the older population represented approximately 10%. It should in any case be pointed out that the ageing process has now also started in these countries, as observed for some time in Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Slovenia. This involves a fall in the percentage of the population aged under 15 years and an increase of the older population. A similar situation can be observed in Yugoslavia, though with sharp differences on the regional level. Furthermore, again according to the UN estimates for the 1990s, in most of the countries surveyed the relative weight of the working age population increased, involving a significant fall in the total dependency ratio. However, the posi-

tive growth rate for the period 2000-2010 of the working age population in Albania, Bosnia, Macedonia and Yugoslavia could affect the migration potential, which although low in absolute terms, could still affect the neighbouring countries or the traditional European host countries.

The purely demographic characteristics of the population in the countries of the Balkan Peninsula can in any case only partly justify the dynamics in population movements of the Balkans. The effect of population pressure is more obvious when combined with other economic and social factors, which could have triggered migration flows, without counting the forced migrations with an evident ethnic nature due to military conflicts.

One of the potential factors "triggering" migrations could lie in the increase of unemployment, officially inexistent during the socialist period. Statistics on unemployment trends in 1990s are incomplete and in any case not very reliable. For indications on the unemployment levels, reference will be made here to the ILO statistics based on labour force sample surveys, and in case of missing data, to figures provided in the respective national *Human Development Reports* published by the UNDP. In most of the countries considered the total unemployment rate is considerably higher than the EU 15 average. Furthermore, it has to be noted that the figures reported might hide an even more critical unemployment situation in many of these countries. The case, for example, of people with highly insecure and unstable jobs is disregarded. In 2000, the majority of the countries considered show a total unemployment rate above 16% with significant peak for Macedonia, which recorded an unemployment rate of 30.5% (Table 5). According to the ILO statistics relying on labour force surveys estimates, Slovenia and Romania are the exceptions. Nevertheless, the figures should be taken with caution as required for the other Balkan countries. Referring to registered unemployment, Romania records a total unemployment rate of 10.5% in 2000.

Albania registered a fall in unemployment rate after the first years of the economic transition. Nevertheless, the favourable situation was reversed after the financial cri-

sis occurred in 1997, with unemployment rates again rising to 18.2%, therefore inducing a serious problem for the country's economic and social system. It should furthermore be stressed that an improvement in the situation of the Albanian labour market has also been compromised by the extent of the underground economy and the discrepancies between real and officially recorded unemployment [UNDP, 2000]. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the unemployment rate in 2001 was estimated at 16.4%. In this situation, the problems encountered when we seek to quantify the level of unemployment are similar to those observed in Albania, and in particular regard the fact that much employment is covered by the informal sector. Nevertheless, a large portion of actual unemployment is also "statistically hidden" within registered employment. Besides the unemployment data, the instability of the labour market and the economic insecurity experienced by most of the population are also rather worrying [UNDP, 2003].

The economic recession in the 1990s also emerges in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) levels. According to the figures available from the World Bank (2003), at the end of the last decade most of the countries surveyed recorded a lower GDP than in 1990. Other indicators, such as the GDP per-capita, also confirm a generally critical situation. For most of these countries, the degree of economic development - if determined on the GDP basis - is currently far under the European Union average.

Apart from the purely economic significance of trade between the Balkan countries and the other European countries, the commercial link is also important in the context of population movements considered as an integral part of the overall factors contributing to the definition of a migration system. In fact, international migration is increasingly the result of the very complex set of relations linking the different part of the world under many respects. The globalisation processes have contributed to increase the importance of the flows of goods, capitals and information in establishing, promoting and maintaining migration movements. In this context, trade flows allow to highlight the size and direction of the eco-

conomic links between Balkan countries and the other countries, describing an important structural factor of international migration. Trade with the countries of the European Union is an important segment of the foreign trade of the Balkan region (Table 6). According to the data for 2000, imports from the EU represent the highest percentage of imports to Albania and Slovenia, and

represent over 50% of the imports in the other countries, except for Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria and Macedonia. Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia, together with Yugoslavia, are the countries showing a higher percentage of imports from the other countries of the Balkan region, while for Bulgaria imports from Russia total 25%.

**Table 6. Imports and exports in the Balkan region. 2000**

Imports (%) by country of origin and destination							
<i>Origin</i>							
<i>Destination</i>	EU-15	Austria	Germany	Greece	Italy	Balkans (a)	<i>Total</i> (mill. US\$)
Albania	76.5	0.9	5.9	26.4	35.0	6.7	1065
Bosnia Herzegovina	43.8	7.0	13.6	0.9	13.0	37.6	2645
Bulgaria	44.9	2.3	14.1	5.0	8.6	4.9	6362
Croatia	56.0	6.7	16.4	0.3	17.1	10.1	7688
Romania	56.7	2.5	14.7	2.8	18.8	1.7	11868
FR Yugoslavia	55.8	6.2	15.2	4.3	16.4	21.3	3277
Slovenia	67.8	8.2	19.0	0.2	17.4	6.8	10089
TFYR Macedonia	38.1	1.9	12.1	9.6	5.3	24.5	2085
Exports (%) by country of origin and destination							
<i>Destination</i>							
<i>Origin</i>	EU-15	Austria	Germany	Greece	Italy	Balkans (a)	<i>Total</i> (mill. US\$)
Albania	88.5	0.8	7.3	17.2	61.3	..	261
Bosnia Herzegovina	65.4	5.9	13.8	1.5	31.5	20.1	683
Bulgaria	51.7	1.4	9.2	7.9	14.4	11.9	4760
Croatia	54.9	6.4	14.6	2.4	21.6	24.2	4071
Romania	64.0	2.4	15.7	3.1	22.5	5.2	10367
FR Yugoslavia	66.9	3.6	17.6	7.5	23.7	10.7	1025
Slovenia	63.9	7.5	27.2	0.3	13.6	16.4	8728
TFYR Macedonia	42.5	0.8	19.4	6.4	6.7	35.7	1319

.. not available

Source: IMF (2001).

Notes: (a) Included only the eight specified countries; when data not available for a specific flow, this value is considered zero.

The structure of imports according to the country of origin suggests the existence of other types of links between the countries, not necessarily or not only related to economic factors, but also to geographical, historical and cultural aspects. A total of 61% of imports to Albania come from Greece and Italy. The Italian import rate is approximately 19% in Romania and 16% in Yugoslavia. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Yugoslavia about 20% of imports come from Austria and Germany, and this percentage rises to 27% in

Slovenia. Exports follow similar trends. In 2000, exports to the EU countries exceeded 60% in most of the countries surveyed, with a peak of 89% for Albania. Italy is the main exporting destination for Albania and makes purchases between 20% and 30% of the exports from Bosnia, Croatia, Romania and Yugoslavia. Exports to Germany total 27% for Slovenia and range between 10% and 20% for the other countries (except for Albania and Bulgaria). In any case, we should also recall the trade flows within the Balkans, with Bosnia, Croatia and

Macedonia partly reflecting the continuity of the economic links in the old Yugoslav Federation. It is interesting to note that some of the relations in migration field are substantially confirmed considering international trade. Albania's trade is almost completely linked to Italy and Greece,

while Germany has strong ties with countries of Former Yugoslavia, and Romania appears to prefer Germany and Italy. In general terms, economic links expressed by international trade might constitute an important component of contextual factors of migration trends.

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## CONCLUSIONS

In the light of what has been observed in the last decade and of the more recent situation, the Balkan region will obviously maintain a significant role in the migration dynamics of the coming years. There are various factors that could contribute to the further development of the mobility of the population in the region. The most obvious factors regard the serious economic imbalance between the majority of the Balkan countries and the nearby countries of the European Union, which represent an important point of attraction. We should therefore recall that the worst negative effects of the transition process towards market economies in Central Eastern Europe have been recorded in the Balkan countries, with the sole exception of Slovenia [UN, 2002a]. To these elements, we should add both an unemployment rate that will be hard to reduce in the short term and, in some of these countries, a persisting population pressure on the labour market due to the still significant potential of natural population growth.

We should furthermore consider that the Balkan region, despite the efforts and commitment of the international community, is still characterised by serious political insta-

bility. This situation seems to have had a larger influence on the development of transit routes for illegal migration than on the size of these flows [Bonifazi and Strozza, 2004]. To this regard, as previously mentioned in two of the EU countries neighbouring the former Yugoslavia, i.e. Greece and Italy, the weight in recent immigration flows of the countries most involved in the conflicts has been definitely modest. The Balkans are on two of the main transit routes for illegal migrations, one moving from the Ukraine towards the Czech Republic and Slovakia, and the other directly involving Romania, Bulgaria, the former Yugoslavia and Albania [IOM, 2000]. The transition period in the region, even on the institutional level, has contributed to the proliferation of new types of "illegal migrations" in the region, such as trafficking and smuggling, mainly towards the EU countries. On the whole, in the present situation it is hard to forecast the outcome, which closely depends on the stabilisation processes under way. The future migration dynamics in the most unstable area of the Balkans depend on the outcomes of the more general political and social development of the countries of the region.

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