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PATTERNS OF MIGRATION IN THE BALKANS

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Introduction

As the late Jonas Widgren pointed out in 2000 to the Parliamentary Assembly of the *Council of Europe* in Struga (Rep. of Macedonia), the Balkans embodies one of the most complicated refugee and migration issues in the entire world (Widgren, 2000: 1). With his customary clarity and insight, Jonas explained that over 10 million people – out of a total population of some 80m in the Balkan peninsula¹ – had moved between 1990 and 2000. Furthermore, these population movements, unusually, had ramifications for security within the Balkans and also for western Europe, thus implicating both the EU and NATO (Widgren, 2000: 3). What has changed in the intervening years?

The Balkan region is complex, with several distinct categorisations of country according to economic development, recent migration history, and formal relationship to the EU. Among the constituent republics of the former Yugoslav Federation, one (Slovenia) has acceded to the EU, another (Croatia) is a candidate country although its application was delayed until October 2005 owing to unresolved war crimes issues (EC 2005a: 6). The remainder – Serbia and Montenegro (SCG), Bosnia and Hercegovina (BiH), Kosovo, and Macedonia (fYRoM) – might be characterised as having serious political structural problems; Macedonia, however, has achieved a degree of stability such that it is now recommended as a candidate for EU membership (EC, 2005b).

There remain around one million refugees and displaced persons in these countries, predominantly in Serbia. Some refugees have returned to the region, but not without problems and recently at a dwindling rate (Blitz, 2005; Philpott, 2005; ECRI, 2004a). With the exception of Croatia (and, of course, Slovenia), economic development is still at a low level, with *per capita* GDP ranging from €930 in Kosovo, €2,230 in Serbia and reaching €5,745 in Croatia for 2003 (EC 2004: 13). Informal economic activity, organised crime and trafficking of aliens are endemic in the region, and constitute a major threat to political stability and chances of future EU membership.

Of the remaining four Balkan countries, two – Romania and Bulgaria – are applicant EU countries, and expected to accede in 2007; Albania and Moldova, on the other hand, have economic and political infrastructure so far below the EU level, that their possibility of EU accession is some way off. Nevertheless, in principle all Balkan countries are seen as possible future members of the EU (EC 2004a: 5), with some significant reforms, especially concerning border controls, being undertaken through the Stabilisation and Association Process (Baldwin-Edwards, 2004a: 11-12). Stabilisation and Association Agreements are in force with Croatia and Macedonia, in the final stages of negotiation with Albania, under negotiation with Serbia and Montenegro, and about to be discussed with Bosnia and Hercegovina (EC 2005a: 10).

In terms of economic development, *per capita* GDP is extremely low for Moldova (€417 in 2002), for Albania it is lower than all of former Yugoslavia other than Kosovo (€1,685 in 2003), and it is slightly above the average for the region for Bulgaria and Romania (€2,257 and €2,317) (EC 2004b; Jandl 2003). The current number of emigrants from Moldova is variously estimated at between 600,000 and 1,000,000 persons (IOM 2003a: 4; Scanlan 2002: 16), constituting 25-45% of current population. Human trafficking has been, and remains, extensive from Moldova, with merely an estimated 80,000 migrants working legally in their country of destination (Jandl, 2003). Albania is thought now to have a minimum of 900,000 emigrants (Barjaba, 2004); however, official data from just Greece and Italy count over 1m Albanians with residence permits, so an estimate of 1.1m (34% of the population) is more plausible.

In the case of Romania, by far the largest country in the region with a population of some 22m, the statistical service seems to have been unable to calculate emigrants from the census data. Nor are there any other state data on temporary migration (IOM 2003b). Comparing 1992 and 2002 census data, a calculation of 800,000 ‘missing’ persons can be made²: this figure sits well with recent IOM survey data, which suggest that 15% of the adult population has worked abroad, with currently some 850,000 persons still abroad, and only 53% with legal employment (IOM 2005). Similar problems with data exist in Bulgaria, where the census data

¹ For the purposes of this paper, I follow the policy of the *International Commission on the Balkans* (ICB, 2005) and classify as western Balkans the following countries: Albania, Bosnia and Hercegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, and Serbia and Montenegro. To these must be added the eastern Balkan countries of Bulgaria, Romania and Moldova. Since Turkey occupies a very special and prominent place in relation to both migrations and the EU, I do not include it in this geopolitical scheme.

² Own calculation, using census data 2002 and births/deaths published in Constantin (2004:37).

show only 196,000 emigrants between 1992-2001 whilst other calculations suggest 600-700.000 (IOM 2003c:17-18). Gächter (2002) in a detailed analysis, suggests that high nett emigration – mainly of Turkish Bulgarians – occurred 1988-1995, with some 479,000 persons. From 1996-99, Bulgaria had a low level of nett immigration whereby emigration of Bulgarians was more than compensated by immigration of other nationals (Gächter 2002: 4). Thus, a snapshot of Bulgarian emigration patterns would probably show less than 10% of the population abroad at any moment.

Table 1, below, summarises these data on population and migration in the region.

Table 1
Crude Population data, Balkan region

	GDP <i>per cap.</i> (€)	Population (millions)	Stock of recent emigrants¶	Emigrants/ population (%)
	2003	2003	Most recent data	
Albania	1,685	3.2	1.1 million	34
BiH	1,897	4.2	*N/A	
fYRoM	2,121	2.1	N/A	
SCG	2,232	8.6	N/A	
Kosovo	930	1.9	N/A	
<i>West.Balkan.av.</i>	2,053	19.9	N/A	
Bulgaria	2,257	7.8	650,000	8
Croatia	5,745	4.4	N/A	
Romania	2,317	21.8	850,000	4
Moldova§	417		600,000-1 million	25-45

SOURCE: EC (2004b)

Notes:

* Emigration data concerning nationals are not applicable for the former Yugoslav countries, owing to the complexities of refugees and returns, along with IDPs. See Tables 2 and 3, below.

§ Data for Moldova are from Jandl (2003), IOM (2003a: 4), Scanlan (2002: 16)

¶ Estimated data from various sources (see text for details)

Types of Migration in the Balkans

Across the Balkans, we can identify four very different sorts of migration, which require separate treatments:

- ✚ *forced migrations*, associated with war and ‘ethnic cleansing’, including IDPs³;
- ✚ *ethnic migrations*, which are of a voluntary nature but inspired either by racial exclusion [e.g. Turkish Bulgarian migration to Turkey] or sometimes by better opportunities abroad [e.g. Greek Albanian migration to Greece];
- ✚ *trafficking*. This is endemic in the region, but affecting different countries rather differently;
- ✚ *temporary or incomplete migration*. This is the most common form of migration over the last few years, and is particularly difficult to measure. Census data do not properly capture the reality, and can overstate or understate the extent and meaning of migrations.⁴

(a) Forced migrations

By the end of the 1991-95 war, some 300-350,000 Croatian Serbs had left their homes in Croatia, mostly for Serbia or Bosnia (Ivanisevic 2004: 351); from Bosnia, at the end of the 1992-95 war, a massive estimated 2.6m people were displaced – more than half the pre-war population (Philpott, 2005: 1) – and about 1.2m found refuge abroad (Ivanisevic, 2004: 351). In Kosovo, 350,000 people fled their homes as IDPs or refugees in 1998, and in 1999 some 450,000 ethnic Albanians fled to Albania, 250,000 to Macedonia

³ Internally displaced persons

⁴ I am indebted to Beryl Nicholson for her astute comments on Albanian emigration and census figures, which also apply to almost all voluntary migrations in the region.

(fYRoM) and 70,000 to Montenegro. With the end of war in June 1999, 600,000 people returned to their homes in Kosovo, only to be followed by a reverse exodus of 230,000 Serbs and Roma who sought safety in Serbia and Montenegro. Two years later, conflict in Macedonia in 2001 led to 150,000 ethnic Albanians fleeing, mainly to Kosovo (UNHCR, 2001: 7).

By end 2003, UNHCR calculated around 540,000 refugees or asylum-seekers outside of the Yugoslav region, around half in Germany (Table 2). Within the region, there were some 600,000 IDPs and over 300,000 refugees (Table 3); IDPs were located mainly in Bosnia or Serbia and refugees almost exclusively in Serbia. Owing to the ethnicised nature of these forced migrations over the last decade, the paradoxical consequence is that Serbia-Montenegro has become not only one of the world's leading source countries for refugees, but also one of the leading host countries for refugees.⁵

Table 2
Stocks of refugees and asylum seekers from the region, end 2003 [000s]

<i>Originating from:</i>	total	and located in [principal countries, only]:				
		SCG	Germany	USA	Sweden	UK
BiH	300.0	99.8	38.7	61.8	25.8	
Croatia	230.2	189.7	3.8	6.3		
fYRoM	6.0	1.4	3.2	0.1	0.3	0.4
SCG	296.6	----	169.0	16.8	27.9	21.3
TOTALS	832.8	290.9	214.7	85.0	54.0	21.7

SOURCE: UNHCR (2004)

Note: totals do not add up because only major subcategories are shown here

Table 3
Stocks of refugees and IDPs in the region, end 2003 [000s]

	IDPs	Refugees	of which [principal nationalities only]:			
			Croatian	Serbian	Bosnian	Macedonian
BiH	327.2	22.5	19.5	3.0		
Croatia	12.6	4.4		0.5	3.9	
fYRoM	0	0.2		0.2		
SCG	256.9	291.4	189.7		99.8	1.4
TOTALS	596.7	318.5	209.2	3.7	103.7	1.4

SOURCE: UNHCR (2004)

The dramatic reduction in refugee numbers is mainly the result of returns – one of the preferred ‘durable solutions’ favoured by UNHCR. Looking simply at the number of returning refugees, these vary greatly across the region. In the case of Bosnia, by mid 2004 just under 1 million had returned, of which 440,000 were minority returns, (Black and Gent, 2004: 11). For returns to Croatia, the figure is 110,000 (Blitz, 2005: 363), with 6,600 from Serbia and 850 from Bosnia in 2004 (UNHCR 2005a, Table 16). In Bosnia, mostly affected by IDPs, in 2004 there were some 20,000 persons returning to their place of origin (UNHCR, 2005b: 417). Within Serbia, rather than returns the policy solution favoured is naturalisation: UNHCR expects the refugee population of 275,000 at end 2004 to halve through this mechanism, along with the recent closure of 58 refugee camps (UNHCR, 2005b: 417). The apparently intractable problem lies with Kosovo, where fewer than 10,000 of the 230,000 refugees who fled since 1999 have returned, and there remain thousands of IDPs within Kosovo or Serbia (HRW 2004a). The increased violence against minorities in Kosovo in March 2004, which created another 4,000 IDPs (mainly Kosovar Serbs and Roma), is also explicitly connected with 2,240 Kosovar refugees in Macedonia (mainly Roma), who are denied local integration (UNHCR 2005b: 416; HRW, 2003). However, 725 refugees returned from Kosovo to Macedonia in 2004 (UNHCR 2005b: 417).

⁵ At end 2004, Serbia was ranked third in the world by UNHCR for its refugee to population ratio.

Although refugee return to the Balkan region is a clear policy choice of the European Union and its national governments, and the re-integration of ethnic minorities along with strong legal protection of minority rights is seen as necessary legitimation for post-conflict societies, there remain many unresolved fundamental issues concerning refugee return. Richard Black and Saskia Gent contribute the concept of “sustainable return”, with a range of factors determining such (Black and Gent, 2004: 17). Similarly, Brad Blitz in his study of returns to Croatia suggests that different historical paths of refugee flight and return lead to vastly different outcomes, with five scenarios of return migration. In particular, it seems that the majority of Serbian returnees are elderly, with a specific type of return – the “return of retirement” (Blitz, 2005: 380). Other scenarios include “resettlement as ethnic colonization” (Bosnian Croats who fled to Croatia), “displaced persons and refugees returning from Bosnia” (Croatian Serbs who remained and did not flee to Serbia apparently have had worse treatment), “settlement through repossession” (housing repossession through judicial intervention), and a final category of “no return”, where marginalised former tenancy holders⁶ lack support structures and exist on the margins of Croatian society.

Overall, the return of refugees has not undone the realities of ethnic cleansing, and it is not clear that this should in fact be an objective of international agencies. One obvious impediment to refugee return has been housing: whereas 93% of claims had been sorted out in Bosnia by June 2004 (ECRI 2004a: 14), restitution of property rights does not mean return. More important, is the existence of jobs (Philpott, 2005: 21). In Croatia, continued discrimination in the labour market and society is seen as one of the most outstanding impediments to re-integration: Blitz contrasts the full incorporation of Croats from Bosnia with the situation of the Serbian minority – the former as recipients of government grants and aid and displacing Serbian local workers (Blitz, 2005: 381). As the International Commission on the Balkans points out, multiethnic harmony and re-integration of refugees must be achieved at the local level, especially as the result of population movements has been to create regional concentrations of minority ethnic communities. This is particularly visible in Macedonia, where local communities have become almost ethnically homogenous (ICB, 2005: 32-33). To these realities should be added the phenomenon of massive urbanisation, which has occurred across the entire Balkan region: this obscures the meaning of international migration, and additionally makes more spurious the goal of refugee returns. It may be that we have more or less reached the end of the road with this policy solution to forced migration in the Balkans.

Asylum-seekers continue to be produced by the Balkan countries, even from Romania and Bulgaria. Serbia and Montenegro is now the leading producer of asylum-seekers in industrialized countries, after massive declines in Russians and Iraqis since 2003, although there is a continued slow decline in numbers. Bosnia and Hercegovina also continues to produce asylum-seekers, and the numbers have been increasing rather than diminishing; Bulgaria too produces rather more asylum-seekers than would be expected from an EU candidate country, again with significant increases over the last two years. Romania, Macedonia and Albania all continue to produce significant numbers of asylum-seekers, but in continuous decline (UNHCR, 2005c: Table 4).

(b) Ethnic Migrations

The Balkan region can be characterized as a region dangerously affected by ethnic conflict, with difficult relations between dominant national majorities and sizable ethnic minorities (Atanasova, 2004: 357). The wide distribution of different ethnic minorities constitutes not only a problem of political management by the state, but is also an issue of diaspora relations impacting on a national state’s relations with other neighbouring states. One author (Tóth, 2003: 201) describes the Hungarian diaspora in the Balkan region (in Croatia, Slovenia, Yugoslavia and Romania) as “kin-minorities” connected to the “kin-state”: clearly inter-state relations are intimately affected by the presence of such minorities.

In the twentieth century, the solutions favoured for managing the issue of large ethnic minorities have been ‘exchanges of [minority] populations’, forcible [often violent] assimilation into a national culture, and toleration of ethnic and regional difference within the broader framework of a socialist planned economy. The two Balkan countries outside of the communist bloc – Greece and Turkey – relied on the first two mechanisms. On the other hand, most of the communist bloc in the Balkans and Eastern Europe tolerated

⁶ See HRW (2004b) for the landmark ECHR ruling which determined that tenancy rights to socially-owned property were terminated by war, thereby removing the property rights of all refugees from Croatia, who had occupied social housing in Croatia.

ethnic difference: the problems came primarily with collapse of their regimes, and the open hostility based on ethnicity which appeared subsequently.

One ethnic group⁷ which ended up being neither exchanged, assimilated nor tolerated was that of the Roma. Although they had benefited from special measures in the early post-war communist bloc, and had actually achieved minority status by the 1980s, traditional prejudices against them emerged and exploded into violence after 1989 (Crowe, 2003: 86). This triggered a new wave of Romani migrations fleeing persecution, both in wartime and also from stable countries such as Romania. Thus, Roma constituted a massive proportion of asylum-seekers from the Balkans over the 1990s, but have not been systematically recorded as Roma. In the period in the early 1990s of mass Romanian asylum-seeking, for example, more than 60% of them were Roma (Ethnobarometer, 2004: VII.3). Comparable data for other countries is not available, as UNHCR does not record ethnicity as such.

Now, with the returns of refugees to Serbia and other countries of the war-zone, there are serious and unreported issues concerning Roma. The vast majority of recent returnees to Serbia and Montenegro have been Roma (CNGOS, 2005: 16); in May 2005, Germany started to forcibly return members of certain minority groups from Kosovo – mainly Bosnians, *Ashkali* and Turks – whereas Roma and Serbs are spared deportation for the moment (Grupa 484, 2005: 21). This has been done despite the warning of independent observers that Serbia is not yet a safe place for minorities (HRW 2005).

Other than Romani migrations and refugees from war-zones, the principal ethnic migrations from Balkan countries since 1989 consist of the following:

From Romania: emigration of ethnic Hungarians, Germans and Jews

Over the decade of the 1990s, these are recorded as 105,000 Germans, 37,000 Hungarians and 3,000 Jews. Earlier periods saw much larger ethnic emigrations, though (Ethnobarometer, 2004:VIII). By 2002, the Romanian Census showed that only the Hungarians had retained a significant presence of just under 1.5m (6.6%, of total population) and almost exclusively located in the region of Transylvania (Ethnobarometer, 2004: IV.4). Ethnic migrations have more or less ceased since 2000.

From Bulgaria: emigration of ethnic Turks

The first pogrom against Turks began in 1984, with a state demand that Turks “Bulgarize” their names; it was accompanied by the closure of mosques and outlawing of Muslim religious holidays . Many resisted, with an estimated death toll of 300—1,500 Turks over one year (Crowe, 2000:107) and a reported 1,000 imprisoned (Atanasova, 2004: 364). This had a knock-on effect for Roma, who were the victims of forced assimilation and violence in the 1980s.

In 1989, after blaming ethnic Turks for a series of bomb attacks, Prime Minister Zhivkov invited those who “do not feel Bulgarian” to leave Bulgaria. Some 360,000 ethnic Turks left, and after pressure from the West and USSR, Zhivkov was forced to resign (Anagnostou, 2005: 91; Warhola and Boteva, 2003). His successors immediately rescinded the effects of this ethnic cleansing, with a 1990 law on the restoration of Turkish names, which was utilised by some 600,000 ethnic Turks in 1991 (Atanasova, 2004: 364). Another law provided amnesty for victims of the 1980s assimilation campaign, while two decree-laws and a 1992 law provided restitution of the housing, property and employment rights of those who had emigrated to Turkey but subsequently returned. An estimated 150,000 returned from Turkey after this reversal of policy (Atanasova, 2004: 364). Thus, Bulgaria has effectively escaped what many western commentators view as the dictates of history and ethnic conflicts in the Balkans (Anagnostou, 2005),

From Albania: emigration of ethnic Greeks

The number of ethnic Greeks in Albania was, and remains, highly contested. The range of figures starts at 59,000 in the 1989 Albanian Census and goes up to 300,000 claimed by the Greek government (Baldwin-Edwards, 2004b: 51). Pettifer (2001: 4) gives a figure of 100,000, which is plausible. The number who actually migrated to Greece is also highly problematic to estimate, for several reasons. First, the ethnic Greek migration was contemporaneous with mass illegal migration of ethnic Albanians as temporary labour in Greece in the 1990s. Secondly, the Greek state did not systematically record those who had been given entry

⁷ There is much controversy about the existence (or not) of different Romani groups – including Egyptian Roma and *Ashkali*. See Marushiakova and Popov (2003) for clarification.

visas as ethnic Greeks. Thirdly, there are accounts of Albanians with different ethnicities (e.g. Vlach) being encouraged to assume a Greek “identity” and apply for special status, either in the Greek consulates or within Greece itself. Thus, by 2004⁸ the Greek state had surreptitiously issued some 200,000 ‘ethnic Greek identity cards’ (Baldwin-Edwards, 2004c: 3), whilst there did not seem to be significantly smaller ethnic Greek communities still residing in Albania! It does not appear, therefore, that the ethnic composition of Albania was much altered by the ethnic migration of Greeks: the emigration of the general Albanian population was much more important.

(c) Trafficking of migrants in the Balkans

For some time now, European policy-makers, practitioners and academics have identified a “Balkan route” for trafficking and/or smuggling⁹ of migrants (e.g. Salt and Stein, 1997: 475-7; Budapest Group, 1999; IOM 2001), with clear links made between older drug trafficking routes, their interruption by war and organised criminal gangs branching out into people-smuggling and trafficking (Kolakovic et al., 2001: 7-9; Budapest Group, 1999; Lindstrom, 2004). Simultaneously, the United States embarked upon its global attack on trafficking, issuing an annual report and tiered classification (using unknown and rather suspect criteria) of how well other countries of the world were attempting to limit the phenomenon. Their global estimates of the extent of trafficking started out with a maximum estimate of 4m in 2002, reduced to 800,000 for both 2004 and 2005; again, the mechanism by which these figures are reached are unknown, and should be treated with extreme suspicion.

Alongside methodological problems concerning the estimation of the extent of trafficking, there remain fundamental definitional problems concerning the issues of migration, prostitution and agency (Kelly, 2005:237). The clear distinction between trafficking and smuggling which is embodied in the UN protocols is not so visible in practice, and it would be more correct to view them both as part of a continuum of behaviours, changing over the migrant’s journey in time and space. Essentially, measurements and interpretations of trafficking data are practitioner-based, and inclined to view all illegal migrants as victims without agency, rather than as frequently willing participants in complex interactions with other persons and/or criminal organisations in their migratory experiences. Yet another deficit is the focus of international organisations on trafficking for sexual exploitation and of children, whilst ignoring other forms of exploitation (Kelly, 2005: 237).

In the case of the Balkans, some of the most detailed investigation of any region in the world has been made since 2000, with research undertaken or financed by the IOM, the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, the ILO, UNICEF and the OSCE, amongst others. One of the most authoritative recent reports identified 6,256 victims between January 2000 and December 2004, with the primary countries of origin as Albania, Moldova and Romania (and to a lesser extent, Bulgaria and Kosovo) and the primary countries of destination or transit as being Croatia, Bosnia, Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro (Surtees, 2005: 12-17). Table 4 reproduces their summary data.

Over the period 2000-2004, 90% of victims were from only 5 countries (28% from Albania, 26% from Moldova, 17% from Romania, 10% from Bulgaria and 9% from Kosovo). There is also a significant number from the Ukraine (6%), but from other countries the numbers identified and assisted are very small indeed.

According to an earlier report (for the period 2000-2003), first trafficking experiences occurred as minors for 65% of Albanians and 50% of Bulgarians, although most were 18-24 at the time of identification (RCP, 2003: 14). The identified trends, confirmed by other recent reports (e.g. Rahmani, 2005) are of decreasing visibility or extent of trafficking and increased trafficking of minors – the latter, especially without crossing country borders (so-called ‘internal trafficking’).

⁸ By the end of 2005, the author was receiving reports that the Greek state had surreptitiously withdrawn or not renewed these 3-year cards, and was threatening to deport those who could not prove their Greek heritage.

⁹ For the distinction, which increasingly is being questioned, see the UN protocols on trafficking and smuggling.

Table 4

Number of identified and assisted trafficking victims 2000-04, Stability Pact

Country of origin of victim	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	Total
Albania	219	445	375	345	366	1,750
Moldova	319	382	329	313	300	1,643
Romania	163	261	243	194	193	1,054
Bulgaria	46	96	164	172	143	621
Kosovo, Province of	54	67	165	192	90	568
BiH	0	0	8	17	39	54
Serbia	0	1	10	13	21	45
Croatia	0	0	1	1	6	8
Montenegro	0	0	2	3	5	10
fyRo Macedonia	0	0	0	14	12	26
SEE countries subtotal	801	1,252	1,297	1,264	1,165	5,779
Ukraine	68	97	104	47	41	357
Russia	7	22	21	5	4	59
Belarus	8	9	1	2	1	21
Georgia	0	3	2	0	2	7
Other	3	0	5	11	14	33
Other countries subtotal	86	131	133	65	62	477
Total numbers of victims trafficked into, via or from South Eastern Europe	887	1,383	1,430	1,329	1,227	6,256

SOURCE: Surtees (2005: 31-32)

According to the Second RCP Report, around 70% of assisted victims from the SEE region (in other words, excluding those originating from other countries) are trafficked solely for sexual exploitation, along with another 10-20% for a mix of sexual services and other employment. Table 5 below shows summary data for forms of trafficking. Of the small proportion of persons trafficked for labour, begging or delinquency (11%), in some countries such as Albania and Kosovo the majority were male and minors (Surtees, 2005: 13). The statistical data presented for the SEE region do not show gender or minor status, but to date no males have been assisted as victims of sexual exploitation.

Table 5

Forms of trafficking among assisted SEE nationals, 2003 and 2004

FORM OF TRAFFICKING	2003		2004	
	N	%	N	%
Sexual exploitation	824	65.2	864	74.2
Labour	91	7.2	48	4.1
Begging and delinquency	51	4.0	75	6.4
Adoption	0		9	0.8
Sexual exploitation and labour	245	19.4	97	8.3
Sexual exploitation, begging and delinquency	10	0.8	27	2.3
Labour, begging and delinquency	11	0.9	2	0.2
Sexual exploitation, labour, begging and delinquency	1	0.1	0	
Potential victims	31	2.5	43	3.7
TOTAL	1,254		1,164	

SOURCE: Surtees (2005: 33)

Within the south eastern European region, it is alleged that 90% of foreign women working in the sex business are victims of trafficking, with 10-15% under the age of 18 ((El-Cherkeh et al., 2004: 22). However, more recent reports note that raids on bars (the most prevalent form of anti-trafficking action) are no longer producing results and that many women offered assistance as victims of trafficking deny that they are such, and say that they are working voluntarily (Limanowska, 2004: 50). Child trafficking, not only for sexual services but also for organised begging,¹⁰ is an increasing problem across the region and also within the EU (IPEC 2005 and 2004 country volumes). However, the limited empirical evidence suggests the following set of characteristics:

- ‘victims’ frequently do not see themselves as such, and often refuse help
- ‘victims’ tend to come from seriously underprivileged backgrounds, and are preponderantly from ethnic minorities, including Roma
- ‘victims’ tend to be very young, and the trend is increasing for minors
- the crossing of borders is not a necessary part of trafficking
- sexual exploitation is not a necessary part of trafficking

In conclusion, we should note that the number of persons identified by the Regional Clearing Point is very small relative to the extent of migration in the region (both voluntary and forced) and raises serious questions about the real significance of the phenomenon of trafficking in the Balkans. The RCP Report itself notes that it is only a standardised record of assistance, and there is no way of estimating the actual extent of trafficking: furthermore, high numbers of assisted victims in a particular country may reflect pro-active policy to tackle the phenomenon, rather than the existence of a greater problem than elsewhere (Surtees, 2005:25). Trafficking and prostitution are largely demand-driven, and extremely problematic and extensive in UN-managed Kosovo, as well as associated with supply side social and family problems in the countries of the region. Furthermore, little if any evidence has been adduced to show that trafficking is big business in the Balkans: rather, the evidence suggests that it is a cottage industry (Nicholson, 2002: 4). This, combined with the increasing phenomenon of “internal trafficking”, might lead us to conclude that this is a problem of social policy, which has developed to extend beyond national borders.

Thus, trafficking is not per se an issue of migration, but rather one of economic survival strategies on the part of both traffickers and those being trafficked or smuggled; on the other hand, the demand side of prostitution, cheap labour and organised street begging is a significant socio-economic problem not only in the Balkans but also across Europe. These two aspects –the supply side of underdevelopment and unequal income distribution, and the demand for sexual services, forced labour and informal employment in EU countries and elsewhere – might be more appropriate foci for government policies.

(d) Temporary or incomplete migrations

Also known as circular migrations, these are typical of voluntary population movements from the CEE region since 1989 (Kaczmarczyk and Okoloski, 2005: 18). They have two defining characteristics: they are predominantly irregular, with employment in the shadow economy; they do not conform to the definition of migration. This ‘incomplete migration’ appears to be extensive in the CEE region, with very large numbers participating, and mainly involving semi-skilled and unskilled persons. Owing to its clandestine character, data and interpretation of numbers are highly questionable and problematic. In the Balkan region, three countries are predominantly involved with this migration type – Albania, Romania and Bulgaria.

The 1990s Albanian migrations to Greece and Italy were clearly of this type, even if the mass deportations by the Greek state constituted a peculiar variant of the return strategy (Reyneri, 2001). Subsequent to the first Greek legalization campaign, and after a legal opinion from the Ombudsman denouncing the deportations as unlawful, Albanians found it increasingly difficult to engage in circular migration. With tighter and more aggressive, even violent, border controls, alongside the Greek state’s insistence on full-time social insurance contributions for legal residence, by the early 2000s Albanians living in Greece had adopted a typical strategy of permanent settlement (Baldwin-Edwards, 2004b: 62). The early migrations had been undertaken by men, later to be joined by their wives and children: after the 2001 immigration law, some 67,000 permits

¹⁰ See TDH (2003) for detailed research on Albanian children trafficked into Greece

for family reunification were given by the Greek state (Baldwin-Edwards, 2004c: Table 2). By 2004, official records indicated just over 400,000 adult Albanians, up to 100,000 schoolchildren, and some 200,000 classed as ethnic Greeks: although some of these may have returned to Albania or moved to Italy, there is no evidence to suggest that this was in large numbers. Thus, Greek government policy – by reinforcing the border with Albania – managed to change temporary migration into permanent settlement for the great majority of Albanian migrants. In Italy, a similar pattern has been noted, with a high proportion of Albanians taking Italian citizenship.¹¹ By end 2004, ISTAT¹² had recorded 317,000 Albanians with residence permits, making them the leading immigrant nationality in Italy.

The situation pertaining to Romanians and Bulgarians is rather different from Albanians. This is not because of any massive difference in strategy by those migrants, nor because of different treatment by receiving countries. It is, rather, the unintended outcome of the gradual incorporation of these two countries into the EU and Schengen regime. In the case of Romania, although circular migration had existed in the late 1990s, primarily to Italy, it was with the removal of the Schengen visa requirement in 2002 that circular migration of Romanians as ‘false tourists’ really took off. Travelling legally under 3-month Schengen tourism provisions, a 2005 survey shows that around 9% of households have one member abroad at any one time (around 850,000 people). Their destinations are principally Italy and Spain, with reports from Italy of up to 2.5 million Romanians there, or (from Romanian authorities) of 1.4m in both Spain and Italy. These extraordinarily high numbers arise, as I show elsewhere (Baldwin-Edwards, 2006) from flawed interpretation of information caused by imposing a traditional view of migration on the complex and well-choreographed circular migration patterns. Thus, although many Romanians – up to 15% of the adult population – have participated in migration, at any one time there is not such a large number abroad. The latest data show 249,000 Romanians with permits in Italy, and 175,000 in Spain. There is also limited legal temporary labour migration – primarily to Germany, but also to Italy and Spain. Available data suggest that this is well under 100,000 in total, per year (Baldwin-Edwards, 2006).

Bulgarian temporary migration has targeted Greece, Italy and Spain – but without the visibility of either Albanian or Romanian migration. Furthermore, there is no consensus on the extent of emigration in recent years: one report suggests that it increased after 2001 when the Schengen visa requirement was removed (OECD-SOPEMI 2005: 165) whilst another claims a stabilization over recent years (Beleva and Minev, 2005). A 2001 IOM survey suggests that the primary destinations for Bulgarian seasonal work at that time were Greece, Spain, Italy, Germany and the Netherlands (Guentcheva *et al.*, 2003: 5). Unlike Romanians, who migrated to Germany in large numbers as ethnic Germans and also as contract workers, Bulgarians hardly appear in German immigration data. In southern Europe, Bulgarians are more visible: from residence permit data, they constitute the second largest nationality in Greece (at 59,000), and some 2% of the immigrant population in Spain (52,000), although have only a small presence in Italy at 15,000. Given that many Bulgarian migrants are female and employed as housekeepers, it is likely that their illegal employment is considerably higher than the official data suggest. There is, however, a serious information deficit on temporary migration movements of Bulgarian economic migrants, compounded by their ease of travel within the Schengen zone.

Trends in Balkan migrations

Despite massive problems with data, it is possible to discern some clear trends. First, the flight of refugees from the region has more or less stopped, with the partial exception of Serbia and Montenegro. The continued low levels of asylum-seeking from the Balkans appear to be mainly by Roma, although there are no hard data. The issue of refugee returns is actually dominating the scene, with serious issues about who is forcibly returned to where, and the reception and nature of voluntary returns. Even for candidate country Croatia, the European Commission has worries concerning returns to that country.

Secondly, ethnic migration looks like a phenomenon of the early 1990s, with the break-up of communist states. It has largely discontinued, although again there is a question mark about the situation of the Roma.

¹¹ This option is denied them in Greece, even for ethnic Greeks. Masked as a “problem” with Albania’s refusal to permit dual nationality, it is clearly a political strategy to retain a Greek presence in Albania.

¹² <http://demo.istat.it/>

There is also a potential, or actual, issue of asylum applications constituting the only route for unskilled or semi-skilled labour migration to the West; it is impossible to clarify to what extent this may have occurred, given the arbitrary way in which some EU countries evaluate asylum claims.

Thirdly, trafficking figures for the region show a continuous decline: already small numbers are getting smaller. The EC's warning to Albania and others to deal more effectively with trafficking looks somewhat doubtful, given our inability actually to detect significant problems in this area.

Fourthly, incomplete or circular migration seems ultimately to have been an option for only two Balkan countries – Romania and Bulgaria. The result of tighter border controls and the Schengen zone has been to effect a two-tier status for border crossing – candidate country or non-candidate country. Although intended only for tourism, the Schengen arrangements have had a predictably aggravating impact on the informal economies of Europe – particularly those of southern Europe.

Several issues have not been explicitly addressed so far, and deserve mention. Immigration into, and transit migration through, the Balkans have been a continuous matter of concern by EU countries. This issue is also partly linked with trafficking, but it is really only from the Ukraine that there is any evidence of a problem. Data on immigration into the region are of very low quality, primarily because most of it is illegal. Information from Romania and Bulgaria suggests that it consists primarily of migrants from within the CEE region, from CIS countries, and asylum-seekers and illegal migrants from Asia. Numbers appear to be low, despite periodic hysteria in western Europe about hordes of Chinese preparing to 'invade' Europe.

One of the clear achievements in the region since the early 1990s has been the modernization and increased effectiveness of border controls, primarily achieved with EU moneys and expertise. Information provided by ICMPD and others suggests a fairly unambiguous improvement in border management, as shown by apprehension statistics (Futo *et al.*, 2005).

The 'brain drain' issue is one which certain Balkan countries worry over, most obviously Croatia. Although there clearly has been an exodus of skilled personnel, mass emigration from the Balkans has represented all sectors of society and arguably over-represented the lower-skilled. The primary issue is not how to deal with past emigration, but how to encourage and fully incorporate possible returning migrants into modern economies. There is, so far, little evidence that focused strategies are being developed to address this issue; furthermore, the EU has provided no guidance or incentives for better labour market and migration management. A legalistic obsession with adaptation to the *Acquis communautaire* has dominated both financing and formal relations with potential and actual candidate countries – to the detriment of other functional economic issues (Baldwin-Edwards, 2006).

Finally, I wish to emphasize a recommendation made by the International Commission on the Balkans. The Commission notes that some 70% of students in Serbia have never travelled abroad, and there exists similar isolation for the youth of Bosnia and Albania. The Schengen wall is almost as great a barrier as the former Iron Curtain, and excludes whole generations in countries with pro-European visions and aspirations for EU membership. To this end, the Commission proposes a Balkan Student Visa Programme, with an annual quota of 150,000 full-time students (ICB, 2005: 34). The negative effects of Schengen are now only too obvious: some flexibility and imagination are imperatives for Europe's policy-makers.

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