



Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Sarajevo
Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana
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International Conference

**European Elections Under the Shadow of (Dis)-Integration:
Perspective from Balkan Route**

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References:

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While EU and its members states under the influence of the rise of nationalist, anti EU and anti migration political forces are applying ever more restrictive and repressive asylum and border policies, Bosnia and Herzegovina deals with increasing number of refugees and migrants stranded on its territory. As a state which integration and cohesion is incessantly challenged and undermined by local nationalist political forces and a state with weakened political institutional framework, it is not able to provide efficient response to challenges posed by growing number of stranded refugees and migrants. All this on detriment of stranded people, local population and political stability. The reports on humanitarian situation of refugees and migrants are discouraging and those on police violence on the EU borders alarming, the antagonism between local population and people crossing the country and trying to reach EU is growing due to poor management of the situation by authorities, and migrants are increasingly becoming the tool to deepen divisions in society and to accentuate disintegration tendencies. Inefficiency of local and state authorities leads to strengthening of local antagonisms while ethnonationalisms use the situation for further ethnical polarization and legitimization of politics of fear.

For those reasons we organize two days event in Bosnia and Herzegovina (in Sarajevo and Velika Kladuša) in which we would like to exchange analysis, perspectives and ideas of scholars that research on Balkan route, solidarity activists, refugees and migrants stranded in Bosnia and Herzegovina and members of European parliament or candidates for European elections. With the event we would like to contribute to understanding of so called Balkan Route in local public, to intervene into agenda of public discussions before coming European elections and to promote exchange between experts and solidarity activists working along Balkan Route and European policy makers.

Main project goals are to include scholars and human rights activists in the scholar network that connects researchers and various experts working on Balkan Route; to inform European public about the situation on Balkan Route, to put situation on Balkan Route in BiH into broader European context for Bosnian public; to show solidarity with local citizens and civil society organizations that act in solidarity with refugees and migrants on the route; to establish connections between scholars, civil society activists, BiH and European policy makers that is going to allow further collaboration in analyzing situation and defining proposals for policy makers.

Main beneficiaries of the project are refugees and migrants that are in transit, stranded or are asylum applicants in Bosnia and Herzegovina, local citizens around migrant route, local and international scholars and civil society activists, BiH and EU policy makers. On the scientific part of the event (conference on Faculty of Political Sciences in Sarajevo) 19 active participants are expected. Presence of around five refugees and migrants is also planned. On the encounter in Velika Kladuša 30 people are expected (besides those attending scientific conference also refugees and migrants, local people providing help on the route and policy makers. Various MEP and candidates for EP were invited together with some BiH policy makers.

Project is the result of collaboration between scholars from Faculty of Political Science in Sarajevo and visiting researcher from Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana. Visiting researcher is member of network connecting scholars researching on Balkan Route that was established during summer school in Belgrade last year. One of decisions of newly established networks was to try to organize event in BiH prior to European elections.

Various research reports from the ground presented during summer school raised concern that current management of migrant route through Balkan has detrimental effects on democracy and human rights. Discussions with BiH scholars and human rights activists that research on the route has led to conceptualization of the project. In preparatory process researchers, human rights activists and local citizens that provide support to refugees and migrants (especially in Velika Kladuša) got involved in preparation of the event. On the other hand scholar network researching on Balkan Route provided participants from countries around the route (Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, Germany). Members of European Parliament that already received various reports from the route were also invited to participate. Same goes for some policy makers in Bosnia and Herzegovina that stressed interest to work on this issue.

The project will be implemented in Sarajevo as scientific conference on Faculty of Political Sciences and as public event for media and other interested public (both events will take place on April 25) and in Velika Kladuša in the form of public encounter (plenum) bringing together refugees and migrants, participants of scientific conference, local citizens and civil society activists and policy makers (April 26)

Expected outputs and results of project are strengthened interest for migration and border studies in academic community in Bosnia and Herzegovina; message addressed to broader public in BiH that issue of migration needs collaborative approach that includes all stakeholders (refugees and migrants, local communities, civil society organizations, academic community, policy makers); message to European public that current management of migrant route through Balkan states is detrimental to democracy, human rights and cohesion; the project will enhance and strengthen cross-border collaboration among scholars, human rights activists and policy makers and such collaboration will allow future joined projects.

Project aim is to contribute to better governance of migrant route through various Balkan states and BiH. Its aim is to articulate critique of bad governance and to point toward alternative approach that would take into account the need to include various stakeholders into definition of policies (local citizens, civil society, policy makers, scholars, migrants and refugees). Various reports from migrant route in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Ahmetašević

and Mlinarević for example) show that management of the situation is not adequate. Such mismanagement produces tensions in local communities, in public and among various regions and entities in Bosnia and Herzegovina while human rights and dignity of refugees and migrants are neglected. Various reports from Croatia and Slovenia on the other hand point to existence of border practices by authorities that deny rights to apply for international protection. Such practices further complicate situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Project engages in public policy influencing different levels of government in BiH by intervening into public debate about migrant route, by inviting policy makers from BiH (the aim of the project is also to encourage politicians on various levels to get involved into seeking different policy solutions), by connecting scholars and human rights activists from BiH and other countries around Balkan Route and by establishing channels of communication with policy makers on the level of EU.

Project enlarges network of scholars researching on Balkan route and human rights activists advocating and monitoring on the route. Such networking is going to improve capacity to develop research projects on various aspects of management of migrant route. Preparation of the project builds capacity for international cooperation between scholars from University of Sarajevo and University of Ljubljana.

Project is going to establish channels of communication and collaboration that are going to allow follow up and further implementation. We have managed to get involved principal research institutions and advocacy organizations from the region (Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia). Ideas for scaling up the project are going to be discussed and certain decisions will be made already during triple event in Sarajevo and Velika Kladuša.

Key project partners are Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Sarajevo and network of scholars and activists researching on migrant route that crosses various countries in South East and central Europe. In Velika Kladuša local organizers are civil society organization Kladuša je naša and local citizens supporting refugees and migrants.

