

Western Balkans Annual Risk Analysis 2017



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Plac Europejski 6, 00-844 Warsaw, Poland
T +48 22 205 95 00
F +48 22 205 95 01
frontex@frontex.europa.eu
www.frontex.europa.eu

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The contents of open-source boxes are unverified and presented only to give context and media representation of irregular-migration phenomena.

Throughout the report, references to Kosovo* are marked with an asterisk to indicate that this designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

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The *Western Balkans Annual Risk Analysis 2017* has been prepared by the Frontex Risk Analysis Unit. During the course of developing this product, many colleagues at Frontex and outside contributed to it and their assistance is hereby acknowledged with gratitude.

Table of contents

Executive summary #5

1. Introduction #7

2. Methodology #8

- 2.1. Quality of available data #8
- 2.2. Changes in data scope after Croatia's entry to the EU #8
- 2.3. Changes in data scope after Kosovo's²⁶ entry to the WB-RAN #9
- 2.4. Application of the Common Integrated Risk Analysis Model #9
- 2.5. Annual risk assessment #10

3. Situation at the common borders – the overall context #11

- 3.1. Passenger flow analysis #13
- 3.2. Refusals of entry #16
- 3.3. Irregular migration #16

4. Large and sustained transit by non-regional migrants through the Western Balkans #18

- 4.1. Illegal border-crossing at the green borders #18
- 4.2. Illegal border-crossing at BCPs #28
- 4.3. Use of false documents in the region #29

5. Irregular movements by nationals from Western Balkan countries #30

- 5.1. Illegal border-crossings from the region at the common EU/Schengen borders #30
- 5.2. Illegal stay in the EU #30
- 5.3. Document fraud within the territory of EU Member States/Schengen Associated Countries #31

6. Migrants using the international protection system in the Western Balkans as a way to avoid detention and move onwards #32

7. Smuggling of firearms and drugs across the regional and common borders #34

- 7.1. Detections of firearms #34
- 7.2. Detections of drugs #36

8. Statistical annex #37

List of abbreviations used

ARA	Annual Risk Analysis
BCP	border crossing point
CIRAM	Common Integrated Risk Analysis Model
CIRCABC	Communication and Information Resource Centre for Administrations, Businesses and Citizens
EC	European Commission
EDF	European Union Document-Fraud
EPN	European Patrols Network
EU	European Union
FRAN	Frontex Risk Analysis Network
Frontex	European Border and Coast Guard Agency
ICJ	International Court of Justice
ID	identification document
IOM	International Organization for Migration
JO	joint operation
JORA	Frontex Joint Operations Reporting Application
NGO	non-governmental organisation
RAU	Risk Analysis Unit
SALW	small arms and light weapons
TU-RAN	Turkey Risk Analysis Network
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council resolution
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WB	Western Balkans
WB-ARA	Western Balkans Annual Risk Analysis
WB-RAN	Western Balkans Risk Analysis Network

Executive summary

Bringing the unprecedented migration flow back under control; coordination and cooperation remain crucial

An array of response measures, ranging from coordinated enhancement of border-controls by the most affected countries to policy actions supported by the EU, contributed to a marked reduction in the volume of the non-regional¹ migratory flow transiting the Eastern Mediterranean and subsequently the Western Balkans.

Overall, on the Western Balkan route, the number of detected illegal border-crossings between border crossing points (BCPs) associated with non-regional migrants decreased in 2016 to roughly 270 000 (down from over 2 million in 2015). The largest share of detections was reported in the first quarter, after which the number of detections was slowly decreasing to reach manageable levels by the end of the year.

Ineffective local response measures

At the height of the crisis in 2015, the most affected countries reacted individually, at times introducing antagonistic measures. For example, while some countries organised a transportation corridor to streamline the movement of migrants, others tried to stop the flow by sealing their green borders. These local

1 Migrants of nationalities other than those of Albania, Kosovo*, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro or Bosnia and Herzegovina.

solutions either accelerated or deflected the migratory flow but failed to bring it back under control.

Need for coordination and cooperation acknowledged

In order to counter the lack of coordination, high-level regional and international meetings focusing on a joint response to the crisis were initiated towards the end of 2015 and continued through 2016.

Nevertheless, bringing the crisis under control and returning to the normal application of border control legislation was too massive a task to be fully achieved in one attempt. A number of phased measures aimed at a gradual filtering and reducing of the flow were agreed upon and introduced² at the regional level starting from the end of 2015.

Closure of the Western Balkan transit corridor and continued cooperation key to keeping control

The closure of the transit corridor was the next crucial step towards regaining control over the migration crisis. Despite being preceded by the phased reduction measures, this closure was not an easy endeavour, given the momentum of the non-regional flow.

2 For example, starting from November 2015, only Syrians, Afghans and Iraqis were allowed transit; starting from February 2016, migrants were asked to confirm their nationality with proper documents, daily quotas were introduced.

Moreover, the success (or lack thereof) with which this measure was implemented carried a crucial message which could either encourage or deter migrants still waiting to leave their home or host countries and move towards the EU.

Likely aware of these aspects, regional countries and EU Member States provided important support to the authorities in Skopje by helping to fully secure their border with Greece. This was a crucial move towards implementing the regional decision of closing the transit corridor and deterring further arrivals from Turkey.

The closure of the corridor was by itself not enough to bring the situation back under control. Therefore, further coherent measures were implemented in order to tackle other issues, such as the migratory pressure accumulated in Greece or the natural tendency of migrants to seek alternative routing.

These measures largely consisted in supporting enhanced border-control activities at key border sections within or outside the region, and policy-level responses to the migration phenomenon.

As regards enhanced border-controls, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia increased their efforts both on their own (internal re-deployments) and with international support in the framework of either EC-funded interventions³ (in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia) or Frontex-coordinated JOs⁴

3 Project 'Special measure supporting the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to manage its southern border in the context of the European migration crisis'; a similar measure was later implemented at the Bulgarian-Serbian border.

4 JO Flexible Operational Activities South East, Western Balkans, EPN Poseidon

(in Bulgaria and Greece). Whereas, Hungary addressed illegal border-crossings by re-enforcing police presence while also redefining working procedures.⁵

As far as policy-level decisions are concerned, the EU-Turkey statement on stemming migration together with the implementation of the Hotspot approach⁶ on the Greek Aegean Islands greatly contributed to reducing the migration flow from Turkey and preventing further movements towards the Western Balkans.

The increased coordination and coherence of regional and international responses significantly reduced the volume of the transiting flow and helped bring the situation largely under control towards the end of 2016.

Migratory situation 'close-to-normal' but coordination still necessary

Following the coordinated restriction measures implemented throughout the region, in destination countries and the Aegean Sea, the non-regional flow transiting the Western Balkans considerably subsided, declining almost every month, from 128 000 illegal border-crossings in January down to roughly 3 000 in December 2016.

The enhanced restrictions led to a number of migrants becoming stranded in different locations along the route (i.e. the Aegean Islands, the mainland Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia). Thus, even though the overall volume of the transiting flow decreased, the stranded migrants continued to exert pressure at different border

sections as they repeatedly attempted to cross.

Despite this continued pressure, the overall number of detections were brought down to manageable levels towards the end of the year. Past data suggest that the current level of pressure can be regarded as a slow return to normality of migration movements via the Western Balkans.

Nevertheless, the underlying conditions for a re-escalation remain in place (i.e. large pool of would-be migrants in neighbouring regions, some actually counting on the Western Balkan route being re-opened), pointing to the importance of close cooperation and coordinated response measures especially considering the precipitous growth of the migratory flow in 2015.

Importantly, the humanitarian aspects of migration have to be taken into consideration. In this sense, identifying and providing necessary support to members of vulnerable groups still in transit or stranded on different sections of the route need to be addressed in conjunction with enhanced border control.

Low level of regional migratory flow, mainly contained in the south of the region

Most of the detected illegal border-crossings of regional migrants⁷ (around 72%) occurred in the south of the region (at Greece's borders with Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) and were, by and large, associated with the Albanian circular migration⁸ to Greece.

The northern part of the region (Hungary and Croatia's borders with Serbia) was affected by approximately 14% of the total pressure exerted by regional migrants, predominantly Kosovo* citizens attempting to reach Western European destinations.

Cross-border criminality – firearm and drug smuggling

Small-scale firearm detections at the borders; continued presence of SALW⁹ in the region

Overall, the number of detections reported within the general area of responsibility of the regional border police forces (reporting from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia) indicates a limited number of firearms/ammunition, mostly obtained for personal use (e.g. illegal hunting).

Locally produced cannabis – the main smuggled narcotic substance

Local groups appear to have regained cannabis production capacity lost following police operations carried out by Albania in 2014. Specifically, if the second half of 2014 and the entire 2015 saw fewer detections of cannabis at the borders coupled with higher prices for the product, the year 2016 tended to indicate a re-saturation of the regional market with this type of narcotic (increased number of seizures at the borders, lower prices on the black market).

5 For example, Hungarian law on returning migrants detected within 8 km from the border to special transit areas where they can either wait for legal admission or return to Serbia.

6 Providing migrants with accommodation, as well as screening, registering and processing them on the islands rather than in the mainland Greece.

7 Migrants who are citizens of the Western Balkan countries.

8 Seasonal movements of workers (Albania-Greece-Albania).

9 Small arms and light weapons

1. Introduction

As was the case with the previous issues, the current edition of the Western Balkans Annual Risk Analysis (WB-ARA) 2017 has been prepared in cooperation between the Risk Analysis Units of the competent border-control authorities of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Kosovo* and the Frontex Risk Analysis Unit (RAU).

The joint analytical activity is an integral part of the Western Balkans Risk Analysis Network (WB-RAN) in which

all the mentioned Western Balkan countries actively participate.

WB-RAN was established following the proposal made by Frontex in May 2009.

The WB-ARA 2017 builds on knowledge from previous editions of the annual report, reporting provided by WB-RAN throughout 2016 and other privileged reporting available to Frontex.

The WB-ARA 2017 is structured around the following elements: (1) a description of the general context in which border controls at common and regional bor-

ders occur; (2) annual risk assessment that includes identification and detailed description of the main risks affecting both the area of the Western Balkans and Member States or Schengen Associated Countries; (3) conclusions and summary recommendations for mitigating actions that take into account relevant EU policy developments.

The statistical annex of the WB-ARA 2017 includes summary tables, describing the key indicators of irregular migration in detail.

The Frontex Risk Analysis Unit would like to thank all WB-RAN and FRAN members for their active participation in common analytical activities throughout 2016 and their valuable input.

2. Methodology

In order to facilitate the exchange of information between the WB-RAN countries and Frontex, the European Commission and Frontex set up a secure Internet platform on the European Commission's Circa server similarly to what is available for the FRAN. This platform (transformed into CIRCABC in 2012) is used exclusively by WB-RAN countries and the Frontex Risk Analysis Unit. WB-RAN statistical data have been available since January 2009.

The core of monthly statistical data from WB-RAN and neighbouring FRAN countries (only common borders) is focused on six key indicators of illegal migration: (1) detections of illegal border-crossing; (2) detections of facilitators; (3) detections of illegal stay; (4) refusals of entry; (5) asylum applications; and (6) detections of false documents.

Monthly reporting by the six regional countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia) related to the detections of firearms in the general area of responsibility of their respective border police forces throughout 2016 was efficiently exploited for the creation of the last chapter of this report. Additional, qualitative information and analytical inputs in the field of cross-border criminality (focusing on firearm detections and drug smuggling) were also provided by the regional countries either as replies to tailored requests for information or within specific Guest Analysts Workshop held in February 2017. This information was effectively integrated in this report. Moreover, Frontex and experts from the region worked together to create

a booklet on operational risk indicators focused on increasing detection capacities as regards potential foreign terrorist fighters, some of the experience shared is also reflected in this report.

In addition to this core data set, other sources available to Frontex were also used. Those include data from the European Document Fraud Risk Analysis Network (EDF), Turkey-Frontex Risk Analysis Network (TU-RAN) and reporting from different Joint Operations coordinated by Frontex. Importantly, in line with agreement by all WB-RAN members, Kosovo* Border Police was invited to participate in the work of the network (starting from 2014).

Many other qualitative and quantitative sources were also used, in particular, bimonthly and quarterly analytical reports of both Member States and WB-RAN countries, Frontex reporting in the context of the post visa-liberalisation monitoring mechanism and analysis from Frontex Annual Risk Analysis (ARA 2017).

Additional inputs were provided by both Member States/Schengen Associated Countries and WB-RAN countries during the Western Balkans-Risk Analysis meetings organised between December 2016 and March 2017.

Open sources of information were also effectively exploited. Among others, these sources included reports issued by government agencies, EU institutions and international or non-governmental organisations. Additional input was provided by both Member States/Schengen Associated Countries and WB-RAN countries during the Western Balkans Expert meeting on 9 March 2017.

2.1. Quality of available data

Consistent with other law-enforcement indicators, variation in administrative data related to border control depends on several factors. In this case, the number of detections of illegal border-crossing and refusals of entry are both functions of the amount of effort spent on the detection of migrants and the flow of irregular migrants. For example, increased detections of illegal border-crossing might be due to an actual increase in the flow of irregular migrants, or they may in fact be an outcome of more resources made available to detect migrants. In exceptional cases, an influx of resources may produce an increase in reported detections while effectively masking the actual decrease in the flow of migrants, resulting from a strong deterrent effect.

As of July 2016, EU Member States neighbouring the Western Balkans region (Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and Croatia) started reporting detections of illegal border-crossing also on exit (data which were not available in 2015 or any year before that). The highest pressure on exit was reported by Bulgaria at its border with Serbia. At the other common border sections, the number of persons exiting towards regional countries reported by Member States was very low and does not affect annual comparisons. The overall image of the flow is not impacted by the expanded data scope.

2.2. Changes in data scope after Croatia's entry to the EU

Important changes in the collection and use of data for Western Balkans Quarterly were introduced upon Croatia's joining the EU in July 2013. Firstly, data for Slovenia, which now has no external borders with non-EU Western Balkan countries, has not been included in the report since the third quarter of 2013. Slovenian historical data were also excluded from the tables in order to make the comparison with previous quarters analytically meaningful.

Secondly, as Croatian-Hungarian and Croatian-Slovenian border sections have now become internal EU-borders they are no longer covered by this report.

Thirdly, after Croatia joined the EU, its data on illegal stay have been limited to detections at the border. More precisely, Croatia's data on illegal stay include cases detected only on exit, while inland detections are not included. The analysis of the illegal stay indicator takes this fact into consideration.

2.3. Changes in data scope after Kosovo's* entry to the WB-RAN

Starting from the first quarter of 2014, data from Kosovo* on key indicators of irregular migration are included in the reporting, making it possible to get a more

comprehensive picture on the irregular movements in the region. However, as there are no historical data available for Kosovo*, the new data do in some measure impact the comparisons of the examined period with the previous quarters. When necessary for analytical purposes, some comparisons are made excluding data from Kosovo* and this is noted in the text.

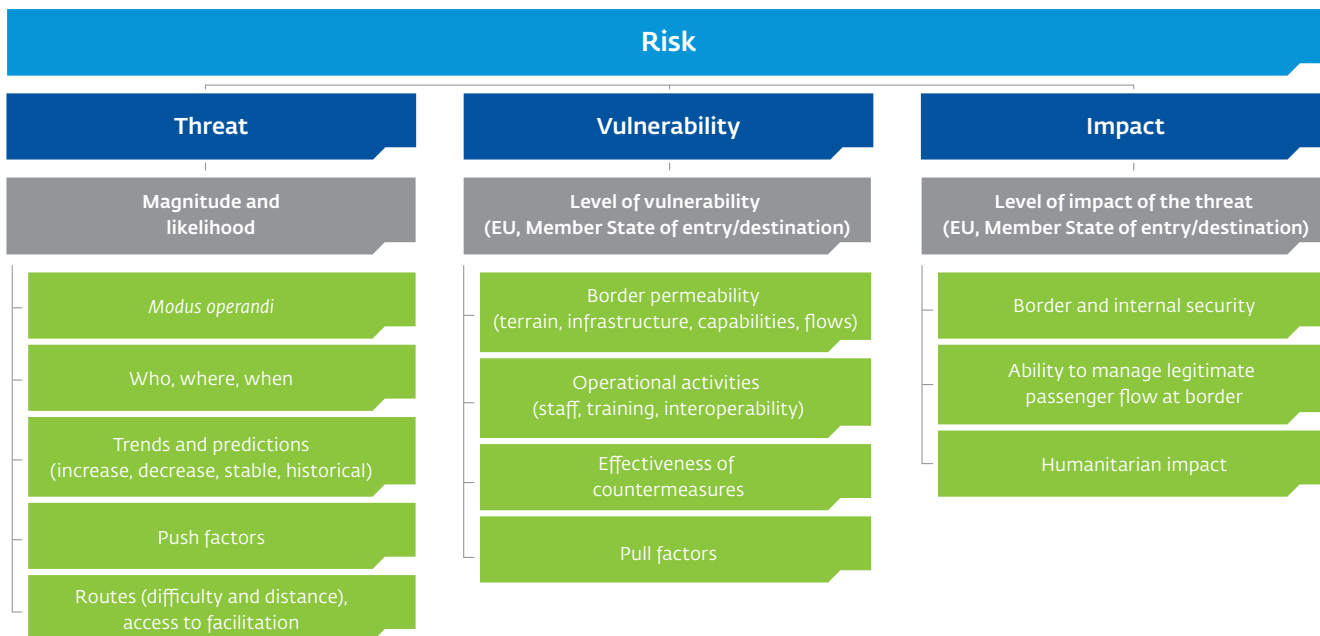
2.4. Application of the Common Integrated Risk Analysis Model (CIRAM)

In line with the previous issues of this annual report, the 2017 WB-ARA considers 'risk' as defined by the updated CIRAM: a function of 'threat', 'vulnerability' and 'impact' (see Fig. 1). Such an approach endeavours to emphasise risk

analysis as a key tool in ensuring the optimal allocation of resources within constraints of budget, staff and efficiency of equipment.

According to the model, a 'threat' is a force or pressure acting upon the external borders that is characterised by both its magnitude and likelihood; 'vulnerability' is defined as the capacity of a system to mitigate the threat and 'impact' is determined as the potential consequences of the threat. In this way, the structured and systematic breakdown of risk is presented in the annual risk assessment.

Figure 1. Risk as defined by the Common Integrated Risk Analysis Model (CIRAM)



Source: RAU – Common Integrated Risk Analysis Model (CIRAM)

2.5. Annual risk assessment

As in previous years, this edition of the annual risk assessment is guided by the CIRAM working definition of 'risk' as a function of three main components: 'threat', 'vulnerability' and 'impact'. It largely builds on the main findings from the same exercise for the drafting of WB-ARA 2016.

Each identified risk is broken down by its main components with focus on the description of the threat.

The following four main risks and specific components are considered in this assessment:

Large and sustained transit by non-regional migrants through the Western Balkans

- Illegal border-crossing at the green borders
- Illegal border-crossing at BCPs
- Document fraud cases in the region

Irregular movements by nationals from Western Balkan countries

- Illegal border-crossings at the regional/common borders with the EU
- Illegal stay in the EU
- Document fraud in the EU

Migrants using the international protection system in the Western Balkans as a way to avoid detention and move on

- Overview of the situation

Smuggling of firearms and drugs across the regional and common borders

- Detections of firearms
- Detections of drugs

3. Situation at the common borders – the overall context

Figure 2. General map of the Western Balkans region

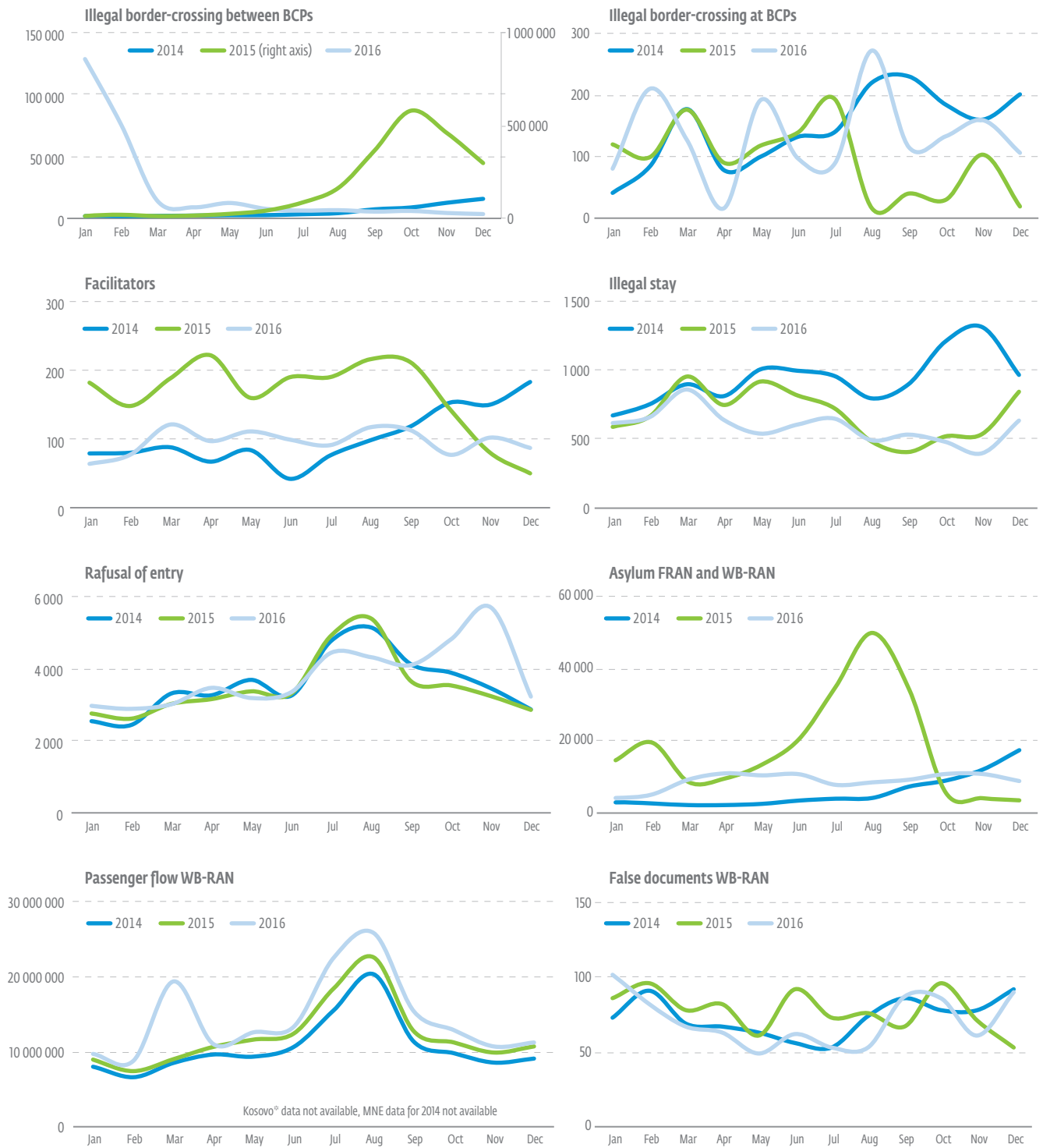


Table 1. Overview of indicators as reported by WB-RAN members

	2014	2015	2016	% change on previous year
WB-RAN Indicator				
Illegal border-crossing between BCPs	66 079	2 081 366	279 282	-87
Illegal border-crossing at BCPs	1 747	1 142	1 595	40
Facilitators	1 218	1 980	1 155	-42
Illegal stay	11 270	8 208	7 105	-13
Refusals of entry	42 715	41 800	45 437	8.7
False travel document users	880	931	855	-8.2

Source: WB-RAN data as of 16 February 2016

Figure 3. Evolution of WB-RAN and FRAN indicators - for the common and regional borders



Source: WB-RAN data as of 25 January 2017

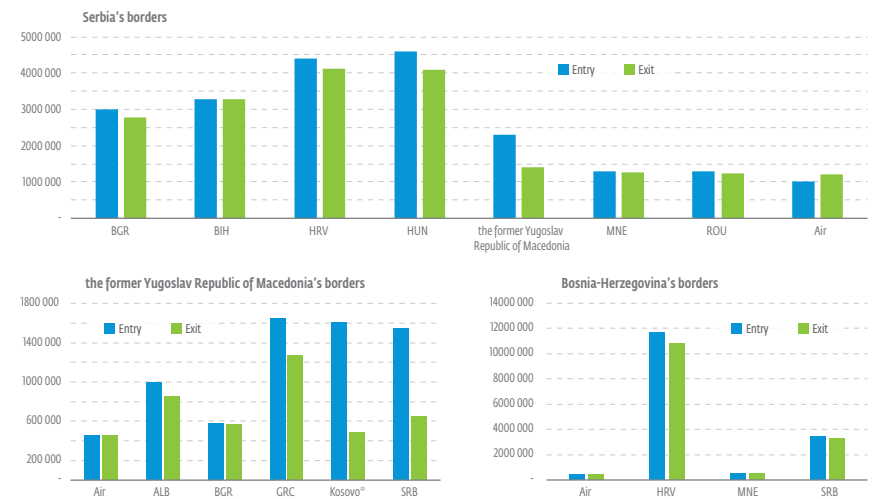
3.1. Passenger flow analysis

Serbia's borders remained the busiest regional borders in terms of regular passenger flow. More precisely, there were almost 69 million entries and exits recorded by the Serbian authorities, a number 18% higher compared with 2015, comprising a stable 40% share of the total passenger flow at the regional level. Similar to 2015, the passenger flow mostly transited the borders with Hungary, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. All of these sections registered increases over 2015, the most considerable reported at the borders with Hungary and Croatia (23% and 12%, respectively). This increased passenger traffic, combined with high migratory pressure exerted on the two border sections, likely translated into massive workload for the border authorities in 2016 as balance needed to be achieved between enforced border surveillance and sufficient resources at BCPs in order to ensure an adequate level of checks.

The borders of Bosnia and Herzegovina were still the second busiest in terms of passenger flows at the regional level, accounting for a stable 29% share of all regular transit in the Western Balkans, and even registering an 18% increase in volume over 2015. The border with Croatia accounted for 68% of over 49.5 million entries and exits reported by Bosnia and Herzegovina. The migra-

Figure 4. Largest discrepancies between the number of entries and exits of foreign passengers reported by the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina

Foreign passenger flow from the perspective of Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina towards their neighbouring countries in 2016



Source: WB-RAN data as of 6 February 2017

tory pressure at this section remained relatively low in 2016.

Around 61% of the entries and exits at the regional level were related to passengers who were not nationals of the reporting country (the so-called foreign travellers). The number of these persons rose by 20% in 2016 compared with 2015.

At the regional level, there were around 5 700 000 (+11%) more entries than exits by foreign travellers in 2016.

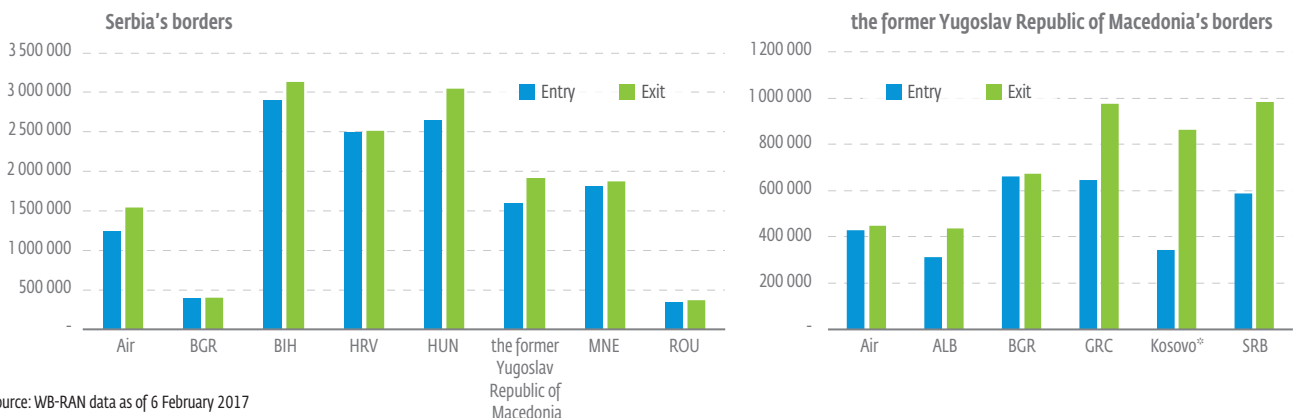
The largest discrepancies were mainly reported at the borders of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Nevertheless, the largest discrepancies were observed during the summer months (generally during the holiday season) and, to a lesser extent, in spring and winter.

Around 39% of the entries and exits at the regional level were related to pas-

Figure 5. Largest discrepancies in the between number of exits and entries of domestic passengers reported by the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia

Domestic passenger flow from the perspective of Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia towards their neighbouring countries in 2016



Source: WB-RAN data as of 6 February 2017

sengers who were nationals of the reporting country (the so-called domestic travellers). The number of these persons rose by 17% in 2016 compared with 2015.

Roughly 3 300 000 more exits by domestic passengers were observed at the regional level in 2016. The biggest discrepancies were mainly reported at the borders of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and those of Serbia.

The ratio between entries and exits can serve as a relative proxy measurement of bona fide travel patterns, since it provides an indication of how many persons exited a country and later returned in a given fixed period, and hence did not overstay the legal period of stay.

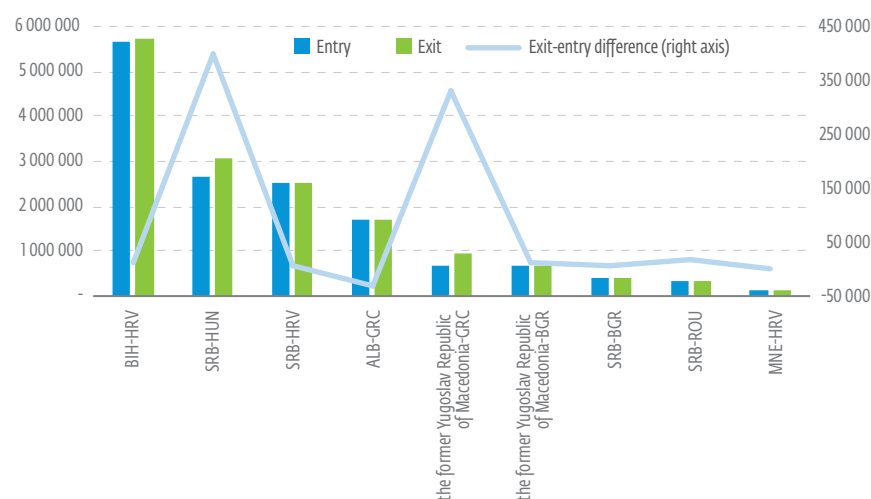
Overall, at the regional level there were roughly 750 000 (5%) more exits by citizens of the regional countries who share a common border with EU Member States towards the respective Member States than entries by the same nationalities (Fig. 6). The biggest discrepancy between exits and entries appeared to be at Serbia's border with Hungary where 396 000 more Serbs exited their country than returned. The second largest difference was related to nationals of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia at this country's border with Greece, where 284 000 more people exited than returned.

Interestingly, in 2016 Albania's border with Greece registered a slightly higher number of Albanians (31 000) returning from Greece than leaving towards the neighbouring EU Member State.

Judging by the number of Bosnians, Serbs, Albanians and nationals of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia who were detected for overstay in

Figure 6. **Largest discrepancies between exits and entries of domestic passengers were reported by Serbia towards Hungary and by the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia towards Greece**

Nationals of each regional country moving across the respective common borders with the neighbouring EU Member States



Source: WB-RAN data as of 6 February 2017

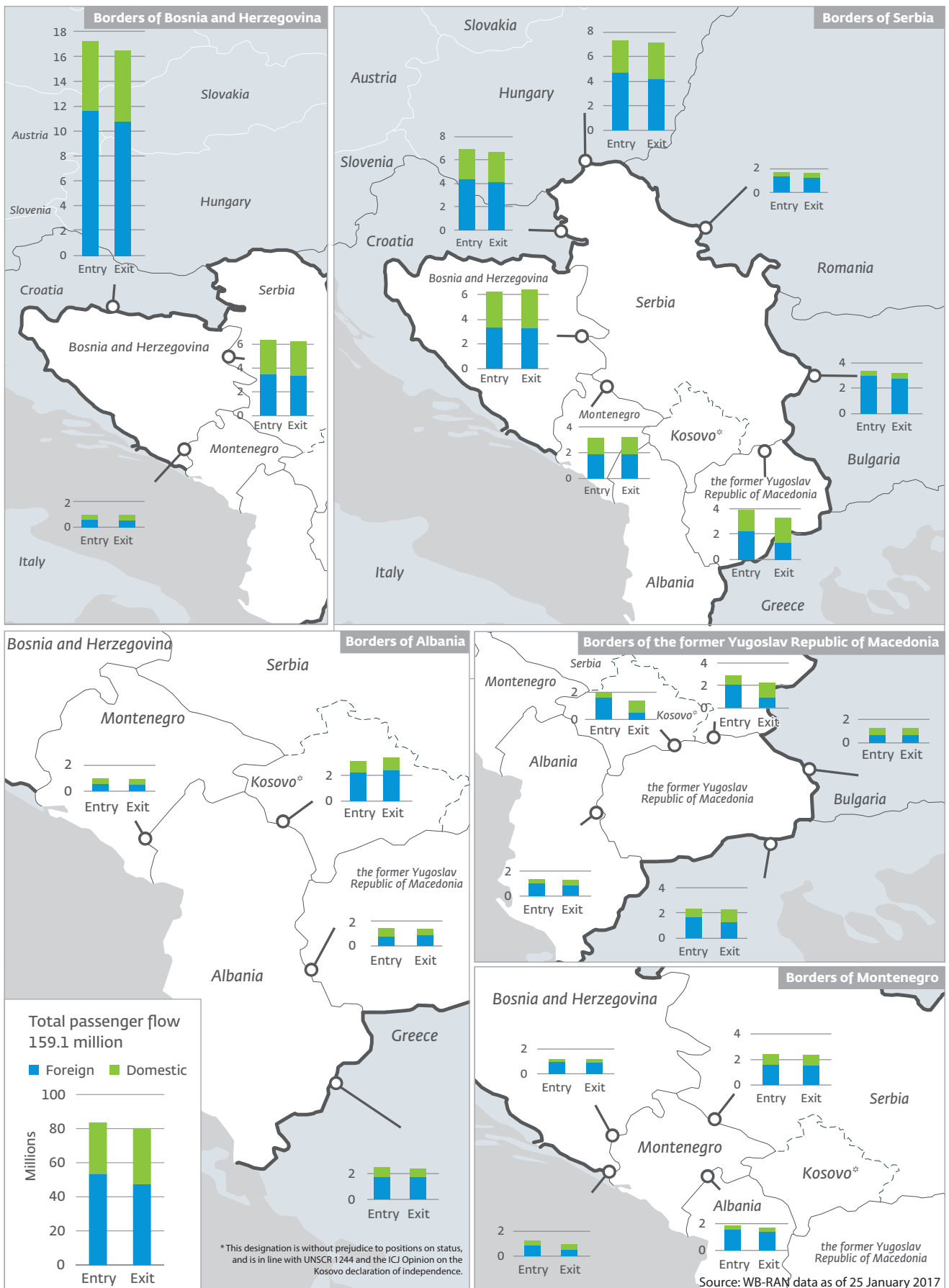
EU Member States/Schengen Associated Countries in 2016, the situation appears relatively stable. Specifically, even though apparently there were 750 000 more exits by the respective nationals towards the EU, only roughly 38 000 of them were reported for illegal stay in the EU.

Nonetheless, the highest number of overstayers in the EU remains that of Albanians with roughly 24 000, although more of these nationals were reported travelling to Albania from Greece than the other way round.

Serbs were the second most reported regional nationality for illegal stay in the EU in 2016, totalling roughly 8 400 detections. At the same time, they registered 429 000 more exits than entries across the borders with Hungary, Roma-

nia, Croatia and Bulgaria. This would make for a ratio of one Serbian overstayer to 51 extra exits by these nationals in 2016. Roughly 3 000 nationals of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia were detected illegally staying in EU Member States while the difference between the number of exits and entries to Greece and Bulgaria by these nationals amounted to 341 000 (a ratio of one overstayer to 114 extra exits). Although Bosnians ranked fourth as illegal stayers in the EU with roughly 2 400 detections, they had a higher ratio in relation to the number of extra exits towards the EU (one overstayer to just four extra exits towards Croatia).

Figure 7. **The borders of Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina remained the busiest ones in terms of regular passenger flow**
 Passenger flow across common and regional land borders in the Western Balkans in 2016



3.2. Refusals of entry

In 2016, 45 437 decisions to refuse entry were issued at the regional and common borders of the Western Balkans, a slightly higher number (by 9%) than that of 2015.

As in previous years, a vast majority of refusals of entry was issued at the land borders (93%), while the remaining 7% was mostly reported at the air borders.

What stands out is the large number of refusals issued to Turkish nationals (roughly 3 100), which made them the fourth most refused nationality for the third year in a row. Similar to the previous year, of the total number of refusals addressed to Turks, 47% was issued at the air borders. Thus, this nationality continued to rank first for this border type, despite a decrease of roughly 1 150 in absolute numbers compared with 2015. At the same time, at land borders, Turks received 4% of the refusals issued

and ranked fifth among known nationalities, even registering an increase of around 320 over 2015.

As in previous years, most of the refusals reported by the neighbouring EU Member States in 2016 were issued to nationals of Western Balkan countries (78%). In turn, as regards refusals of entry to the six countries of the region, 34% was issued to local residents, followed by nationals of EU Member States/Schengen Associated Countries (31%) and Turkish nationals (15%).

Refusals issued to the non-regional nationalities associated with the migratory flow which originates from Turkey/Greece continued to account for a low share of the total. In fact, only just over 1.5% (less than 700) of all refusals was issued to Syrians, Afghans, Iraqis, Pakistanis and Iranians (top five non-regional nationalities reported for illegal border-crossing in 2016).

3.3. Irregular migration

Overall, the number of detected illegal border-crossings by **non-regional migrants**¹⁰ on the Western Balkan route reached roughly 270 000 in 2016 (down from over 2 million in 2015).

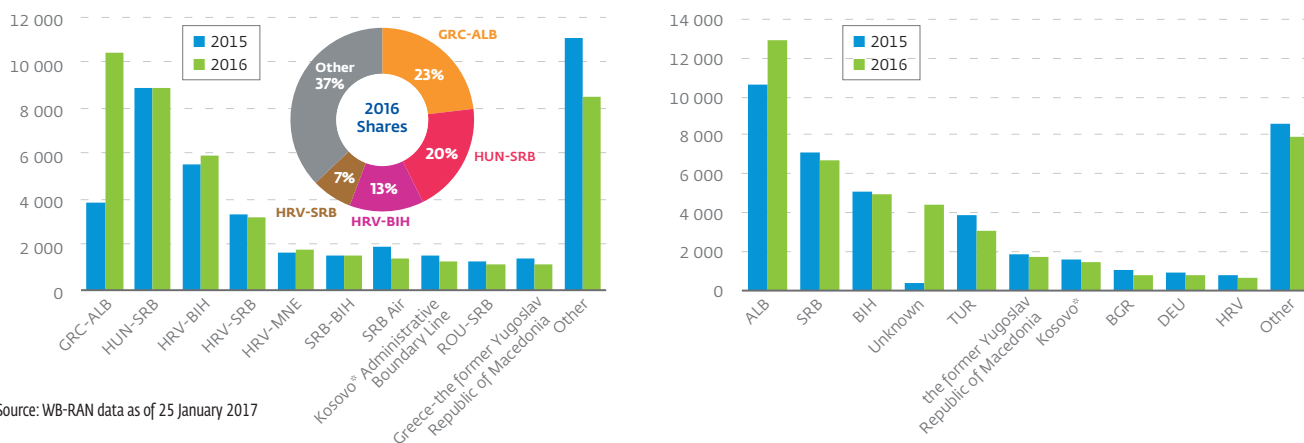
An array of coherent regional and international response measures to irregular migration gradually brought the flow down to manageable levels, with decreases reported almost every month throughout 2016 (i.e. from 128 000 illegal border-crossings in January to roughly 3 000 in December).

Nevertheless, the prevention measures implemented throughout 2016, apart from reducing the flow, also contributed to a number of migrants be-

¹⁰ Migrants of nationalities other than those of Albania, Kosovo*, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro or Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Figure 8. Only a small proportion of refusals were issued to main nationalities transiting via Turkey/Greece; Turks continued to rank high among refused nationalities

Persons refused entry by top border sections, top shares (left) and nationalities (right)



Source: WB-RAN data as of 25 January 2017

ing stranded at certain locations along the route. That is why the pressure on some border sections persisted despite an actual decrease in the volume of the transiting flow.

Specifically, the pressure observed at some sections may have been higher than the actual number of individual migrants would indicate, due to repeated attempts to cross the border made by the same person. Moreover, the same migrant may have been detected at several border sections while transiting the region.

With this in mind, the detections reported along the Western Balkan route do not necessarily relate to an equal number of individual migrants and the reported pressure, especially after the closure of the corridor, was likely higher than the actual size of the flow.

Similar to 2015, Syrians and Afghans were the two main nationalities, each accounting for a roughly 20% share of the non-regional flow. However, in terms of absolute numbers, both registered steep declines in relation to the previous year (-92% and -83%, respectively). The top five of known non-regional nationalities also included Iraqis, Pakistanis and Iranians, with their numbers ranging between just above 2 300 for Iranians to over 25 000 for Iraqis. Overall, approxi-

mately 43% of the non-regional flow was reported as 'unknown'¹¹ in 2016.

Nevertheless, as the non-regional flow slowly subsided in consequence of coordinated response measures, the share of illegal border-crossings reported as 'unknown' also decreased. Specifically, between Q1 and Q4 2016 the share of 'unknown' nationalities shrank from 50% to below 3% of the non-regional flow, indicating that the situation slowly returned to levels manageable by the authorities' screening and registration capacities.

At the same time, around 9 400 illegal border-crossings by **regional migrants**¹² were reported, a number 75% lower than that of 2015. This decrease was mostly linked to the fact that the migratory flow from Kosovo* (significant factor at the end of 2014 and in the first two months of 2015) was finally halted. The detections of regional migrants followed a relatively stable trend in 2016 and, due

to the drop in the non-regional flow, accounted for roughly 3% of the overall migratory pressure in the region.

Most of the detections of illegal border-crossing between BCPs by regional migrants (around 73%) occurred in the south of the region and were, by and large, associated with the Albanian circular migration¹³ to Greece.

The number of Kosovo* citizens detected for illegal border-crossing plummeted in 2016. Hence, they were only the second most detected regional migrants accounting for approximately 13% of the regional flow, after Albanians, who ranked first with an 81% share. Kosovo* citizens mostly targeted Serbia's borders with Hungary and Croatia. The other regional nationalities were detected in low numbers in 2016, often lower than in 2015.

11 The number reported as 'unknown' is analysed as part of the non-regional migration flow as the authorities are considered capable of identifying regional residents.

12 Migrants who are nationals of Serbia, Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro or Kosovo*

13 Seasonal movements of workers (Albania-Greece-Albania).

4. Large and sustained transit by non-regional migrants through the Western Balkans

4.1. Illegal border-crossing at the green borders

Traditionally, the non-regional migration flow transiting the Western Balkans was mainly a function of the developments occurring at Turkey's borders with Greece and Bulgaria and thus, by extension, in the Middle East. In this sense, the continued insecurity in this area over the past years has provided for an ever increasing pool of would-be migrants and/or refugees to accumulate inside Turkey ready to use all known migration routes towards the EU.

While strong inter-dependencies between the Western Balkan and the Eastern Mediterranean routes continued to exist, the relations between the two in terms of migratory pressure were slightly modified by the various restriction measures and policy responses to irregular migration implemented throughout 2016.

Specifically, if in the previous years (i.e. 2014 and especially 2015) the migratory pressure from the Aegean Islands manifested itself on the Western Balkan route with sometimes minimal delays, the implementation of the EU-Turkey statement and of a Hotspot approach to irregular migration decreased the number of arrivals to the islands while preventing the onward movement of most of those who still made the sea travel.

With this observation in mind, it can be considered that the detections reported in the Western Balkans in 2016 are mainly linked to the unprecedented number of migrants reported on the Aegean Islands before 20 March 2016 (i.e. before the implementation of the EU-Turkey statement) and to those choosing to travel via Turkey's land borders with Greece and Bulgaria.

Most of the persons who reached the Greek Islands in the Aegean Sea before 20 March can be assumed to have reached the mainland, further adding to the pressure on the Western Balkan route.

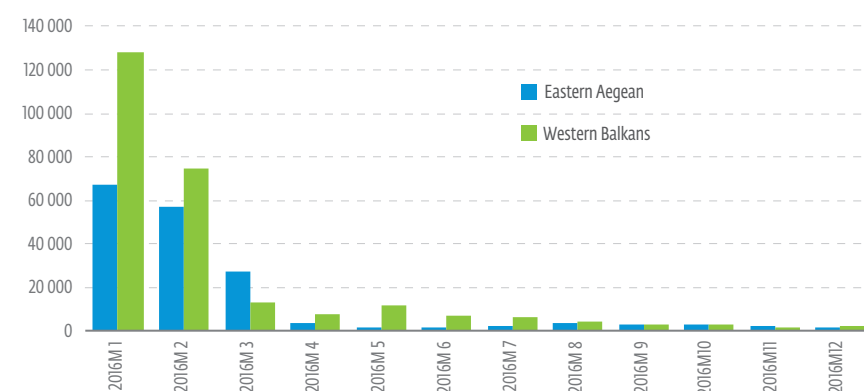
After March, however, the illegal border-crossings to the Aegean Islands dramatically decreased due to the implementation of the EU-Turkey statement, Hotspot approach to migration and the closure of the Western Balkans transit corridor. Moreover, the persons still travelling via the Aegean Sea after 20 March were largely contained on the islands in order to be processed locally; they had no possibility to quickly reach the mainland, so their impact on the Western Balkan route was probably lower.

Considering that the migratory flows transiting the Western Balkans mainly originated from the Eastern Aegean Islands before March, it may seem odd that the overall numbers reported on the former route appear higher. However, this is a natural occurrence as a migrant transiting the Western Balkans needs to go across several border sections on the way to his destination and thus can be reported several times.

Similar to previous years, during the reference period the non-regional migration flow continued to enter the Western Balkans across the **southern common borders** with Greece and Bulgaria before heading north and exiting the region at first mostly across the Croatian-Serbian and then the Hungarian-Serbian border sections.

Figure 9. **The migration pressure observed in the Eastern Aegean is less reflected onto the Western Balkans after March; migrants who arrived in Greece before March and those leaving Turkey overland maintain pressure on the Western Balkans**

Detections of illegal border-crossing by migrants originating outside the Western Balkans



Source: FRAN and WB-RAN as of 6 February 2017

However, in 2016 roughly 270 000 illegal border-crossings by **non-regional migrants** en route from Turkey, Greece and Bulgaria were reported at the common and regional borders of the Western Balkans, a massive drop compared to the crisis period of 2015.

In the course of the year, the volume of the flow followed two different trends. Specifically, in the first quarter it continued at very high levels (albeit lower than the last quarter of 2015 due to seasonal variations and a number of restriction measures), before constantly dropping after March due to increased border-control measures in the region and the closure of the Western Balkans transit corridor.

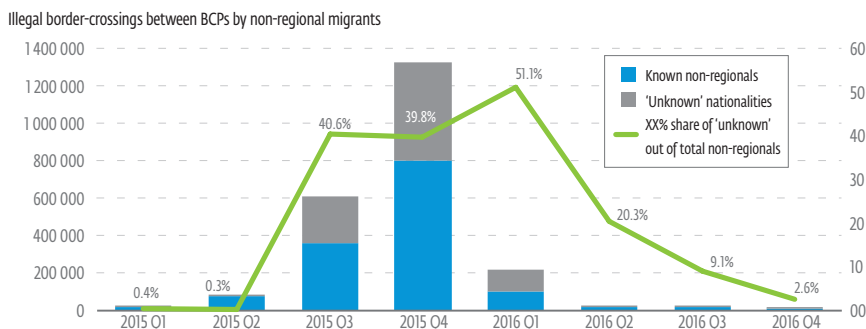
Following the coordinated restriction measures implemented throughout the region, in destination countries and the Aegean Sea, the non-regional flow transiting the Western Balkans considerably subsided, declining almost every month, from 128 000 illegal border-crossings in January down to roughly 3 000 in December 2016.

That is not to say that the need for close cooperation has disappeared, especially keeping in mind the precipitous growth of the migratory flow in 2015.

The enhanced restrictions led to a number of migrants becoming stranded in different locations along the route (i.e. the Aegean Islands, the mainland Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia). Thus, even though the overall volume of the transiting flow decreased, the stranded migrants continued to exert some pressure at different border sections as they repeatedly attempted to cross.

Nevertheless, the flow was ultimately brought down to levels manageable by the authorities' screening and registration capacities. Specifically, between Q3 2015 and Q1 2016, a significant share (40%-50%) of illegal border-crossings was associated with persons whose na-

Figure 10. **The share of 'unknown' nationality dropped as the flow decreased; the situation returned to levels manageable by existing screening capacities**



Source: WB-RAN data as of 25 January 2017

tionality was reported as 'unknown'.¹⁴ However, the share was shrinking as the volume of the flow declined, reaching less than 3% in the last quarter of 2016.

4.1.1. Main factors decelerating and ultimately bringing the flow under control

Phased approach to gradually decrease the flow

At the peak of the crisis in 2015, the most affected countries reacted individually, at times introducing antagonistic measures. For example, while some countries organised the transportation corridor to streamline the movement of migrants, other effectively stopped the flow by closing their green border. These local solutions either accelerated or deflected the migratory flow but failed to bring it back under control.

This general inefficiency of individual response to what was a cross-regional phenomenon came to attention highlighting the need for increased coordination towards the end of 2015 and onwards.

Starting in November 2015 and through the first quarter of 2016, the countries most affected by the non-regional flow transiting the Western

Balkans started to increase their coordination in order to better tackle the high migration pressure.

The first common restriction measure was agreed on at the end of November when only Syrian, Afghan and Iraqi migrants were allowed transit while all others started being filtered out from the flow. Despite being difficult to implement due to the fact that many migrants resorted to nationality swapping in order to slip through, this decision set the stage for further trans-regional actions.

In February 2016, several high-level meetings of regional police chiefs and ministers were organised, each resulting in the application of more coordinated and gradual transit restrictions. These restrictions ranged from requiring migrants to document their nationality, origin from war-torn areas, previous registration in Greece, all the way to imposing daily transit quotas, refusing entry to migrants who had resided in other safe countries for a longer period or who did not fully cooperate with the authorities.

All of these enhanced filtering activities led to a drop in the number of persons allowed transit based on the regional arrangements, while also resulting in a certain accumulation of migratory pressure in Greece, and especially at its border with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

In order to cope with the high numbers of refused persons trying to force their passage, the authorities in Skopje increased the number of police forces at

¹⁴ The number reported as 'unknown' is analysed as part of the non-regional migration flow as the authorities are considered capable of identifying regional residents.

their southern border while also erecting a two-layer fence in the most sensitive areas. As the success of all planned restriction measures greatly depended on the capacity to properly curb the flow in this area, other regional countries also sent reinforcements.

Closure of the transit corridor

The phased approach of gradually filtering and reducing the flow set the scene for the decision on 9 March to completely close the facilitated transit corridor and return to the normal application of the Schengen Borders Code and legislation governing international travel, announced by the Slovenian and Croatian authorities.

In the immediate period after closing the corridor, the pressure continued to accumulate in Greece, fuelled by migrants who kept making the journey from Turkey across the Aegean Sea and to the border with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. These persons were animated by the hope that the authorities would give in to the pressure and reopen the borders (as, for example, at the end of July 2015).

In these conditions, more than 12 000 migrants quickly accumulated in the Ido-

meni area in northern Greece, camping out there and constantly trying to force their way across the border to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

This brought about a number of violent clashes with the authorities.

Despite the immediate intensification of the pressure, the authorities managed to maintain the transit corridor closed thus slowing the momentum gained by the migratory flow in the previous months and sending an important message to others who were still contemplating the journey via Greece and the Balkans.

Cascading restrictions added to maintaining the route closed

Despite significantly reducing the flow from the very beginning, the closure of the corridor itself was not sufficient to fully bring the situation back under control. Specifically, prompt and coherent response measures were needed in order to tackle other issues, such as the migratory pressure accumulated in Greece or the natural tendency of migrants to seek alternative routing.

With this in mind, additional support was deployed by transit and destination countries at key border sections

throughout the region while operational activities and policy responses were implemented in the Aegean Sea and Turkey.

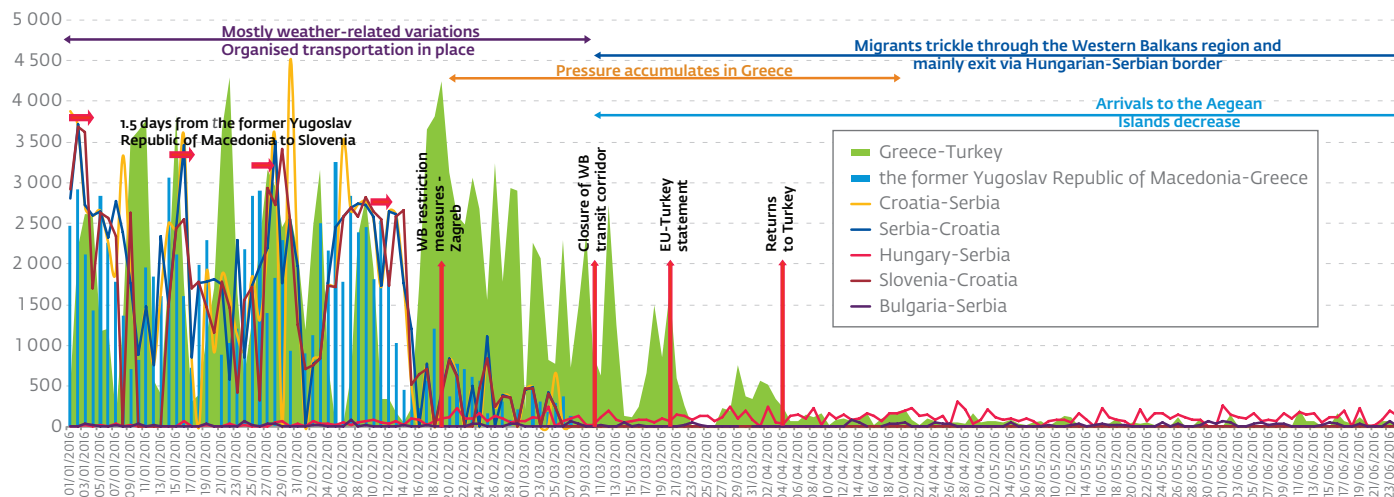
As regards **border-control measures**, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Bulgaria and Serbia enhanced their efforts both on their own (e.g. internal re-deployments of personnel and equipment, involvement of military units in border surveillance, etc.) and with international support in the framework of either European Commission-funded interventions or Frontex Joint Operations.

Bulgaria redeployed additional personnel and equipment to its western border with Serbia in 2016, particularly from the beginning of July, while additional border guards and equipment were sent by other EU Member States in the framework of Frontex coordinated Joint Operation 'Flexi South East' starting in September.

Serbia also supplemented its border-control capacities by deploying personnel and equipment from other police forces and the army to its southern and south-eastern borders and implementing inland control measures at the main road junctions to increase detections.

Importantly, **policy-level responses** were implemented in reaction to the cri-

Figure 11. Timeline of key events/decisions and impacts on the flow transiting the Eastern Aegean Sea and the Western Balkans in 2016



Source: WB Daily information exchange as of 18 January 2017

sis. In this regard, the EU-Turkey statement on stemming migration, which entered into force on 20 March, and the implementation of the Hotspot approach¹⁵ on the most targeted Greek Islands in the Aegean Sea greatly contributed to reducing the migration flow from Turkey and preventing further movements towards the Western Balkans.

Another policy response was that of Hungary who, besides reinforcing its border-control activities, adopted a new piece of legislation modifying the working procedures at the borders. Specifically, starting in July the border police forces were enabled to return all migrants detected within 8 kilometres from the borders to specially designated transit areas where they could either wait for a legal admission (at a rate of 30 per day) or return to Serbia. Similar legal provisions allowing border closures and limited admissions of migrants in case of significant increase in the flow were adopted in Slovenia. Arguably, the latter legal changes envisage a response which can only be triggered in emergency situations rather than a permanent approach to migration.

15 Providing migrants with accommodation, as well as screening, registering and processing them on the islands rather than in the mainland Greece.

Migratory situation ‘close-to-normal’ but coordination still necessary

Following the coordinated restriction measures implemented throughout the region, in destination countries and the Aegean Sea, the non-regional flow transiting the Western Balkans considerably subsided, declining almost every month, from 128 000 illegal border-crossings in January down to roughly 3 000 in December 2016.

Nevertheless, the underlying conditions for a re-escalation remain in place (i.e. large pool of would-be migrants in neighbouring regions, some actually counting on the Western Balkan route being re-opened), pointing to the importance of maintaining close cooperation and coordinated response measures for the future.

Humanitarian aspects of irregular migration

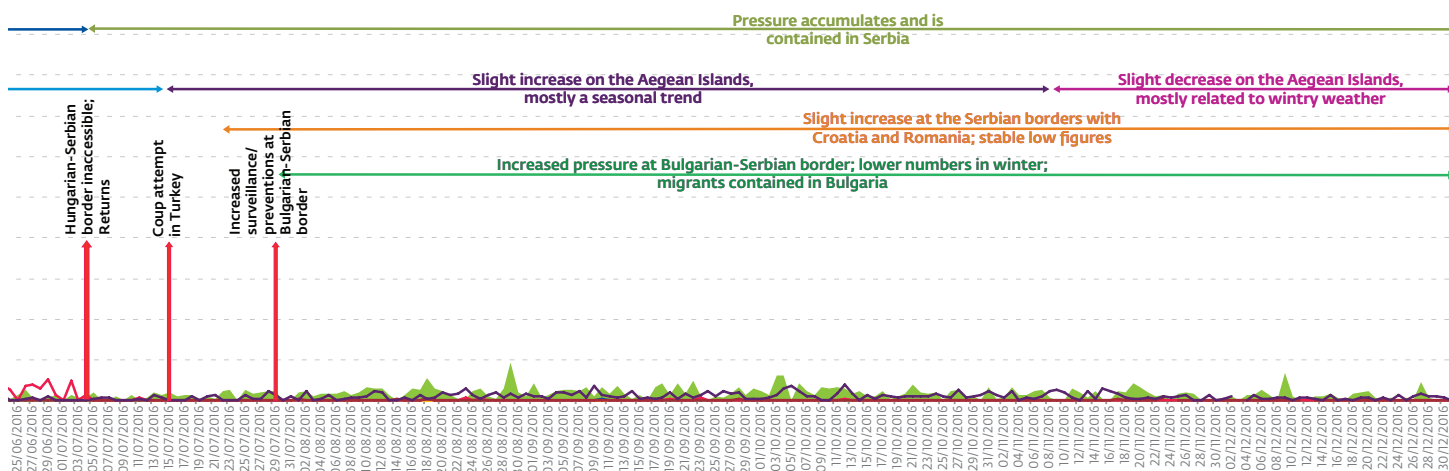
Enhanced border controls efficiently reduced the migration pressure throughout the region. However, as a side effect of these measures a number of migrants became stranded at certain sections of

the route (e.g. roughly 7 500 in Serbia alone) unable to continue their irregular journey. Many of these persons might belong to vulnerable groups (women and children) in need of special support. Another side-effect of enhanced border-controls is the fact that migrants (including vulnerable ones) may increasingly approach criminal groups to facilitate their onward journey, thus exposing themselves to various risks (abuse, kidnapping for ransom, etc.).

In this context, it is necessary that border police forces are also sensitive to this situation and well-equipped to identify members of vulnerable groups among migrants so that they can refer them to proper assistance/support mechanisms available in their countries.

4.1.2. Development of the migratory pressure at different border sections throughout 2016

The implemented prevention measures, apart from reducing the flow, also contributed to a number of migrants becoming stranded at certain locations along the route. That is why, the pressure on some border sections persisted despite an actual decrease in the volume of the



transiting flow (i.e. likely multiple transit attempts by the same migrant).

Similar to 2015, the same migrant could be detected at several border sections throughout the region on his way to the final destination. However, in contrast to 2015, after the closure of the transit corridor and increased prevention measures, the same migrant could also be detected several times while he tried to unsuccessfully cross the same border section.

Thus, the detections reported along the Western Balkan route do not necessarily reflect an equal number of individual migrants. Similarly, the reported pressure on some sections, especially after the closure of the corridor was likely higher than the actual size of the flow.

The south of the region remained the main entry/pressure point for the non-regional flow

The border between Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia massively influenced and was, in turn, influenced by all the decisions taken throughout the region. In this sense, the sharp increase in the migration pressure in 2015 coincided with Skopje's decision to allow migrants expressing an intention to claim asylum a 72-hour window to transit. Similarly, the success of all restriction measures and the ultimate closure of the transit corridor in 2016 largely depended on the effective sealing of this section.

This aspect was acknowledged by regional countries and EU Member States alike which thus sent reinforcements to the area in 2016.

Moreover, in the context of enhanced regional and international commitment to controlling the crisis, the Project 'Special Measure supporting the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to Manage its Southern Border in the Context of the European Migration Crisis' was initiated in April with the support of the European Commission and IOM. Within the framework of this project, additional po-

Figure 12. The border between the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Greece remained the section most affected by the non-regional transiting flow entering or trying to enter the region, followed by the Bulgarian-Serbian border. In the north, the Croatian-Serbian (in Q1) and the Hungarian-Serbian (after Q1) borders took most of the pressure exerted by migrants exiting or trying to exit the region. Other northern sections registered slight increases; the regional flow was mostly reported at Greece's border with Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

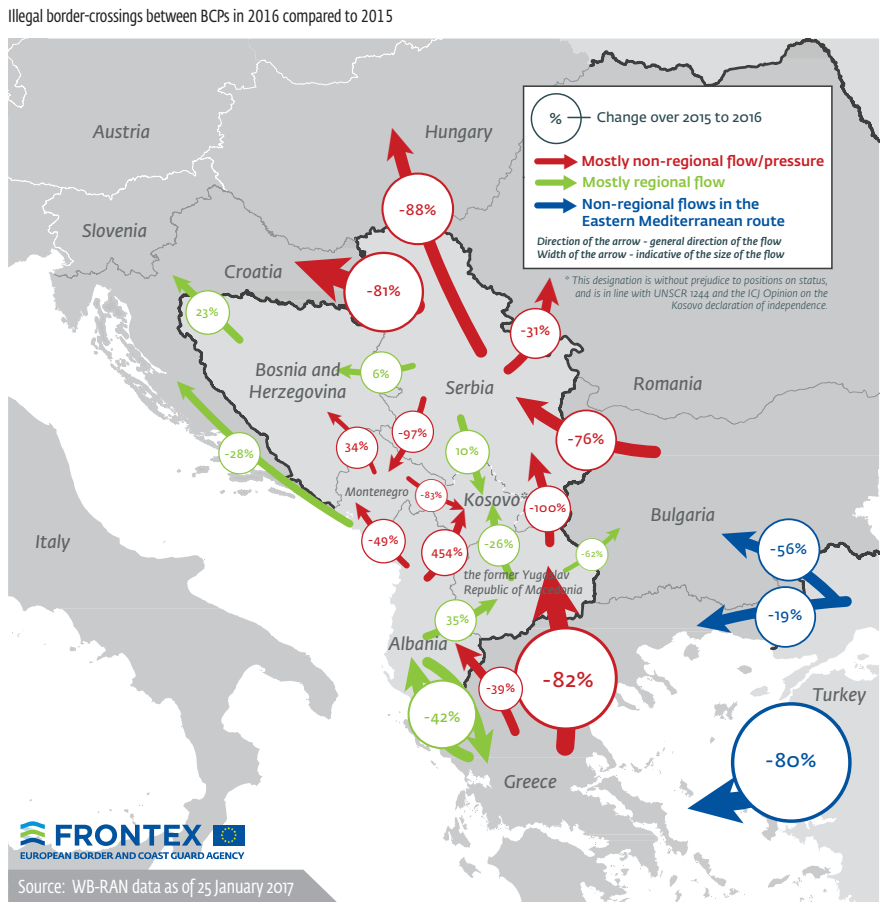
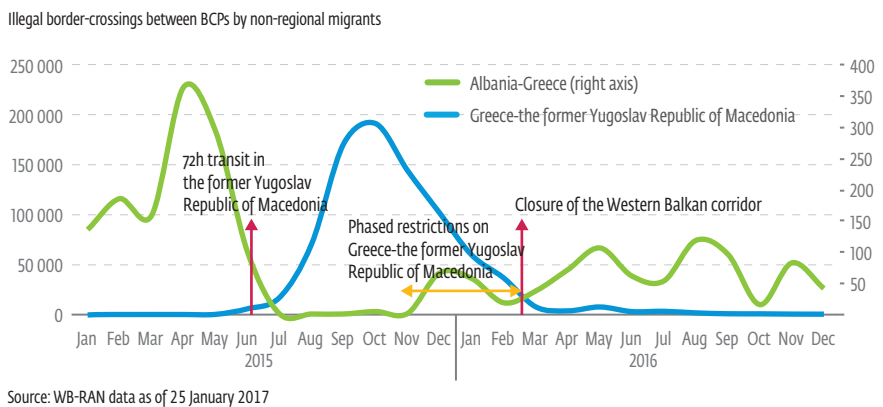


Figure 13. Decrease in migratory pressure at the border between Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia following the closure of the corridor and continued reinforcements



lice officers (over 100 each month) and equipment from several countries within or outside the region started helping patrol the border alongside already reinforced local personnel. The project continued throughout the year and is still ongoing in 2017.

These measures played a key role in halting the momentum of the migratory flow, and sent an important message to would-be migrants still preparing to make the journey from Turkey or their home countries. The success of these measures was ultimately reflected in the gradual decrease of the pressure.

Specifically, between January and February 2016 this border section registered three times more illegal border-crossings by non-regional migrants than between April and December, when the registered migratory pressure decreased. Arguably, as the closure of the corridor largely equated to preventing illegal border-crossings, and only allowing entry on humanitarian grounds, many of the detections registered between March and December were repeated attempts. In December, the number of detections dropped to below 500.

Undoubtedly, other measures, such as the implementation of Hotspots on the Aegean Islands, preventions of departures by Turkey under the EU-Turkey statement, as well as Greece's efforts to dismantle the irregular camps in Idomeni and moving the migrants to reception centres inland also contributed to the observed reduction in the pressure.

The **Bulgarian-Serbian** border, another section in the south of the region, registered a considerable pressure throughout 2016, especially after the effective closure of the transit corridor. Combined operational information from Bulgaria and regular reporting from Serbia on both sides of the common border indicate a relatively high migratory pressure on this area.

Nevertheless, repeated unsuccessful crossing attempts by the same migrants might have largely contributed to this pressure (detected on exit by Bulgaria and sent back to the reception centres).

Detections on the Serbian side suggest that due to Bulgaria's increased capacities, fewer migrants were able to successfully cross (a decreasing trend of detections reported by Serbia as Bulgaria's numbers increased) (Fig. 14).

Judging by regular reporting and available operational data, no clear correlation could be observed between Bulgaria's border with Serbia and the one with Turkey.

Specifically, the numbers reported on both sides of the Bulgarian-Turkish border section were constantly lower than the detections on exit towards Serbia. The gap even widened as more resources were allocated to secure the section with Serbia, although similar efforts were made to reinforce capacities at the border with Turkey.

In this sense, repeat offenders detected at the border with Serbia partly explain the difference in the level of pressure exerted at the two border sections. Another plausible explanation is that a number of migrants may have managed to pass undetected from Turkey.

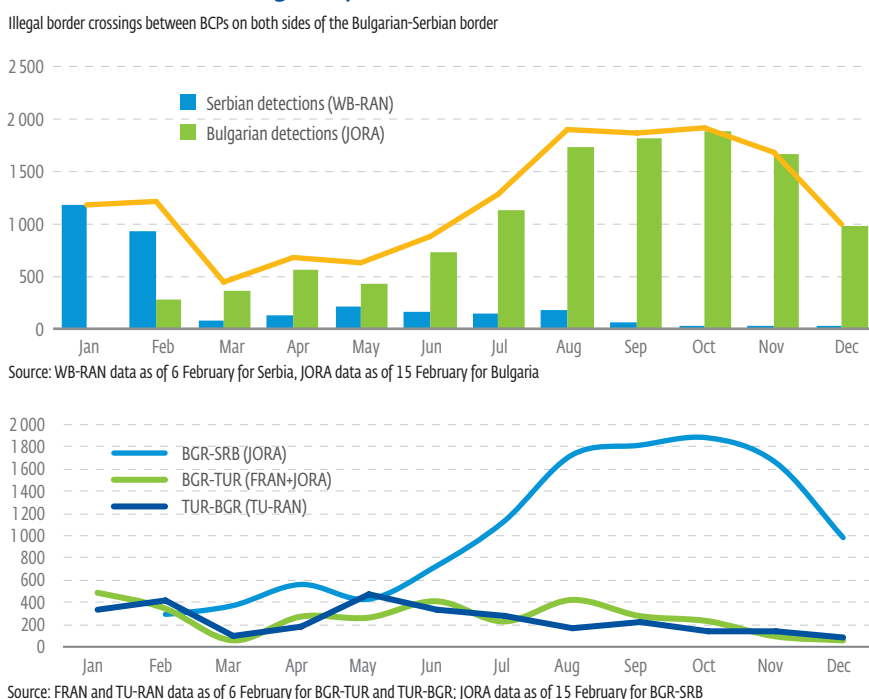
Nevertheless, the low number of detections and downward trend reported by Turkey at the common border partly dismiss this hypothesis, as they are almost identical to Bulgaria's reporting at the same section.

The downward trend observed on both sides of the Bulgarian-Turkish border can also be seen as a successful result of increased capacities at the border with Serbia. Specifically, arrivals from Turkey are deterred by the impossibility of moving further on via Serbia.

Moreover, the decreasing number of detections reported by Serbia is also indicative of Bulgaria's success in reducing the flow.

The **Greek-Albanian** border section, having become less attractive in 2015, appeared to again be targeted by migrants starting from March 2016. The first development was largely related to the increased appeal of the easier routing from Greece to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia starting in June 2015 and the second was linked to the increased restrictions leading to the clo-

Figure 14. **Detections of illegal border-crossing on both sides of Bulgaria's land borders with Serbia and Turkey tend to indicate a successful reduction in the volume of the migratory flow**

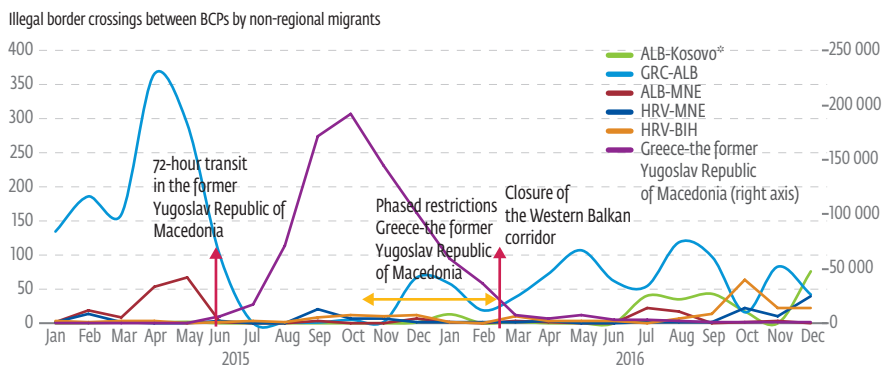


sure of the Western Balkans transit corridor in March 2016.

The introduction of phased restriction measures which made the transit via the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia more difficult also increased the attractiveness of the Greek-Albania border. Nevertheless, this border section registered quite a low number of detections in 2016: 767 illegal border-crossings by non-regional migrants, which is lower than the total of 2015.

Detections reported by other border-sections further north also tended to confirm the slight increase in migratory pressure from Greece to Albania, although the overall numbers remained relatively low throughout the year. This is the case of the borders between Albania and Kosovo*, Albania and Montenegro and Croatia-Montenegro (Fig. 15).

Figure 15. **The pressure at the Greek-Albanian border rose slightly as the restriction measures were introduced at the Greek border with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the Western Balkan corridor was closed**



Source: WB-RAN data as of 2 March 2017

This reactivation of the mentioned border sections cannot be regarded as in any way equivalent to a full deflection of flows searching for transit alterna-

tives out of Greece, but it does indicate a need to closely monitor the situation.

Facilitation cases reported by the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia after the closure of the transit corridor

The enhanced border-controls along the Western Balkans, especially after March 2016, increased migrants' demand for undetected crossings, a situation exploited by criminal groups offering such services. Many migrants (especially families or those with previous unsuccessful transit attempts) opted for using facilitation services in order to ease their travels. In this sense, roughly 108 facilitation cases were detected on the territory of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in 2016, despite the overall reduction of the migration flow.

The cost of such services ranges between EUR 300 and EUR 1 500 per person and the required amount is generally paid in full to organisers in Thessaloniki. The money is then distributed among the persons in charge for the next segments of the route (money transfers, cash payments through the drivers).

Routes in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia:

- Gevgelija-Valandovo-Demir Kapija-Negotino - Veles - Skopje - Kumanovo;
- Gevgelija-Valandovo via Strumica, Radovis, Stip, Sveti Nikole-Kumanovo;
- Secondary roads across Belasica and Osogovo Mountains through small villages to northern border;
- From Bitola region through Prilep/Kavadarci, to Skopje and Kumanovo.

Organised groups dismantled in 2016

The first group was composed of nine nationals of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and one Albanian, mostly known to the authorities for previous drug smuggling and other violent crimes. These persons are believed to have transported over 560 migrants from the southern border with Greece to the northern villages of Vaksince-Kumanovo in 2015 and 2016.

The second group was composed of four Pakistanis, two Afghans and one national of the former Yugoslav Repub-



Facilitation case detected inland

lic of Macedonia. This group was transferring migrants from the border with Greece to the northern village of Lojane-Kumanovo. They used physical force, threats, blackmail and privation of freedom in order to extort additional funds from their 'clients' before enabling them to continue their journey into the EU. Police searches conducted in a safe house used by the group in Lojane found 50 migrants (Syrian, Iraqi, Pakistani and Afghan nationals). One family detected and reported in this case stated that they were held prisoner and blackmailed for more money.

Source: Police of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia/WB Guest Analysts' workshop

In the centre of the region, Serbia took the greatest pressure

As Serbia is located on the way from Greece/Bulgaria to Western Europe, it remained a mandatory transit area for non-regional migrants moving on the Western Balkan route.

Trying to cope with this situation, the Serbian authorities implemented a series of measures designed to enhance detection capacities, tackle migrant-smuggling and deter illegal entries. These measures ranged from setting up mixed police check-points at the main road junctions leading to the borders (at the end of May) all the way to deploying 2 000 army officers to support border control (at the end of July).

Moreover, starting in September, a European Commission-financed support mission, similar to the one in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, was established at Serbia's border with Bulgaria. In this framework additional personnel and equipment were deployed from EU Member States to enhance border-control capacities.

The number of migrants arriving in Serbia significantly dropped following enhanced restriction measures and the closure of the corridor.

Nevertheless, a number of these persons still managed to trickle into Serbia ultimately building up a presence in the country (roughly 7 500 towards the end of the year) especially after July, when Hungary implemented a new piece of legislation making the irregular transit through the common border more difficult.

The rest of the countries in the centre of the region saw low numbers of transiting migrants at their borders, although slight increases were noticed at certain sections such as Kosovo* and Montenegro's borders with Albania, where few cases involving mainly Afghan migrants were reported.

The north part of the region remains the main exit point

Traditionally, most of the non-regional migrants who entered the Balkans through the southern common border with Greece and Bulgaria transited Serbia on their way north, either towards Hungary or Croatia.

A similar situation could be observed in 2016, but some distinctions need to be made between different time periods.

Specifically, up to 10 March, while the transit corridor was still in place, the majority of the flow exited the region across the **Croatian-Serbian** border section. Due to this factor, in the first two months of 2016, there were over 100 000 crossings by non-regional migrants registered at this border section.

After the introduction of daily transit quotas towards the end of February, the closure of the corridor in March and altogether discontinued transportation towards Croatia, the flow dramatically reduced but also re-oriented itself towards the Hungarian-Serbian border section. As a result, detections at the Croatian-Serbian border dropped sharply, registering only 2 500 between March and December.

At the same time, the pressure on the **Hungarian-Serbian** border began rising, from below 600 detections of illegal border-crossing in January to roughly 2 300 in February and above 3 000 per month between March and June 2016. Under these circumstances, even though the flow reduced dramatically, the Hungarian-Serbian border became the main

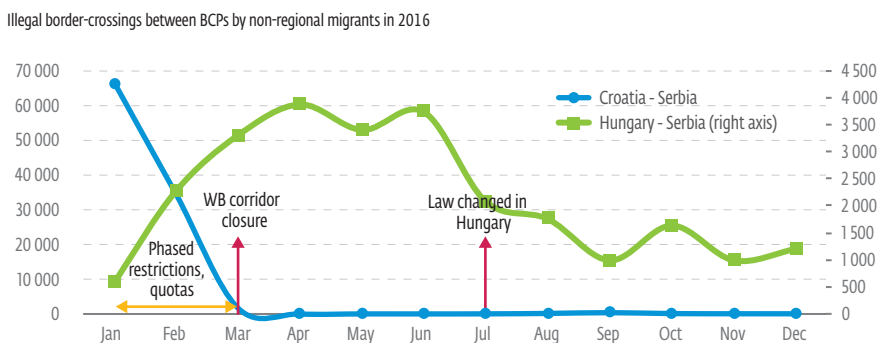
exit point for migrants who still trickled through the region despite the restriction measures introduced.

Hungary, responding to this situation, amended its border legislation on 4 July by empowering police officers to escort all migrants detected within 8 kilometres from the border to specially designated transit areas. Once in the transit zones, migrants could either await registration and legal admission into Hungary, at a rate of 30 per day, or return to Serbia. From then on, an increasing number of migrants found themselves stranded on Serbia's territory (roughly 7 500 persons reported by the end of the year). This situation, along with the previously described measures, contributed to the further reduction of the flow.

Some pressure was still being exerted on the Hungarian-Serbian border even after July. Arguably, this pressure was largely linked to multiple crossing attempts by migrants stranded in Serbia and did not translate into an equal number of individual persons, although some more resilient migrants still managed to trickle through the region despite enhanced control activities. Even in these conditions, the pressure slowly decreased towards the end of the year.

Most likely as a consequence of accumulating migratory pressure inside Serbia, the country's borders with Croatia and Romania started registering slight increases in detections after July 2016 compared with the previous months, but the numbers remained generally low and decreased towards the end of the year.

Figure 16. Following the closure of the corridor, the Hungarian-Serbian border outranked the Croatian-Serbian section as top exit point; the flow dropped but pressure slowly accumulated in Serbia



Special focus on the reception conditions in light of accumulating pressure in Serbia

Migrants present in Serbia - large number of minors

Daily records of minors are kept in all centres on Serbia's territory. Moreover, a special record of unaccompanied minors is kept. On 14 March 2017, the centres accommodated 6 751 migrants. Of that number, 52.5% of persons were from Afghanistan, 19.8% from Iraq, 11% from Pakistan and 9.26% from Syria. In terms of gender, out of the total number of accommodated persons 2 696 were men, 1 070 women and 2 985 minors (1 995 boys and 990 girls). 682 of them were unaccompanied minors.

Special reception conditions for families and children

All available measures are taken not to separate families when placing them in asylum or reception centres. Families with children are accommodated together if it is in the best interest of the child. Special care is taken to accommodate unaccompanied minors in specially designated rooms which are separated from the rooms occupied by adult males.

In all centres there are rooms specially adapted for children (children's corner). In addition, corners for mothers and babies are installed in larger centres. Some centres are provided with special facilities for adolescents, in which workshops and activities adapted to their age are organised in cooperation with NGOs. NGOs providing free legal aid and psychosocial support are also present in the centres.

Special training/Standard Operating Procedures for staff members helping to provide adequate support

Staff members of the centres are continually provided with training in protecting, working with and treating vulnerable groups of migrants, including minors, prepared in cooperation with the relevant national and international NGOs. Staff members are also trained to identify potential victims of human trafficking, gender-based violence so as to provide adequate support to migrants and prevent various forms of violence. Migrants and asylum seekers with special needs, including minors, are provided with appropriate care. Immediately upon admission of an unaccompanied minor the competent centre for social work is informed. Standard operating procedures for the protection of minor refugees/migrants are also in place. Among others these procedures include indicators to help determine whether a refugee/migrant child is a victim of human trafficking. A reporting procedure for such cases is also defined.

Education provided as migrants spend longer periods in Serbia

Given that the retention of migrants in the territory of the Republic of Serbia is now much longer (especially taking into account that minors represent more than 40% of the migrant population) all school-age migrants, regardless of their legal status, are provided with the access to non-formal education in accordance with the principle of the best interest of the child. This type of education is organised by the competent authorities in cooperation with UNICEF and NGOs. Moreover, school-age asylum seekers and recipients of asylum status

are enrolled in the formal education system (primary and secondary school). At the moment, 41 unaccompanied children attend school. Preparations for the registration of accompanied children in the centres are under way. Numerous activities for children are organised in cooperation with NGOs (sports, art, occupational activities, etc.).

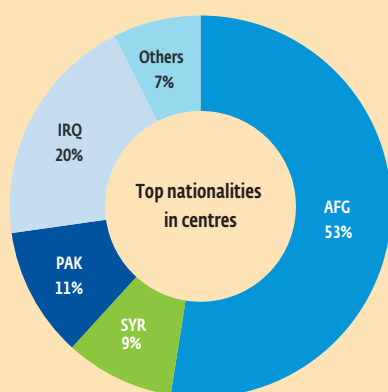
Many of those migrants who refuse to be accommodated in specialised centres are minors

Authorities have repeatedly tried to relocate the persons residing in inhumane conditions in the barracks near the bus station in Belgrade to specially designated facilities. These persons have also been regularly informed about the possibilities to get accommodation in one of the reception centres where they would be provided with all necessary services. A large number of the persons choosing to stay in these inadequate conditions refused to accept accommodation considering that the relocation from the city centre would delay their journey to desired countries of destination.

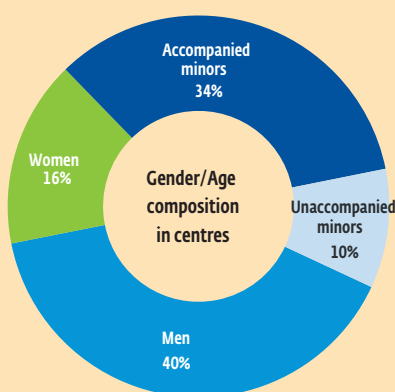
The Centre for Crisis Response Policies carried out field research in the barrack area on 3 March 2017. The study was conducted on 357 migrants. Of the total number of respondents, there were 182 children (50.98% of the total), of which 87.91% were from Afghanistan and 12.08% from Pakistan. Of the total number of respondents, 38.65% said they were travelling alone despite being under 18 years old. Of these, 89.13% were from Afghanistan and 10.87% from Pakistan. Only 3.08% of respondents expressed the desire to move to some of the centres.

Available information indicates that at any moment close to 500 beds were at the migrants' disposal in the centres. At times, the occupancy rate in some centres only reached 60% because migrants preferred to be accommodated in facilities closer to the northern borders. In order to relocate migrants from derelict warehouses, emergency reception capacities were created. Moreover, to further encourage them to move from the inadequate facilities, the Republic of Serbia set up an additional centre near Belgrade (municipality of Obrenovac).

Presence of migrants in reception facilities (out of a total of 6 751)



Source: Serbian border police



Source: Serbian border police / Commissariat for Refugees

4.1.3. Top nationalities

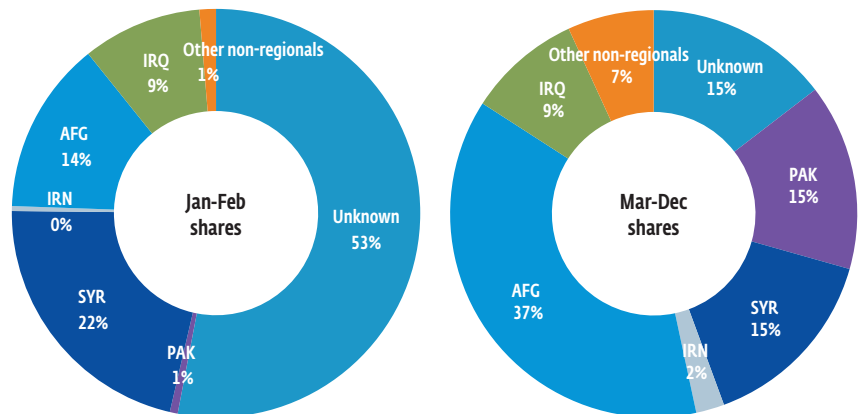
Similar to 2015, Syrians and Afghans were the two main nationalities detected for illegal border-crossing between BCPs, each accounting for a roughly 20% share of the non-regional flow transiting the Western Balkans. In terms of absolute numbers, both of these nationalities registered steep declines in relation to the previous year (-92% and -83%, respectively).

The top five known non-regional nationalities also included Iraqis, Pakistanis and Iranians, with their numbers ranging from just above 2 300 in the case of Iranians to over 25 000 with regard to Iraqis. As in the case of Syrians and Afghans, the rest of the top five nationalities also registered significant decreases compared with 2015, in line with the overall trend of the flow (-82% for Iraqis, -65% for Pakistanis and -89% for Iranians). Together these top five nationalities accounted for a 54% share of the total non-regional migration pressure observed at the level of the Western Balkans in 2016.

Approximately 43% of the non-regional flow was reported as 'unknown' in 2016. Nevertheless, as the non-regional flow slowly subsided in consequence of coordinated response measures, the share of illegal border-crossings reported as 'unknown' also decreased. Specifically, between Q1 and Q4 2016 the share of 'unknown' nationalities shrank from 50% to below 3% of the non-regional flow, indicating that the situation slowly returned to levels manageable by the authorities' screening and registration capacities.

Figure 17. After the closure of the corridor the shares of top nationalities changed, especially related to a more accentuated decrease of Syrians, and an almost unchanged or even increasing trend of Pakistani detections

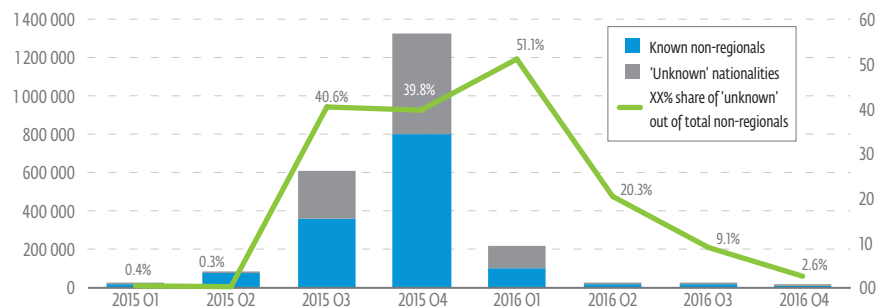
Top non-regional shares before the closure of the corridor and after the closure of the corridor



Source: WB-RAN data as of 25 January 2017

Figure 18. The share of 'unknown' nationality dropped as the flow decreased; the situation returned to levels manageable by existing screening capacities

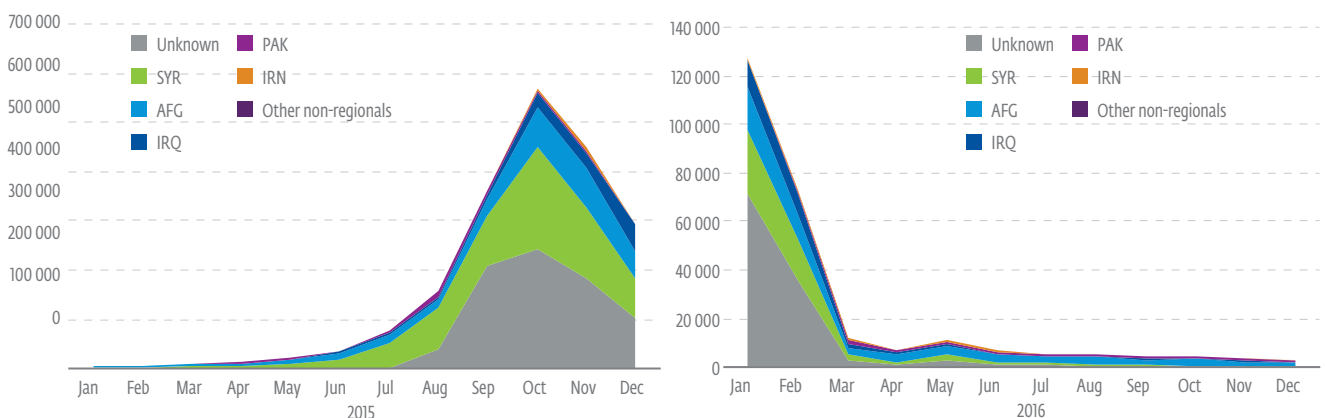
Illegal border crossings between BCPs by non-regional migrants and shares of 'unknown' flow



Source: WB-RAN data as of 25 January 2017

Figure 19. Non-regional migration flow steeply decreased in March 2016 (with the top nationalities virtually unchanged from 2015), largely in connection to the closure of the corridor

Illegal border-crossings between BCPs by top non-regional nationalities



Source: WB-RAN data as of 25 January 2017

4.2. Illegal border-crossing at BCPs

In 2016, approximately 1 400 **non-regional migrants** were detected while trying to cross at BCPs illegally, most of them hiding in vehicles, a number 51% higher than in 2015.

This 51% rise is hardly surprising, since the authorities no longer offered organised transit, which forced migrants to revert to the less convenient alternative of crossing the border at BCPs.

Overall, the 1 400 detections of 2016 are comparable with the situation of 2012–2014, before the organised transit corridor was opened in 2015 and made clandestine travels less appealing (given the more cumbersome organisation and costs of such alternatives).

Afghans, Syrians and Moroccans were the top reported nationalities, together accounting for 67% of all non-regional migrants detected at BCPs.

Hungary observed an increase in the number of migrants hiding in freight trains in order to make it across its border with Serbia, especially towards the end of the year, after the harder stance on migration made successful crossing at the green borders extremely difficult.

The migrants often risk their health and even their lives by hiding in dangerous cargo, such as aluminium hydroxide powder or magnesite powder.

Additionally, only 213 regional migrants, mostly Albanians (66%), were reported attempting an irregular crossing at BCPs. Most detections (58%) occurred at the common borders of the EU, most likely involving persons who tried to circumvent entry bans imposed for prior visa liberalisation misuse.



Figure 20. Migrants hiding in freight trains, even the ones containing dangerous substances (aluminium hydroxide and magnesite powder)

4.3. Use of false documents in the region

In 2016, there were 855 cases of fraudulent travel document use reported by the six Western Balkan countries, an 8% decrease over the previous year. The use of fraudulent documents, despite being a less common *modus operandi* for migration via the Western Balkans, should not be disregarded, as this option is chosen by many affluent non-regional migrants. It allows them to reach Europe in relative comfort, in most cases travelling by air.

As regards reporting countries, Serbia continued to rank first, followed by the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Albania.

Regarding nationalities, the citizens from the region ranked first amongst detected fraudsters, totalling 658 detections, followed by third-country nationals (151 detections). At the same time, 46 EU nationals were reported using fraudulent documents in the Western Balkan countries.

Amongst the detected regional migrants using fraudulent documents, Albanians, nationals of Kosovo* and Serbia ranked top, together accounting for 621 out of the 658 detections. The most commonly used fraudulent documents were passports (generally issued by the regional countries) followed by mostly EU Member States-issued ID cards. Except for the nationals of Kosovo*, most of

the other regional fraudsters used this *modus operandi*, most likely to avoid entry bans issued for previous misuse of visa-free travel.

Amongst the non-regional migrants, Turks, Pakistanis and Iranians were the most detected document fraudsters, accounting for 72 out of the 149 detections in Western Balkan countries. Cubans emerged as fraudulent document users in the region occupying the fourth position in 2016, but their overall number was low (11 detections). Syrians ranked fifth in detections with only 9 cases (down from 75 in 2015).

5. Irregular movements by nationals from Western Balkan countries

5.1. Illegal border-crossings from the region at the common EU/Schengen borders

All six Western Balkan countries, with the exception of Kosovo*, are exempt from visa requirement to travel to the EU. Thus, the regional migration flow mostly consists of persons who previously overstayed in EU Member States and attempt to travel illegally to circumvent entry bans imposed on them.

During the analysed period, there were roughly 9 600 nationals from Western Balkan countries detected while illegally crossing the regional and common borders. At the same time, the 9 600 illegal border-crossings by regional migrants represent a 75% decrease compared with 2015.

This decrease was mostly linked to the fact that the migratory flow from Kosovo* (a significant factor at the end

of 2014 and in the first two months of 2015) was finally halted. The detections of regional migrants followed a relatively stable trend in 2016 and, due to the drop in the non-regional flow, accounted for roughly 3% of the overall migratory pressure in the region.

Most of the detections of illegal border-crossing between BCPs by regional migrants occurred in the south of the region (at Greece's borders with Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) and were, by and large, associated with the Albanian circular migration¹⁶ to Greece. The next busiest border-sections were those of Serbia with Hungary and Croatia.

The number of Kosovo* citizens detected for illegal border-crossing plummeted in 2016. Hence, they were only the second most detected regional migrants accounting for roughly 13% of the non-regional flow, after Albanians, who ranked first with an 81% share. Kosovo*

citizens mostly targeted the northern regional borders with Hungary and Croatia. The other regional nationalities were detected in low numbers in 2016, often lower than in 2015.

The majority of the cases was registered between BCPs, while only 210 persons were discovered hiding in vehicles.

Overall, the regional flow was consistently below the monthly levels of 2015, and Albanian nationals were the most active nationality, accounting for 81% of the illegal border-crossings detected in 2016. Nevertheless, compared with 2015, their total reduced by 41%.

5.2. Illegal stay in the EU

During the analysed period, there were almost 45 000 illegal stayers from the Western Balkans region reported at the level of EU Member States/Schengen Associated Countries, a number 25% lower compared with 2015. Nevertheless, of the total number of detections, 38 200 accounted for citizens of the five visa-exempt countries and 6 500 for Kosovo* citizens.

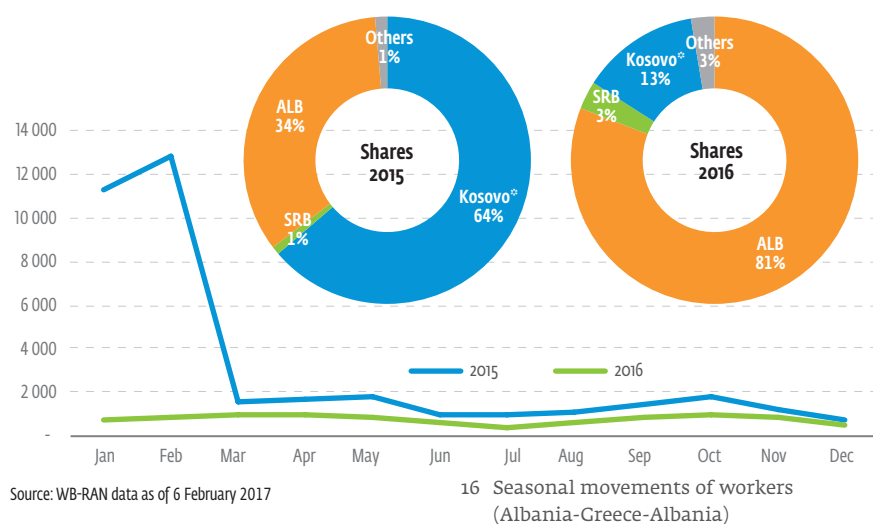
Amongst the five visa-exempt nationalities, the overall number of detected illegal stayers in the EU/Schengen Associated Countries dropped by 12% compared with 2015. All the visa-free Western Balkan nationals contributed to this decrease (i.e. drops ranging from -17% for Albanians to -2% for Serbs) with the exception of the citizens of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia who registered a 9% increase.

Despite a 17% decrease over 2015, Albanians continued to rank top amongst the Western Balkan visa-free nationalities reported for illegal stay in 2016, accounting for over 63% of the total detections of the discussed nationalities in EU Member States/Schengen Associated Countries, distantly followed by Serbs who constituted a 22% share.

Most detections of illegal stayers from the visa-free Western Balkan countries continued to be reported by Germany, France, Greece and Hungary, whose total numbers accounted for 69% of all re-

Figure 21. Significant drop in the regional flow after Q1 2015 and change in nationality shares all related to the drop in the number of Kosovo* migrants

Illegal border-crossing between BCPs by regional migrants in 2015 and 2016



Source: WB-RAN data as of 6 February 2017

ports at EU Member States/Schengen Associated Countries level.

Similar to previous years, Albanians were the most reported nationality in each of the top four countries, with the exception of Hungary, where Serbs returning from the EU were most numerous.

Compared with 2015, the number of illegal stayers from Kosovo* registered a 60% decrease, in line with the subsiding migratory outflow which marked the end of 2014 and the first quarter of 2015. In this sense, as the number of illegal border-crossings associated with Kosovo* nationals decreased, the number of illegal stayers also dropped.

Germany continued to report the highest number of illegal stayers from Kosovo*, followed distantly by Switzerland.

After the outflow from Kosovo* subsided in March 2015, the number of these

nationals detected for illegal stay in Hungary and Austria decreased significantly from almost 5 200 in January and February 2015 to a combined monthly average of below 30 between March 2015 and December 2016. This development indicates that the two countries are mostly regarded as transit areas by Kosovo* migrants.

5.3. Document fraud within the territory of EU Member States/Schengen Associated Countries

In 2015, there were 3 096 nationals of the five visa-exempt Western Balkan countries and 46 Kosovo* citizens reported using false documents on intra EU/Schengen area travels. The most cases were reported by the UK (612) Italy (542), France (399) and Ireland (355).

As regards nationalities, similar to the situation on entry across the external borders, the great majority of false document users from the Western Balkans reported on intra EU/Schengen area travels were Albanians, accounting for 96% of all cases reported in 2016.

The cases reported on intra-EU/Schengen area movements represent 79% of the total number of detections of false document users from the Western Balkans while only around 12% were reported on entry from third countries.

In terms of documents, there were 3 499 false documents used by the visa-exempt nationals of the Western Balkan countries (3 437) and Kosovo* (62) throughout 2016 on intra-EU/Schengen area travel. Most of these documents were issued by EU Member States/Schengen Associated Countries, with Italy and Greece accounting for a 67% share of the reported total.

Decisions mitigating the propensity of international protection systems for being improperly used

In Germany – at the end of 2015, Albania, Kosovo* and Montenegro were classified as safe countries of origin, joining Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on this list. This decision allows for quicker processing, employment bans, and an obligation for the asylum applicants to reside in specially designated facilities pending a decision or return. Furthermore, family reunification was suspended for the recipients of subsidiary protection, while benefits for unmarried persons were reduced and obstacles to returns removed (i.e. difference in the medical care systems of the origin country was no longer considered grounds for halting returns).

Open-source information indicates that in Germany the asylum authorities would fingerprint all asylum seekers in a central registration system in order to avoid multiple registration and welfare fraud. In this sense, media reports indicate that the authorities

of Braunschweig (a town in northern Germany) are currently investigating 300 cases of multiple registrations and fraud by migrants.¹ Similar reports estimate that multiple registrations by protection seekers produced a fraud of between EUR 3 and 5 million in lower Saxony alone.²

In Sweden – a temporary law (to be in effect for three years) was adopted in July 2016 to govern the asylum procedures. Based on the new rules, the recipient of a negative decision is no longer allowed to reside in the reception centres. Being granted the refugee status no longer entitles a person to receive a permanent residence per-

mit in Sweden (only a three-year permit is granted). Recipients of subsidiary protection only obtain a 13-month residence permit and cannot apply for family reunification. Those that receive three-year residence permits can apply for family reunification but are required to prove they can support themselves.

At the EU level, the concept of a safe countries list is also envisioned in the legislative package aimed at standardising the rules for asylum processing and asylum qualification (i.e. transposing the EU Asylum Procedure Directive and Qualification Directive into Regulations³). Similar to Germany, nationals who are on these lists would be subject to quicker processing.

The streamlining of asylum processing along with envisioned reduction of possibilities for misuse of benefits are likely to partially curb migration in general, not only by Western Balkan nationals.

1 <http://www.dw.com/en/braunschweig-northern-germany-uncovers-300-cases-of-welfare-fraud-by-asylum-seekers/a-36969990>

2 <http://www.dw.com/en/german-agency-calls-for-all-refugees-to-be-fingerprinted-to-fight-fraud/a-37441626>

3 <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/news/europe-will-the-new-asylum-package-improve-integration>

6. Migrants using the international protection system in the Western Balkans as a way to avoid detention and move onwards

There were no major changes in terms of migrants using international protection systems in the Western Balkans as a way to avoid detention and continue their trips, compared with the situation in previous years, aside from an overall decrease in the number of detections following the closure of the transit corridor in March 2016.

Specifically, in Serbia in 2016 there were roughly 13 000 registered expressions of intention to claim asylum, while only 584 migrants actually filled in an official application. Additionally, 96 000 entry-certificates were issued, by and large, to migrants allowed to transit the region while the Western Balkans transit corridor was still in place. These certificates allowed migrants to

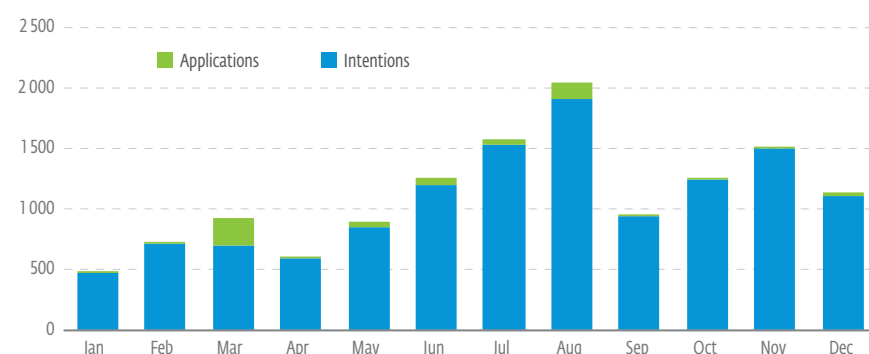
enter and transit the region even if they did not express the intention to apply for asylum at the borders, as a means of avoiding overcrowding at the entry points. After receiving the certificates, migrants were then free to reach reception centres and could apply for asylum, but as the statistics show most of them chose to continue their transit.

The situation changed slightly following enhanced border control measures which were introduced in the region after the closure of the transit corridor in March 2016. In this sense, irregular travel across the region became more difficult, resulting in a number of migrants becoming stranded at certain locations along the route (e.g. the number of stranded migrants in Serbia reached over 7 500 towards the end of the year).

Following a new law introduced by Hungary on 4 July¹⁷, migrants found it increasingly difficult to leave Serbia. At first, most migrants completely refused to be accommodated in Serbian reception centres even organising protests, which were widely covered in the media. During these protests (e.g. migrants threatening hunger strike in the border area with Hungary at the end of July; migrants protesting in Belgrade before marching towards the Hungarian border in October) migrants demanded that the borders be reopened indicating that they did not wish to remain in Serbia. Similar protests were also reported in Bulgaria, following the rein-

Figure 22. Ratios between the expressed intentions and official applications for asylum in Serbia clearly indicate misuse

Number of migrants entering the stages of asylum procedure in Serbia in 2016



Source: Serbian data reported in the WB-RAN as of 6 February 2017

17 Allowing the return of migrants detected within 8 km from the border to specially designated transit areas where they should wait for legal access at a rate of 30 per day or return to Serbia

Humanitarian impact of the more challenging transit through the region

The humanitarian aspect of this situation should not be overlooked. Specifically, vulnerable persons are likely to be among the migrants present on Serbian territory, especially both accompanied and unaccompanied minors. According to UNHCR data, of the 1 600 migrants they assisted in Serbia in November and December 2016 most were children (46%), followed by men (39%) and women (15%). The authorities struggle to provide the necessary support to all migrants, including the more vulnerable ones present on the territory, but as mentioned before, some refuse

the accommodation and expose themselves to the elements (it is estimated that half of those residing in unofficial camps are minors).

Moreover, the more difficult transit of the region exposes migrants to sometimes ruthless facilitation groups and criminal element.

In this sense, several tragic incidents were reported in November and December highlighting the risks people are willing to take by placing their lives in the hands of smugglers. Such incidents included a 26-year-old man from Afghanistan who was killed and an-

other severely injured in a knife fight between smugglers in the Belgrade city centre and the death of a 17-year-old Afghan boy from an electric shock on top of a train in Subotica train station. In December, two incidents involving smugglers were also reported near the Bulgarian border. In one, five persons died and another 12 had to be hospitalised following a car crash of a vehicle in which they were being smuggled. The second involved a young Iraqi woman who died of hypothermia after smugglers had left her in the mountains because she could no longer walk.

Source: UNHCR Europe's Refugee Situation Update #33, Nov-Dec 2016 <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/53795>

forcement of the border with Serbia at the end of July.

Towards the end of 2016, when more migrants finally realised that the borders would not be reopened, a larger number of these persons accepted accommodation in the reception centres in Serbia. As a result, roughly 6 500 persons arrived in the centres, while another 1 000 preferred to camp out

in parks or stay in abandoned buildings around Belgrade, despite the risk of freezing to death.¹⁸

Operational information indicates that migrants who refused the offered

help did so either fearing repatriation, perceiving it as a step back in their travel (available accommodation was located south of Belgrade), or because of deals they had made with people smugglers roaming around the irregular settlements.

¹⁸ <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/inpictures/2017/01/dark-smoky-shelters-refugees-stranded-serbia-170118192733389.html>

7. Smuggling of firearms and drugs across the regional and common borders

7.1. Detections of firearms

The border dimension – description of the threat

In an attempt to create a better understanding of the international dimension of firearm smuggling in the region and work towards more efficient solutions through coherent and concerted regional approaches, the Frontex Risk Analysis Unit together with the representatives of the Western Balkan countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia) taking part in the WB-RAN agreed to set in place a regular data collection related to cases of firearm possession/smuggling detected by the border police forces of the respective countries.

Provisional definitions/indications and a standardised reporting template were created for the collection of the most relevant information related to cases of firearm detection. Following these definitions/indications, the information covering 2015 was collected during a workshop organised at the beginning of 2016. The process then continued with monthly reporting by participating countries throughout 2016.

As it is a new initiative, these definitions/indications, template and the

aggregated data are still subject to improvement, based on gained practical experience, further discussions/proposals from the participants but also depending on the available resources.

Generally small-scale detections at the borders

In 2016, the border police forces of the six regional Western Balkan countries continued to detect weapons (firearms, gas and converted), and ammunition pieces during their activities.

More exactly, at the regional level the reporting lists 169 weapons (128 firearms, 40 gas, one converted), 16 793 rounds of ammunition and 50 kg of explosive material, all detected in 154 cases. Compared with the same period of 2015, there were roughly 29% more ammunition pieces, 91% more firearms, 46 more kilograms of explosive materials and 40% less gas weapons. Additionally, one converted weapon (down from 6 in 2015) and three optical targeting devices were reported in 2016. In order to put the assessment into perspective, it should be kept in mind that the volume of detections in both 2015 and 2016 was quite low considering the total length of the border areas of the region.

Serbia ranked first in terms of detections of weapons, followed by Kosovo*

and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Montenegro, Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia detected lower numbers of prohibited goods, totalling 15 firearms, one gas, one converted weapon, 148 ammunition pieces and one empty weapon clip.

At the regional level, 67 of the detected firearms were handguns (pistols, revolvers), 51 were long rifles or shotguns and 10 automatic weapons. Of the 40 gas weapons, 34 were handguns, one was a long rifle, while no details on the other five are available in reporting.

Most detections occurred at BCPs

Reporting from the analysed year indicated that most detections occurred at BCPs. Specifically, BCP detections contained 13 328 rounds of ammunition, 109 firearms, 27 gas weapons, one converted weapon and three targeting scopes.

Two firearms and 51 rounds of ammunition were reported at the green borders (such detections are likely linked to hunters without licences). The authorities also detected 11 firearms, 13 gas weapons, 2 875 rounds of ammunition and 50 kg of explosive material in their area of responsibility (generally within 30 km of the borders) but not in the immediate vicinity of the borders while six firearms and 539 ammunition pieces were detected outside of the usual area of responsibility (more than 30 km inland).

Firearms within the region – description of the threat (focus on Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro)

Analytical documents developed by representatives of Bosnia and Herzego-

vina and Montenegro participating in WB-RAN and kindly shared with Frontex RAU, provide more focus on the presence/trafficking of firearms in the two respective countries going beyond detections at the border.

As regards firearms, **Bosnia and Herzegovina** can be considered mainly a country of origin and, to a lesser extent, of transit. Moreover, it is estimated that a significant number of people continue to illegally possess different types of firearms and explosives left behind after the war ended despite various collection and destruction campaigns. One such action was carried out in July 2016 when the authorities destroyed over 1 000¹⁹ small arms and light weapons (SALW) to mark the international gun destruction day.

Following increased vigilance by the authorities, over the past two years Bosnia and Herzegovina has not registered any cases of weapons which were stolen from military warehouses or depots as was the case in previous years.

Investigations conducted by the authorities over the past years have indicated that in some cases weapons end up being trafficked towards other Western Balkan countries or Western Europe (e.g. the Netherlands, Sweden, France and Germany), however, not in large-scale shipments. Detections at BCPs show mostly citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina transporting small number of firearms hidden in their own vehicles.

Smuggling to the EU is mainly driven by financial gains. Due to the relatively high availability, prices of firearms on the black market in Bosnia and Herzegovina are considered much lower than



Figure 23. **Massive amounts of weapons were destroyed throughout the region following the end of conflicts**



Figure 24. **Weapons detected at BCP Kelebija-Tompa in September 2016**

those in the countries of destination, possibly bringing substantial financial gain to smugglers.

The **Montenegrin** authorities also observe a relatively easy access to firearms, especially for criminal groups who are more prone to disobey the legislation as well as for persons who are not normally involved in criminal activities. Most of the weapons detected are catalogued as SALW, although even rocket propelled

grenades can be found on rare occasions. Most of the firearms come from past conflicts in the region.

The availability of weapons and extensive links between organised criminal groups in the area of Montenegro with other criminals in the EU favour the trade and smuggling of weapons to Western Europe. Past cases indicate the involvement of Montenegrin criminal groups in drug smuggling and also

19 http://www.seesac.org/News-SALW/BiH-Destroys-1008-SALW-to-mark-the-International-Gun-Destruction-Day_1/



Figure 25. **Montenegrin volunteers for 'Respect life, surrender weapons' campaign in Montenegro**

firearm trafficking towards the EU (i.e. Montenegrins involved in international groups detected in Slovenia transporting firearms originating in Bosnia and Herzegovina which they planned to exchange for cocaine in France or the Netherlands²⁰). Moreover, the media coverage²¹ on a Montenegrin citizen who is prosecuted for transporting firearms and ammunition to Germany in September 2016 also indicate such illegal trade activities.

Although firearm detections at the borders are rather small-scale, the Montenegrin authorities in 2016 also seized over 70 firearms and several thousand ammunition pieces from criminal groups inside their territory.

The 'Respect life, surrender weapons' campaign, in which roughly 2 000 weapons and parts, 191 mines and explosive devices together with over 17 000 pieces of ammunition were returned indicates the general good faith of the population, but still highlights a massive presence of firearms on Montenegro's territory.

20 <http://polis.osce.org/library/f/4796/4317/GOV-MNE-RPT-4796-EN-4317.pdf>; <https://www.dnevnik.si/1042529414/kronika/1042529414>

21 <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-germany-trial-weapons-idUSKCN11T1DT>

7.2. Detections of drugs

In terms of illicit drug-trafficking at the regional level, cannabis appears to be the most commonly detected substance, most of it grown in the region and trafficked internally or to the EU. Available information indicates that over 11 tonnes of this drug were detected by Albania, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in 2016, with most of these reporting countries registering increases over the previous year.

The same countries also reported detections of heroin, but generally the seized quantities were small (72 kg, mostly detected by Albania and Montenegro). Other drugs such as cocaine and amphetamines were also reported, but the quantities detected at the borders were small.

Albania's mild climate, isolated rural areas together with experienced groups involved in drug smuggling have all contributed to the country's status as a long-time top regional producer of cannabis.²²

In the first quarter of 2014, the Albanian authorities performed complex operations meant to disrupt the cultivation and processing of cannabis and other drugs in the areas of Lazarat and Dukagjin. As a result, the production capacity of local groups was reduced and, along with it, the detections of smuggled drugs shrank as well. Namely, most of the cannabis detected by Albania at its borders in 2014 were reported before the mentioned interventions and the quantities reported in the following months of 2014 and in 2015 were smaller.

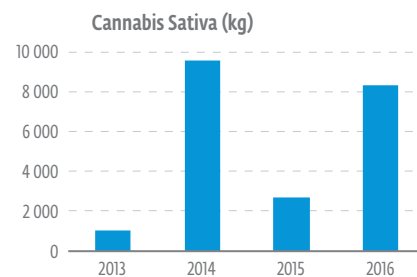
As a consequence of lower production capacity and (most likely) unchanged demand, the authorities of Montenegro (an important transit country for regionally produced cannabis) observed an increase in the black-market price for cannabis. Specifically, if in 2013 the whole-sale price of one kilogram of cannabis in the border area with Albania was around EUR 500, in the second half of 2014 and throughout the first half of 2015, the price for the same amount of drugs reached more than EUR 1 000.

Naturally, the increase in potential profits was an incentive for criminal

22 <http://globalganjareport.com/node/767>

Figure 26. **Drop in detected cannabis due to special actions in 2014, followed by an increase throughout 2016**

Detections of cannabis at Albania's borders



Source: Albanian border police

groups in Albania to regain the production capacity lost in 2014, with apparent success based on Albanian data. In this sense, in 2016, the authorities continued their law-enforcement efforts and detected over eight tonnes of cannabis at their borders, a quantity close to that of 2014.

The evolution of the prices seen by Montenegro in its border area with Albania tends to confirm the re-saturation of the market with cannabis throughout 2016, as the wholesale price of one kilogram of the substance went down to roughly EUR 350–450 (while demand most likely remained unchanged). This low price was observed in spite of the fact that over two tonnes of cannabis were seized in the country over 2016, mostly at the border with Albania.

Similar to the situation in the past, the Albanian authorities detected most (more than half of the entire quantity) of the smuggled cannabis at the country's sea border, generally before it was to be transported towards Italy or Greece. Furthermore, the remaining quantity was roughly divided between the country's seaports, the land BCPs and green border areas with Greece and, to a lesser extent, with Montenegro.

Continuing the efforts against cannabis production, the Albanian authorities deployed roughly 3 000 police officers to search and destroy hidden plantations in remote areas of the country in February 2017.²³

23 <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/albania-police-efforts-prevent-cannabis-planting-45684570>

8. Statistical annex

LEGEND

Symbols and abbreviations: n.a. not applicable
: data not available

Source: WB-RAN and FRAN data as of 25 January 2017, unless otherwise indicated

Note: 'Member States' in the tables refer to FRAN Member States, including both 28 EU Member States and three Schengen Associated Countries

As of July 2016, EU Member States neighbouring the Western Balkans region (Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and Croatia) started reporting detections of illegal border-crossing also on exit (data which were not available in 2015 or any year before that). Nevertheless, the only significant value is related to the Bulgarian-Serbian border, while for the other common sections the number of persons exiting towards regional countries reported by Member States was low and does not impact annual comparisons. The overall image of the flow is not impacted by the expanded data scope.

Annex Table 1. **Overview of indicators as reported by WB-RAN members**

	2014	2015	2016	% change on previous year
WB-RAN Indicator				
Illegal border-crossing between BCPS	66 079	2 081 366	279 282	-87
Illegal border-crossing at BCPS	1 747	1 142	1 595	40
Facilitators	1 218	1 980	1 155	-42
Illegal stay	11 270	8 208	7 105	-13
Refusals of entry	42 715	41 800	45 437	8.7
False travel document users	880	931	855	-8.2

Source: WB-RAN data as of 16 February 2016

Annex Table 2. Illegal border-crossings between BCPs

Detections reported by Western Balkan countries and neighbouring EU Member States, by top five border sections and top ten nationalities

	2014	2015	2016	% change on prev. year	Share of total
Top Five Border Sections					
the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia - Greece	1 825	704 865	126 850	-82	45
Croatia - Serbia	978	557 551	103 717	-81	37
Hungary - Serbia	45 827	218 918	26 832	-88	9.6
Bulgaria - Serbia	820	48 495	11 767	-76	4.2
Albania - Greece	11 398	12 315	7 166	-42	2.6
Others	5 231	539 222	2 950	n.a.	1.1
Top Ten Nationalities					
Not specified	175	779 196	117 153	-85	42
Syria	12 536	709 920	53 697	-92	19
Afghanistan	10 963	314 406	52 965	-83	19
Iraq	542	141 536	25 239	-82	9.0
Pakistan	563	32 549	11 252	-65	4.0
Albania	11 662	12 782	7 600	-41	2.7
Iran	230	20 196	2 310	-89	0.8
Morocco	31	5 319	1 531	-71	0.5
Kosovo ^o	23 580	23 958	1 254	-95	0.4
Algeria	59	1 524	980	-36	0.4
Others	5 738	39 980	5 301	-87	1.9
Total	66 079	2081 366	279 282	-87	100

^o This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Annex Table 3. Illegal border-crossings at BCPs

Detections reported by Western Balkan countries and neighbouring EU Member States, by top five border sections and top ten nationalities

	2014	2015	2016	% change on prev. year	Share of total
Top Five Border Sections					
Croatia - Serbia	660	50	643	<i>n.a.</i>	40
Hungary - Serbia	457	213	329	54	21
the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia - Serbia	202	244	164	-33	10
the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia - Greece	0	0	128	<i>n.a.</i>	8.0
Albania - Greece	17	83	73	-12	4.6
Others	411	552	258	-53	16
Top Ten Nationalities					
Afghanistan	702	425	592	39	37
Syria	366	331	189	-43	12
Morocco	4	1	143	<i>n.a.</i>	9.0
Albania	121	147	140	-4.8	8.8
Pakistan	69	10	114	<i>n.a.</i>	7.1
Algeria	39	11	102	<i>n.a.</i>	6.4
Iran	5	6	61	<i>n.a.</i>	3.8
Iraq	20	73	57	-22	3.6
Kosovo*	72	49	31	-37	1.9
Palestine	9	2	26	<i>n.a.</i>	1.6
Others	340	87	140	61	8.8
Total	1 747	1 142	1 595	40	100

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Annex Table 4. Facilitators

Detections reported by Western Balkan countries and neighbouring EU Member States, by place of detection and top ten nationalities

	2014	2015	2016	% change on prev. year	Share of total
Place of Detection					
Land	1 044	1 781	1 001	-44	87
Inland	155	188	153	-19	13
Air	5	6	1	-83	0.1
Sea	14	5	0	n.a.	
Top Ten Nationalities					
Serbia	546	1 090	547	-50	47
Bulgaria	60	174	131	-25	11
Albania	190	179	119	-34	10
Greece	77	98	74	-24	6.4
the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	90	95	69	-27	6.0
Not specified	45	56	49	-13	4.2
Afghanistan	16	4	36	n.a.	3.1
Bosnia and Herzegovina	25	31	21	-32	1.8
Pakistan	4	25	13	-48	1.1
Turkey	19	14	12	-14	1.0
Others	146	214	84	-61	7.3
Total	1 218	1 980	1 155	-42	100

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Annex Table 5. **Illegal stay**

Detections reported by Western Balkan countries and neighbouring EU Member States, by place of detection and top ten nationalities

	2014	2015	2016	% change on prev. year	Share of total
Place of Detection					
Land	5 275	4 601	3 850	-16	54
Inland	5 453	3 170	2 492	-21	35
Not specified	542	437	763	75	11
Top Ten Nationalities					
Serbia	3 308	2 932	2 814	-4.0	40
Albania	870	631	789	25	11
the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	545	428	397	-7.2	5.6
Turkey	437	271	263	-3.0	3.7
Bosnia and Herzegovina	228	271	253	-6.6	3.6
Afghanistan	343	228	234	2.6	3.3
Syria	2 468	1 109	195	-82	2.7
Iraq	130	140	150	7.1	2.1
Kosovo*	195	163	142	-13	2.0
Russia	150	100	134	34	1.9
Others	2 596	1 935	1 734	-10	24
Total	11 270	8 208	7 105	-13	100

*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Annex Table 6. Refusals of entry

Refusals reported by Western Balkan countries and neighbouring EU Member States, by border type and top ten nationalities

	2014	2015	2016	% change on prev. year	Share of total
Border Type					
Land	39 814	37 146	42 167	14	93
Air	2 868	4 571	3 193	-30	7.0
Sea	33	83	77	-7.2	0.2
Top Ten Nationalities					
Albania	10 012	10 685	12 928	21	28
Serbia	9 677	7 113	6 757	-5.0	15
Not specified	850	982	5 016	411	11
Bosnia and Herzegovina	5 710	5 069	4 972	-1.9	11
Turkey	2 259	3 898	3 073	-21	6.8
the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	2 016	1 805	1 699	-5.9	3.7
Kosovo*	1 779	1 522	1 389	-8.7	3.1
Bulgaria	988	1 091	815	-25	1.8
Germany	814	962	715	-26	1.6
Croatia	500	774	666	-14	1.5
Others	8 110	7 899	7 407	-6.2	16
Total	42 715	41 800	45 437	8.7	100

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Annex Table 7. Persons using false documents

Detections reported by Western Balkan countries, by border type, document type, top ten nationalities and top ten countries of issuance of documents

	2014	2015	2016	% change on prev. year	Share of total
Border Type					
Land	532	556	637	15	75
Air	231	307	187	-39	22
Sea	115	63	31	-51	3.6
Not specified	2	5	0	n.a.	
Document Type					
Passports	473	545	509	-6.6	60
ID cards	190	183	189	3.3	22
Residence permits	66	51	58	14	6.8
Visas	24	36	37	2.8	4.3
Unknown	69	9	33	267	3.9
Stamp	58	107	29	-73	3.4
Top Ten Nationalities					
Albania	242	370	359	-3	42
Kosovo*	272	159	200	26	23
Serbia	87	103	62	-40	7.3
Turkey	39	60	40	-33	4.7
Bulgaria	6	7	24	243	2.8
the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	23	11	20	82	2.3
Pakistan	3	17	20	18	2.3
Iran	8	11	12	9.1	1.4
Bosnia and Herzegovina	8	16	12	-25	1.4
Cuba	1	0	11	n.a.	1.3
Others	191	177	95	-46	11
Top Ten Countries of Issuance of Documents					
Albania	180	266	266	0	31
Italy	55	74	81	9.5	9.5
Serbia	87	110	68	-38	8
Bulgaria	65	40	57	43	6.7
the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	43	25	47	88	5.5
Greece	75	88	44	-50	5.1
Romania	21	11	28	155	3.3
Germany	22	18	25	39	2.9
Switzerland	17	19	19	0	2.2
Belgium	21	13	18	38	2.1
Others	294	267	202	-24	24
Total	880	931	855	-8.2	100

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Annex Table 8. **Detections of weapons, explosives and ammunition**

Detections at the borders reported by Western Balkan countries

	2015	2016
Weapons		
Firearms	67	128
Gas	67	40
Converted	6	1
Explosives		
Explosives (kilograms)	3.45	50
Grenades (number)	2	0
Ammunition		
Pieces	12 995	16 793

Top Nationalities Involved	2015	2016
Serbia	20	33
Kosovo ^a	27	24
Bosnia and Herzegovina	15	20
Turkey	7	13
Montenegro	6	11
Albania	8	8
the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	8	8
Bulgaria	4	6
Germany	2	4
Romania	1	4
United States	1	3
Others	18	20
Unknown authors	11	7
Total	128	161

^a This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Detections reported by Member States for indicators Illegal border-crossing between BCPs, Illegal border-crossing at BCPs, Refusals of entry and Persons using false documents are detections at the common land borders on entry only (between 2009 and June 2016). Starting from July 2016 the aforementioned data also include detections on exit. For Facilitators, detections at the common land borders on entry and exit are included. For Illegal stay, detections at the common land borders on exit only are included. For Asylum, all applications (land, sea, air and inland) are included.

For Western Balkan countries, all indicators – except for Refusals of entry – include detections (applications) on exit and entry at the land, sea and air borders.

Each section in the table (Border type, Place of detection, Top five border sections and Top ten nationalities, etc.) refers to total detections reported by WB-RAN countries and to neighbouring land border detections reported by Member States.



Plac Europejski 6
00-844 Warsaw, Poland

T +48 22 205 95 00
F +48 22 205 95 01

frontex@frontex.europa.eu
www.frontex.europa.eu



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