

THE EFFECTS OF THE MIGRATION CRISIS IN ALBANIA: THE SYRIAN REFUGEE CASE

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ABSTRACT:

THE MIGRATION CRISIS IN 2018 PUT IN SERIOUS RISK THE FRAGILE EQUILIBRIA INTO THE EUROPEAN UNION REGARDING THE SECURITY OF THE EASTERN BORDERS AND REVEALED ON MORE TIME THE TENSIONS BETWEEN EU MEMBER STATES OVER HOW TO HANDLE IRREGULAR IMMIGRATION MAINLY FROM AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE WEST. THE REFUGEE CRISIS AFFECTED ALSO THE BALKAN STATES, A GROWING NUMBER OF MIGRANTS ARE USING THE NEW TRANSIT BALKAN ROUTE THROUGH ALBANIA, MONTENEGRO AND BOSNIA TO REACH THE WESTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES.

THE SYRIAN REFUGES IN ALBANIA WERE IN THE CENTER OF THE POLITICAL DEBATE OFTEN A XENOPHOBIC POLITICAL DEBATE USED BY THE OPPOSITION IN ORDER TO ATTACK THE GOVERNMENT. THE CONCEPT OF "REGIONAL DISEMBARKATION PLATFORMS" USED BY DONALD TUSK BEFORE THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL MEETING IN JUNE 2018 INCREASED THE TENSION IN THE COUNTRY, DUE TO THE FORMER PRIME MINISTER BERISHA ALBANIA WAS ONE POSSIBLE LOCATION. ALSO, THE HEAD OF OPPOSITION LULEZIM BASHA ACCUSED THE PRIME MINISTER OF TRANSFORMING THE ALBANIANS A MINORITY IN THEIR OWN COUNTRY BUT RAMA EXPRESSLY DENIED THE OPENING OF CENTERS FOR MIGRANTS IN ALBANIA.

THE PAPER AIMS TO ADDRESS THE POLITICAL DEBATE IN ALBANIA DUE TO AN INCREASED NUMBER OF MIGRANTS FROM SYRIA, AND THE MEASURES IN ORDER TO SECURE THE BORDER LIKE THE COOPERATION WITH FRONTEX. ALSO, THE PAPER DESIGNS THE SITUATION IN ALBANIA AS A TRANSIT COUNTRY IN THE FLUX OF MIGRANTS, WHO USE FORMAL REQUESTS TO CLAIM ASYLUM SIMPLY TO GAIN TIME BEFORE CONTINUING ON THEIR WAY TOWARD EUROPEAN UNION COUNTRIES

KEYWORDS: MIGRANT CRISIS, TRANSIT COUNTRY, NEW BALKAN ROUTE

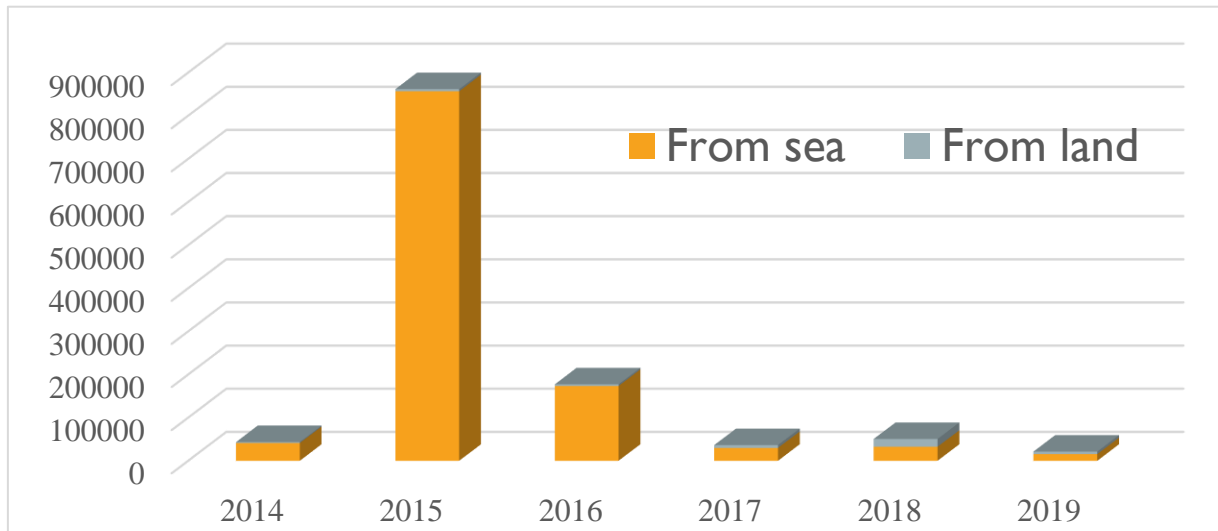
INTRODUCTION

In 2015, migrants and refugees reaching Europe from Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia have presented European Union and the European leaders with a great challenge regarding the future of the organization and had shaped the relations between the European Union and the Western Balkan. The high influx of migrants and refugees has created tensions between the EU member states over how to handle irregular immigration and the flux of refugees. From 2015 the flux has decreased, due to the EU deal with Turkey, the control border

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in the Balkans and also the agreement between Italy and Libya, but still thousands of people are trying to get to Europe.²

According to UNCHR, less people are directed to Europe but the numbers are still important so, only in 2019, 15.459 people have arrived by sea to Italy, Greece, Spain, Cyprus and Malta and 5779 have arrived by land to Greece and Spain, mainly from Syria and Afghanistan.³



Sources: Operation Portal, Refugee Situations, UNHCR.org

The high number of migrants from 2015 till now had influenced the foreign policy of the European Union but had also shaped the relations between the member states. Due to their geographical position, Spain, Italy and Greece faces most of the migrants and refugee but inside the European Union lack a complete and definitive agreement regarding the issue. Some countries are willing to have stronger external borders control despite of others whom prefer a more equal distribution between the European countries. Inside the European Union different necessities need to be balanced, and in some cases these are quite opposite, such Hungary that doesn't want migrants on the territory and Germany with Merkel that pushes on more acceptance of refugees on European soil.

The problem increased after 2018 when in Italy the far-right League Party of Mateo Salvini become part of the government, with Salvini as minister of the interior. The right movements or parties which gain important numbers in the national elections such as in Italy but also France are not the only problem inside the EU. Anti-immigration sentiments are raising all over Europe, as Eurobarometer (the Commission's twice-a-year poll), showed that immigration remains the main concern, with 40% of mentions (+2 percentage points since spring 2018).⁴ The highest level of concern about the issue was noticed in countries where immigration is minimal, such as Czech Republic where 58% of the interviewers indicate immigration as the most important issue at the moment, in Estonia 65% percent of the

² What is the current state of the migration crisis in Europe in

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jun/15/what-current-scale-migration-crisis-europe-future-outlook>

³ <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean>

⁴ http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-18-6896_en.htm

interviewers and in Hungary 54% of the interviewers thinks that immigration is the most important problem of the EU.⁵

Indeed, as Estevens pointed out the lack of total state control on national sovereignty in Europe demands cooperation in terms of security and defense but there was no common EU response on how to manage the refugee crisis, due to different national cultures and also political and social necessities.⁶

The EU tried to approach the problem on June 2018 European Council and different positions emerged with the lack of a common response on the issue. The result was not a total success especially when Italy threatened to veto the entire text if the EU was not willing to help more with the arrivals on the Italian shores, but the Italian position faced with Hungary and central European states which oppose to any mandatory action.⁷

The decisions of the Council and the EU policy towards the migration crisis influenced the Western Balkan region and its response to the crisis.

The paper aims to prove that the European Union decisions are important in the Balkans and especially in Albania but also all the involved countries like Albania, Serbia and Northern Macedonia tried to take advantage of their position in order to accelerate the integration process. So, the European Union decisions shaped the regional relations in the Western Balkans.

During the European Council in 2018, the leaders agreed on some important decisions such as support to Italy and other frontline EU countries, stressed the need to fully implement the EU-Turkey agreement and supported the development of a concept of regional disembarkation platforms for people saved at sea.⁸ The concept of regional disembarkation was new and not clearly explained but due to the Council results those who are saved on EU territory should be taken charge of, on the basis of a shared effort, through the transfer in controlled centres. These centers were to be set up in states, only on a voluntary basis.⁹

The *modus operandi* of the these centers was unclear but in theory they would function in order to separate economic migrants from refugees with a potential right to seek asylum.

One important decision which is crucial to this paper is the affirmation of the need to work and collaborate closely with Western Balkans partners which were affected from the crises but also are extremely important in the external control borders of the European Union and the control of the flux of refugees trying to reach Europe by land.

Indeed, the Western Balkan states are very important for the European Union in the migrant crisis, as a growing number of migrants were using the new transit Balkan route through Albania, Montenegro and Bosnia in order to reach the Western European countries.

According to the European Commission, during 2015 and in the first quarter of 2016, more than 920 000 refugees and migrants - primarily from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq - have passed through Serbia on their way to Hungary and Croatia, with the intention to reach the EU

⁵<http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/survey/getsurveydetail/instruments/standard/surveyky/2215>

⁶ Joao Estevens, *Migration crisis in the EU: developing a framework for analysis of national security and defense strategies*, Comparative Migration Studies, 6(1), 2018

⁷ *EU leaders hail summit victory on migration but details scant* in <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jun/29/eu-leaders-summit-migration-doubts>

⁸ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/european-council/2018/06/28-29/>

⁹ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/european-council/2018/06/28-29/>

member states as Germany or Austria.¹⁰ The “Western Balkan route” became a well-known term for public debates throughout the EU. Refugees and migrants moved on from Greece, in order to reunite with other family members in Europe, using the most common route till 2016 through the Northern Macedonia into Serbia to Hungary and then further on to mainly Austria, Germany and Sweden.¹¹

According to the European Border Agency (Frontex), in 2015 the region recorded 764.033 detections of illegal border crossings by migrants, a 16-fold rise from 2014. The top-ranking nationality was Syrian, followed by Iraqis and Afghans.¹² For this reason the Western Balkan region became the center of the European policy for a short period of time. Serbia, Northern Macedonia and Albania tried to take advantage from the situation in order to settle more advantages for their integration process and to bargain the European Union attention while helping to resolve the crisis.

In 2016 the situation evolved, routes increasingly diversified as countries tightened border control, including the introduction of a new border regime in Hungary, the construction of a fence between Hungary and Serbia and the provision of Hungary to return to the other side of the fence those detected within 8 km of the border.

Also, the number of migrants passing through the Western Balkan reduced significantly in 2016 due to the EU – Turkey deal, under which the parties agreed to restrain irregular migration across the Aegean Sea. According to FRONTEX in 2016 and in 2017 the non-regional flow transiting the Western Balkans considerably decreased, diminishing from 128.000 illegal border-crossings in January 2016 to 3000 in December 2016.¹³

The closure of the Balkan routes brought to the creation of a new Balkan route that passed through Albania and Bosnia-Herzegovina trying to reach Croatia and continuing further in the north.¹⁴ Albania, at first was not involved in the migration crisis and indeed the country didn't face a crisis but the situation influenced the political and social panorama.

Indeed, Albania not only faced some challenges due to the crisis regarding the control of the borders, the conditions of the welcoming structures but also tried to take advantage in the European integration process. This way the paper illustrates that Albania is not a destination but a transition country and that the hope to use the crisis in order to accelerate the integration process was invane. After 2016, the Western Balkans slipped again in the back yard of the European policy and the attention shifted once more toward Turkey.

But, if the countries in the Balkans were affected and reacted in an individual way to the crisis, the refugee crisis impacted the relations between them. The relations between Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia and Northern Macedonia initially were tense due to the lack of

¹⁰ European Commission, *ECHO Factsheet Serbia response to the Refugee Crisis*, available in https://www.osservatoriodiritti.it/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/peace.please-documentario_migranti-serbia_fondi-ue.pdf

¹¹ UNHCR Bureau for Europe, *Desperate Journeys, Refugees and migrants entering and crossing Europe via the Mediterranean and Western Balkan Routes*, February 2017 in <https://www.unhcr.org/58b449f54.pdf>

¹² FRONTEX, *Migratory routes*, available in <https://frontex.europa.eu/along-eu-borders/migratory-routes/western-balkan-route/>

¹³ FRONTEX, *Migratory routes*, available in <https://frontex.europa.eu/along-eu-borders/migratory-routes/western-balkan-route/>

¹⁴ Amir Puric, *Refugees on new Balkan route stuck in limbo*, 03.07.2018, in <https://www.dw.com/en/refugees-on-new-balkan-route-stuck-in-limbo/a-44509373>

cooperation, and to the closure of the serbian frontier which strained the situation in Croatia, so the crisis revealed the old problems and mistrust between the Balkan countries.¹⁵

The relations improved when the number of the migrants who passed in these transit countries decreased and they begin to share information, the summit in Vienna in 2015 with the participation of all the Balkan countries created a common plan in order to face the crisis. This was the overall situation in the Balkans due to the refugee crisis, which lead to the analyze of the situation in Albania.

THE SYRIAN REFUGEES IN ALBANIA

Like mentioned above the refugee crisis explicite its effects in Albania after the closure of the Balcanic route and the creation of a new transit Balcan route through Albania, Montenegro and Bosnia to reach the Western European countries.

The Syrian refugee become the center of the public debate in Albania when they begin to seek asylum in the country, and also tried to pass the border in order to reach other European countries. Pablo Zapata, the High Commissioner for Refugees in Albania, declared that Albania remains mostly a transit country and all the Balkan countries are considered transit countries, "the refugees continue their journey to northern Europe, where they rely on family networks for help, they usually come to Albania to connect with people smugglers to help them travel further north".¹⁶

According to UNCHR, in 20018 the asylum requests increased comparing with the past years, there were 4378 asylum requests and the border police intercepted 5730 people trying to pass the border.¹⁷ The trend was high in January with 295 arrivals and 266 asylum requests. But, the number of the people that want to pass the border is higher than the number of the asylum request which is a clear fact that Albania remains mostly a transit country for the refugees. The migrants, use formal requests to claim asylum simply to gain time before continuing on their way toward European Union countries, since if they don't ask formally for asylum, deportation to the country which they entered is immediate. The requests are mostly formal because the number of the applications is higher than the number of hearings and in some cases the procedure is just interrupted due to the departure.

The legal framework regarding the asylum procedures was drafted in order to harmonize the legislation with the EU directive and the result was the law n. 121/2014 which provides not only the conditions and procedures regarding the status of refugee but also supplementary and temporary protection in the Republic of Albania and defines the conditions for the integration of the refugees.¹⁸ But, despite the legal framework the asylum seekers are not willing to remain in the country, two thirds of them came mainly from Syria, mostly women, girls and boys but also unaccompanied children.¹⁹

¹⁵ Senada Selo Sabic, Sonja Boric, *At the gate of Europe: a report on refugees on the Western Balkan Route*, march 2016 available at <http://www.balkanfund.org/publib/biepag/The-migrant-crisis-a-catalyst-for-EU-enlargement-web.pdf>

¹⁶ Lindita Arapi, *Syrian refugees find a home in Albania*, 20/11/2017 available in <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/6159/syrian-refugees-find-a-home-in-albania>

¹⁷ UNHCR factsheet on Albania, available in <https://www.unhcr.org/see/wp-content/uploads/sites/57/2019/03/Fact-Sheet-UNHCR-Albania-Updated-31-January-2019.pdf>

¹⁸ Ministry of the Interior, *The Migration Profile in the Republic of Albania*, 2017 available in https://mb.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Profili_i_Migracionit_2016_Eng.pdf

¹⁹ UNHCR factsheet on Albania, available in <https://www.unhcr.org/see/wp-content/uploads/sites/57/2019/03/Fact-Sheet-UNHCR-Albania-Updated-31-January-2019.pdf>

According to the testimonies of the refugees, Albania was the only solution in order to arrive in Germany and be safe from the turmoil in their country. Guwan Belai a Syrian refugee declared that *Albania is a transit country for me and for the others but is not like Serbia or Macedonia which have closed the borders. Albania is the only solution for transit-based refugees. I came in Albania from Greece and with the will of god I want to end my journey in Germany.*²⁰

The journey toward Germany is a common dream also for the other refugees so Berivian Alus declared that *It was a long journey from Syria to Turkey and then in Greece but we hope to reach the UE countries from Albania.*²¹

The presence of the refugees in Albania and the country as a transit one put the government in a difficult position, it needed to address their accommodation and also to control the borders, especially the border with Greece.

The government tried to respect human rights and also to be involved in all the European initiatives in order to approach and resolve the phenomenon. Also, the refugee accommodation put the government in a privileged position with the UE and the PM tried to take advantage from the situation. The European free space without internal border is frequently threaten by the insecurity of the extern borders, including the border with the Western Balkan. The PM Edi Rama in 2016 regarding the migration and the use of the Balkan route declared that Albania *had to follow a third way* which meant neither opening the border nor acting in contrast with European values and human rights, clearly referring to Hungary.²²

Regarding the accommodation of the refugee, the government prepared the “Contingency Plan for possible mass influx of migrants and asylum seekers at the Albanian border” and also institute the Committee of Refugee and the Albanian National Center for Refugees. The contingency plan aimed on the formalizing the procedures for a durable stay of the migrants, regarding the fluxes form the main Border Crossing Point as Kapshtica and Kakavija, the plan was directed to a high number of migrants but was updated in 2016 to a more moderate influx.²³

The Committee is a decision- making authority for asylum and refugees and is under the authority of the Ministry of the Interior. In 2016 was created the national Center for the Refugees which would provide food, clothing, health care, education for children especially the unaccompanied children and to help the integration into the Albanian society, the capacity of the center is of 400 people.²⁴

Despite the efforts, the migrants of the center complain the lack of sanitary conditions and food, also is difficult to have an exact number of the migrants in the center because many of them escape in order to pass illegally the border. Also, the official reports on the conditions is not available to consult but regarding the media and the interviews of the migrants they don't

²⁰ *Refugjatet siriane ne Shqiperi: Destinacioni yne eshte Gjermania*, Gazeta shqip, 22.06.2018, available in <https://www.gazeta-shqip.com/2018/06/22/refugjatet-siriane-ne-shqiperi-destinacioni-yne-eshte-gjermania/>

²¹ *Refugjatet siriane ne Shqiperi: Destinacioni yne eshte Gjermania*, Gazeta shqip, 22.06.2018, available in <https://www.gazeta-shqip.com/2018/06/22/refugjatet-siriane-ne-shqiperi-destinacioni-yne-eshte-gjermania/>

²² Fatjona Mejdini, *Albania fears joining new refugee route*, 3 October 2016, in Balkan Insight

²³ Cooperation, Development Institute, *Albania in the Western Balkans Route ((2015-2016)*, Working Paper n.1 of the Berlin Process series, available in <http://cdinstitute.eu/web/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/2016-06-23-Albania-in-the-Western-Balkans-migration-route-v.2-1.pdf>

²⁴ Per organizimin dhe funksionimin e Qendres Kombetare Pritese per Azilkerkuesit, 332/2016 published in the Official Journal, available in <https://qbz.gov.al/>

have enough beds, food, bad sanitary conditions and frictions are present among them.²⁵ Also, they declare that the destination now is mainly France, Germany and Italy trying to pass through Montenegro.

The other concern for Albania and the European Union is the illegal cross border of the migrants, and in this scenario the smugglers and human being traffickers tried to take advantage. The situation in the border was almost quite in 2015, 2016, 2017, there were people who tried to pass the border but the numbers were irrelevant, in 2018 there was a five-fold increase in arrivals (5730) and a 14 times increase of asylum requests (4378) used in order to gain time while trying to reach the UE.²⁶

The numbers were smaller than hundreds of thousands that used the so called traditional Balkan route in 2015 but the fear grow up that the new route would be used much more and also created some tensions between Albania and the neighbors like with Montenegro. Montenegro accused Albania for the lack of control in its borders and also for not accepting migrants back after they arrival in Montenegro despite bilateral agreements in this sense.

The Albanian policy enforced the border control with Greece and Montenegro and with Northern Macedonia, also daily there were people caught at the border trying to pass it illegally and smugglers who tried to take advantage from the situation.

The border police tried to take additional measures along the border with Greece and Montenegro due to the local media, the police stopped daily tens of migrants coming from Greece and trying to pass the border.²⁷ The prime Minister continually asked for the help of the European partner and the European Union react with an agreement that allows the European Border and Coast Guard Agency to coordinate operational cooperation between the EU Member States and Albania on the management of the EU's external borders, which is a further step into the integration with the security framework of the EU.²⁸

Also, Albania is the first state outside the European Union which is part of FRONTEX (European Border and Coast Guard Agency) which launched its first and fully operation outside Europe Union and deployed officers and patrol cars in order to support the border control and to prevent cross-border crime.²⁹

This was an important step not only for Albania but also for the Western Balkans in general in their European road because it is the sign of a tight cooperation on migration and border management, which can bring closer the region with the European Union. The first mission in Albania was launched in 2019 and will help to control the land border between Albania and Greece but also the check of documents, migratory flows and eventually criminal activities or traffic of human beings.³⁰ The launch of the first mission was welcomed by the

²⁵ Fjorela Beleshi, *Ora News ne Qendren e Azilkerkuesve ne Babrru, ankesa per ushqimin dhe trajtimin*, 10/02/2019 available in <http://www.oranews.tv/article/ora-news-ne-qendren-e-azilkerkuesve-ne-babrru-ankesa-ushqimin-dhe-trajtimin>

²⁶ UNHCR factsheet on Albania, available in <https://www.unhcr.org/see/wp-content/uploads/sites/57/2019/03/Fact-Sheet-UNHCR-Albania-Updated-31-January-2019.pdf>

²⁷ <https://www.vizionplus.tv/po-perpiqeshin-te-hynin-ilegalisht-policia-ndalon-30-emigrante-siriane/>;
<https://lapsi.al/2019/04/19/policia-kufitare-arreston-4-emigrante-te-paligjshem-siriane-dhe-iraniene/>;
<https://gazetaimpakt.com/shqiperi-forcohet-kontrolli-kufitar-per-kalimin-e-emigranteve-klanestine-nga-siria/>

²⁸ Nicholas Waller, *EU signs border management agreement with Albania*, in *New Europe* 5.10.2018 available in <https://www.neweurope.eu/article/eu-signs-border-management-agreement-with-albania/>

²⁹ FRONTEX, *Frontex launches first operations in Western Balkans*, in <https://frontex.europa.eu/media-centre/news-release/frontex-launches-first-operation-in-western-balkans-znTNWM>

³⁰ *Albania and FRONTEX launch the first ever joint operation outside the EU*, https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/62894/albania-and-frontex-launch-first-ever-joint-operation-outside-eu_en

Minister of Interior and also the premier who consider the event as an important step into the integration process and also a contribution into the relations with the European Union and as a chance in the starts of the accession talks. Despite the positive consideration of the Albanian government and the commissioner Avramopoulos, it is also considered as an assault on Albanian sovereignty.³¹

In June 2018, the European Union strategy toward the emigration tried to reach a compromise regarding the emigration and tried to explore the concept of “regional disembarkation platform”, this strategy influenced the political life in Albania. The regional disembarkation platform aims to safely disembarked people rescued at the sea and to distinguish between irregular migrants and people in need of international protection.³² According to Catherine Wollard, the idea was more simile to a “externalization fantasyland” than to a concrete political plan in order to contain illegal migration, smugglers, traffic human being and to offer international protection to whom really needed.³³

The concept contains political and legal questions and problems that probably would never seen the life but despite this the idea brought tension outside European Union regarding the states that would accommodate these centers. Surely, the centers would be host on voluntary basis by the states and it was unclear where these centers could be, in Europe, north Africa or elsewhere but the media reported that Albania was one of the countries designed to host a center of disembarkation.

According to the Albanian media the country was considered for the immigrants coming via the Eastern Mediterranean route and the PM would certainly accept to host such centers in order to speed up the integration process and to be a good ally of the Austrian chancellor.³⁴ The EU denied a specific plan regarding Albania but the Austrian government spokesman Peter Launsky-Tieffenthal told to DW that talks were already underway with Albania in order to host such centers.³⁵ Also, Antonio Tajani according to the Balkan Insight told that the camps should be established outside EU, like in Albania, and politicians in Germany find the proposal interesting.³⁶

The news brought a xenophobic debate in the country and was deeply commented and used by the opposition in order to attack the government. So, the Former Premier Sali Berisha accused the government of accepting “600.000 Syrian former ISIS terrorists”³⁷, the actual head of the opposition Lulezim Basha, accused the PM that such plan would make Albanians a *minority in their own country*.³⁸

³¹ Vincent W.J. van Gerven Oei, Frontex is an assault on Albanian Sovereignty, 24.05.2019 available in <https://exit.al/en/2019/05/24/frontex-is-an-assault-on-albanian-sovereignty/>

³² European Commission, *Managing migration: Commission expands on disembarkation and controlled center concepts*, 24.07.2018 in http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-18-4629_en.htm

³³ Francesco Maiani, *Regional Disembarkation Platforms, and controlled centers: Lifting the drawbridge, reaching out across the Mediterranean or going nowhere*, in <http://www.reflaw.org/>

³⁴ *Albania possible candidate to host EU “disembarkation platform”*, in <https://exit.al/en/2018/06/21/albania-possible-candidate-to-host-eu-disembarkation-platform/>; David M. Herszenhorn, Jacopo Barigazzi, *EU leaders consider centers outside bloc to process refugees*, www.politico.eu

³⁵ Adelheid Feilcke, Volker Wagener, *Potential EU-Albania asylum deal could help keep Germany's Angela Merkel in power*, DW, 22.06.2018

³⁶ Gjergj Erebara, *Speculation grows over “Migrant camps” in Albania*, 25.06.2018 in <https://balkaninsight.com>

³⁷ <https://balkanweb.com/rama-pranon-600-mije-refugjate-siriane-ne-shqiperi-ne-kembim-te-hapjes-se-negociatave/>

³⁸ Gjergj Erebara, *EU denies wanting Albania to Host rescued refugees*, 22.06.2018, in <https://balkaninsight.com/2018/06/22/european-council-denies-plans-for-refugee-disembarkation-platforms-in-albania-06-22-2018/>

The government promptly denied such talks or decision about hosting the center and the PM underlined the construction of the center as a fantasy from the opposition.³⁹ The debate continued in the Security Commission where the opposition deputies of the opposition and the deputies of the Socialist Party accused each-other in order to threaten the national security. Klevis Balliu, a former deputy declared that the *government planned to banish the people of Skanderbeg (the national hero) with the people of Sultan Mehemet.*⁴⁰

CONCLUSION

The migration crisis in 2015 put in serious risk the cohesion inside the European Union, the differences between the states were present in the European Council and in different summits. The refugees tried to escape from the turmoil in their states like Syrians and Afghans forward Germany and Austria, using the so-called Balkan Route.

The use of the Balkan Route brought disagreement between the states and some of them decided to build fences like Serbia. The situation influenced also Albania which in 2015 didn't suffered the consequences of the crisis but tried to use the situation in order to enhance the relations with the European Union. The country built the accommodation center and improved the legal framework with the European directive on the refugees and the international protection.

In 2018 the situation changed due to the use of the new Balkan route which involved the use of Albania as a transit country. Albania is not a destination country but a transit country and this is evident with the low number of asylum request, some of them interrupted abruptly due to the abandon of the country.

But, despite the use of the country as a transit one the concept of regional disembarkation created fear and discomfort in Albania. The racist comments and also the extreme position of the opposition regarding the presence of the refugees in the country is the expression of a closed position and also a phobic one towards the other. It is curious to notice this opinion and behavior in a country of migrants where the people mostly want to leave the country, especially the young generation. A country of migrants and refugees, discover itself as a non-tolerant when the migrants are the "others".

On the other side the government tried to take advantage from the crisis in order to accelerate the integration process. The PM wanted to be a factor in the crisis solution especially in the 2016 which would lead to a positive step toward the integration process. As the result was clear, this was only a vain hope, due to two reasons, first of all the integration process is a complex, complete and often political decision. Due to this it was difficult to influence the process and all the 27 states with the measures taken by the government. Also, the migrants in Albania were less than in Greece or in Serbia, and the numbers were very low comparing to our neighbor. In this situation the crisis couldn't be use in order to gain favors in the integration process.

Also, the crisis shaped the regional cooperation and relations in the Western Balkans, at first, they were less cooperative with each other but also due to a common problem and crisis they begin to collaborate in order to improve the border control.

Another consequence of the crisis is the presence of FRONTEX forces in Albania in order to facilitate the border control especially that with Greece.

³⁹ <https://exit.al/2018/06/dw-kampet-e-refugjateve-mund-te-ndertohen-ne-shqiperi/>

⁴⁰ The debate in the Security Commission among the deputies
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qu6cvJ0FMfM&feature=player_embedded

So, the crisis explicate multiple effects in Albania, that led also to an improvement of the legal framework regarding the status of refugees and the asylum procedures, conform with the European directive.

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