Deliverable 5.3

Report on the organisation of the Project's final conference

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1. Overview of WP5

WP5 – Project Evaluation, Exploitation and Communication has two aims. On the one hand, it aims at consolidating the results of the Project and preparing for the continuation of the MIGREC beyond the duration of H2020 funded project through assessing the impact of the Project in terms of the expected impacts stated by the relevant Call, and as addressed by the Project proposal. On the other hand, the WP aims at communicating and disseminating the establishment of the MIGREC brand as a unique mechanism for supporting and facilitating knowledge infusion at the domain of migration, integration and governance across Europe.

The ambition of the MIGREC consortium is to use the Project as a test-bed for the creation of a permanent research excellence centre dedicated to migration challenges at the University of Belgrade – Faculty of Political Science that will operate on a continuous basis and will cover as much as possible the European migration research and policy eco-system. The expansion of the research beyond the duration of the Project is envisioned in three parallel ways:

- Geographically: with the extension of the MIGREC's impact beyond Serbia to the Western Balkans
- Thematically: with the inclusion of more research capacity to more related themes and coverage of migration aspects
- In terms of enhanced multi-disciplinary academia / policy / NGO co-working: with the expansion of networking and collaboration between academia, NGOs, funding agencies, R&I intermediaries and EU policy makers.

WP5 consists of the following tasks:

- Task 5.1 – Building a network of related organizations, events and potential stakeholders promoting the MIGREC
- Task 5.2 – Impact assessment and creation of a sustainable modus operandi
- Task 5.3 – Organising a final project international conference

This Deliverable is focused on Task 5.3 – organization of the MIGREC's final conference. The aim of the Conference is to highlight the activities and results of the Project and to become a spring-board for sustaining the MIGREC's activities, networks and operations beyond the life time of the Project.

2. Organisational aspects of the MIGREC's Final Conference

Having in mind the abovementioned, the conference started to be brainstormed and planned at the monthly meetings of the Project Coordination Committee as of January 2022. The main ideas about its topic, purpose, target audience as well as a series of technical details were further refined and developed at the occasion of the MIGREC's Summer School held in May / June 2022 in Belgrade, which was attended by representatives of all Consortium members. The Conference Committee was formed so to include one participant from each of the Consortium members – Natalija Perisic from FPN, Alexandra Prodromidou from SEERC, Ryan Powell from USFD and Panagiotis Pachalidis from ELIAMEP, with the understanding that new members can join if needed. Therefore, Sanja Klempic Bogadi from the Institute for Migration Studies in Zagreb, Croatia and Jelena Dzankic from the European University Institute in Florence, Italy, joined the Committee Board in order to offer diversity in terms of regional perspective and inclusion of academics from Diaspora respectively. The Conference Committee members organized special meetings for the purpose of proceeding with the Conference organisation and reported all developments related to the Conference at regular meetings of the Project Coordination Committee.

The general topic of the conference was agreed to be "Migration in the Western Balkans – Re-thinking Crisis Narratives". It was devised having in mind several factors:

- the Project's threefold focus on the integration of migrants, migration governance and migration-development nexus
- absence of objective and unbiased scientific and societal debates in Serbia and the region of the Western Balkans about the position(s) of the region towards the European Union and interactions between the countries of the region
- topics for which the MIGREC team built their capacities during the Project
- topics on which the MIGREC team will focus in their future work
- national and regional stakeholders with whom the MIGREC has been building networks and connections during the Project, with a view to nurturing such relations in the future.

The purpose of the Conference was to gather academics whose focus is on the Western Balkans without its "othering" and biased approaches favouring the perspectives of the Global North. Therefore, academics from Serbia, region of the Western Balkans and the rest of Europe were targeted to offer their innovative views. The multidisciplinary perspective of migration and migration related topics was at the focus and the academics of various educational backgrounds deploying different methodological approaches were welcomed – political science, geography, anthropology, law, economics, journalism, etc. The Conference Committee was devoted to provide presence of researchers in different stages of their careers, including those members of the MIGREC's Advisory Board who are globally acknowledged academics in the field of migration. Due care was agreed to be taken also to gender balance. The regional perspective was highlighted either in terms of the presence of participants from the region of the Western Balkans or presenting about the territories of the Western Balkans. The Conference was planned to enable the MIGREC to make their connections with the colleagues from the region even deeper and broader. The presence of the Serbian academic Diaspora was also ensured. The need to have balanced approaches at the Conference with fresh and robust conclusions as well as to position the MIGREC at the "map" of research excellence was met with additional element – involvement of stakeholders from the field from Serbia.

The Conference was scheduled as an international event at the Faculty of Political Science in Belgrade, Serbia, in the duration of two days, February 2nd – 3rd 2023. Online presence was arranged for those participants unable to travel to Belgrade.

It was organised in the form of the conference on the whole with two plenary sessions, six thematic panels and one policy panel. Twenty-four papers, authored by 38 academics were presented by 30 of them at the thematic panels. The policy panel gathered four speakers. Nine colleagues moderated the sessions.

The Conference was widely announced and disseminated via the MIGREC's website and social media accounts. A four-page leaflet on the conference was produced, uploaded at the MIGREC's website, posted at its social media accounts, sent to MIGREC's mailing list comprising of up to 200 targeted emails of those continuously engaged in Project activities and up to 1,000 emails of Bachelor, Master and PhD students.

3. MIGREC's Final Conference

3.1 Conference description

The Conference call (as presented in the text below) was drafted and developed by the Conference Committee.

Migration in the Western Balkans has been contextualized within various intersecting narratives of crises for decades. The positioning of the region within the East/West dichotomy strengthens the narrative of being in perpetual crisis and also its othering. However, are these migration and related "crises" endogenous to the region or are they driven by external processes? Are there any lessons learnt from past crises which help in navigating through current and future ones? And, is this "crises lens" helpful at all for the region, or is there a need to move beyond crisis narratives altogether?

The region of the Western Balkans is characterised by increased migration diversification (Zitranova, 2014), but the complexity of the migration picture is rarely captured within migration studies. It is most commonly scrutinized within the framework of negative demographic changes and "brain drain". It is frequently presented narrowly as a 'sending' region, through which people transit; a region that constructs migrants as a security threat, as opposed to a humanitarian concern, and which prioritises bordering over humanitarian responses. Contrary to that dominant perspective, we want to look into particular neglected aspects of migration in the Western Balkans – migration flows, processes, relations and practices that contribute to the political, economic, and social development of societies within the region. Accordingly, we aim to advance debates and scholarship on migration beyond the narratives of crisis in the Western Balkans and give them contextualized meanings. We positioned the Western Balkans at the centre of the debate, challenging widespread perceptions of peripherality. We aim to explore more nuanced multi-level responses to migration and extend beyond state actors and one-dimensional focus on securitisation. This shifts the focus from security to humanitarian responses and concerns, and accounts for policy, media and behavioural lenses. We are also interested in capturing divergent experiences as related to different groups of migrants (irregular, regular and returnees), but also to variegated responses, in the Western Balkans region.

Therefore, we encourage the papers in the following interconnected areas:

- Migration and development nexus (e.g. migration and socio-economic landscapes, migration patterns – causes and consequences, labor migration and human capital, emigration and socio-political mobilisation of Diaspora/Diaspora engagements, social and financial remittances, transnational perspective of 'migrants', 'Diaspora' and 'transnational community', climate change, etc.)
- Migration governance (e.g. bordering/de-bordering practices, racialization, mobilities to and from the Western Balkans, NGO-isation of migration governance in the region, resistance and grassroots solidarity, etc.)
- Integration of migrants (critiques of integration, integration in receiving societies, including gender-specific inequalities, forced migration and post-conflict integration, political, economic, social, cultural dimensions of integration, etc.).

3.2 Conference structure and contents

As already mentioned, the Conference was structured around two plenary sessions, six thematic panels and one policy panel.

The first keynote speech was given by Prof. Dr. Russell King, the MIGREC's Advisory Board Member, on the past and state-of-the-art developments in migration studies.

The second keynote speech was given Dr. Angeliki Dimitriadi on the impact of the "The New Pact on Migration and Asylum" on the region of the Western Balkans.

The following thematic panels were organized:

- Perspectives on migration from the Western Balkans;
- Crises frameworks;
- Violence, post-conflict societies and migration;
- Ambivalences in (ir)regularizing migrants;
- Critical narratives, discourses and representations of migrants;
- Challenging "integration" – experiences of migrant children, youth and families.

The policy panel gathered stakeholders active in the "practice" of migration from the perspective of international and national organizations working in the field in the national and regional contexts.

3.2.1 Day I of the MIGREC Conference

Day I of the Conference was opened by the Dean of the Faculty of Political Science and the Coordinator of the MIGREC Project. In the welcome speech, Natalija Perisic, Coordinator of the MIGREC Project, summarized the Project activities and achievements. She presented the work done in each of the Work Packages, with an emphasis on the establishment of the Migration, Integration and Governance Research Centre at the University of Belgrade – Faculty of Political Science and the PhD programme in Migration Studies submitted for the accreditation. She also pointed to the process of capacity building and developing and stressed the key success points of MIGREC researchers as of October 1st 2019.

3.2.1.1 Keynote speech number 1 – "From types and transitions to turns and tropes: Reflections on the study of migration"

The first keynote speaker, **Russell King**,[1] presented his work "From types and transitions to turns and tropes: Reflections on the study of migration" which was moderated by *Claudio Minca*.

Russell King debated on the issues of the position of migration studies in past and contemporary conditions. He started with the types of migration, from the classic to the contemporary ones and showed versatile ways of "slicing" migration: as a spatial, distance-based phenomenon, by regional/settlement type, time, life-cycle stage and gender / family. King pointed to "old" and "new" migration, problematic binary divisions and a series of turns in migration studies, the most important being transnational turn and mobilities turn, and also conceptual turns in social sciences – cultural turn, qualitative and ethnographic turns, reflecting a shift from the study of migration as an aggregate and disembodied phenomenon to the study of migrants and their lived experiences. Other turns he pointed to are related to the domains of cosmopolitism, infrastructure, materiality, gender, locality, return, lifestyle migration, reflexivity, space and time, emotions, sex, narratives, inequalities... Even more problematic, migration has a history of being politicised through a series of generally negative tropes, which need to be questioned to reveal a more objective 'truth' about migration. The words migration, migrant, immigration, immigrant, asylum-seeker, refugee, etc. carry a certain baggage; they are not neutral terms, even if they should be. Rather, they are manipulated and instrumentalised, especially in public discourse designed to win support for populist anti-migration policies, King concluded.

3.2.1.2 Panel number 1 – Perspectives on migration from the Western Balkans

The first panel titled "Perspectives on migration from the Western Balkans" was moderated by *Alexandra Prodromidou*. It was focused on the understanding of diverse but still common challenges shared by the countries of Southeast Europe, Turkey, Croatia, Montenegro and Albania. The panel comprised of five presentations as detailed below.

In the presentation "EU's enlargement policy in Southeast Europe: why it causes outward migration from the region" by **Dusan Reljic**, the MIGREC's Advisory Board member, an emphasis was on the

[1] Affiliations of all authors can be found in the conference agenda annexed to this Report.

scope of migration from the Western Balkans to the European Union in the period before and after the states of emergency caused by the COVID-19. Very intensive emigration is a result of slow economic growth and development in the region of the Western Balkans. Economic and developmental aid offered by the European Union has not resulted in decreased outward migration. The reasons for even more intensive emigration from the region in the future are mainly in the domain of economy again: although potential growth in the Western Balkans is expected to firm over 2022-20, it is anticipated by the World Bank, to remain subdued relative to the Western Balkans' peers.

Presentation "Migration to Turkey and migrants in Turkey in the era of crises" by **Ulas Sunata** started from the migration affairs in Turkey as a peripheral country of Europe or a country within the East/West dichotomy which has been long evaluated as critical matter in the European context. Still, the last decade in the country has witnessed a blend of the multiple and overlapping crises on migration: (i) Syrian war/refugee crisis, (ii) the COVID-19 pandemic, (iii) a radical devaluation in Turkish lira and related economic crisis, (iv) the migration flow from Afghanistan, and (v) Ukraine war/refugee crisis. Within this context, Sunata discussed the changes in migration size in Turkey in the last years and the impact of the related crises on migration to Turkey as a destination place.

Sanja Klempic Bogadi presented her work co-authored with Sonja Podgorelec "'I come when I want, I return when I want' – the new trends of return migration on the Croatian islands" on the basis of results of the study conducted on one Croatian island - Dugi otok in 2021, using the biographical method with semi-structured interviews to collect the life stories of 17 returnees in five settlements. The study showed that the concept of return migration to Croatian islands is changing just as migration is changing on the global level. Namely, contemporary migrants returning to the islands can be viewed from the perspective of temporality, where the former permanent return is increasingly being replaced by a series of planned or spontaneous return visits to the island.

The triangular relationships between human capital formation, labour markets and migration were presented by **Vojin Golubovic** in the presentation "How migration, human capital and the labour market interact in Montenegro". The presentation focused on the internal and external migration in relation to Montenegro, the scope of emigration and immigration, the reasons for emigration, the impact of COVID-19, migration policy measures, etc. Golubovic pointed to some critical domains –

the provision of the efficient use of the domestic labour force, the focus of the education system on tailoring skills which would match current and projected future demand in the labour market, necessary labour market reforms, further development of the policy framework for reintegration of returnees, etc.

Finally, in his presentation "Rethinking Albanian migration into the new European and regional context", **Kosta Barjaba** addressed recent developments of Albanian migration in the new European and regional context. He showed that Albania is both an origin and a destination country, characterized primarily by dynamic emigration trends. Namely, Albania remains among the European and world's countries with the highest migration rates per capita and with intense, economically driven, irregular and rapidly evolving emigration flows. For that reason, migration has a strong impact on the country's political and economic development, with remittances competing with other sources of development. Barjaba's presentation also enabled insights into currently challenging situation of Albanian "invasion" towards the United Kingdom.

3.2.1.3 Panel number 2 – Crisis frameworks

The second panel titled "Crisis frameworks" was moderated by *Panagiotis Pachalidis*. It was focused on crisis perspectives from the point of view of the migration of refugees from Ukraine, challenges of asylum seekers in Serbia, migrant integration in Trieste (Italy) and racialisation of Polish essential workers in the United Kingdom. The panel comprised of four presentations as detailed below.

The Ukrainian migration to Poland was discussed in the presentation "#Ukrainians on the Big Move" by **Isabela Grabowska**, the MIGREC's Advisory Board member. She pointed to the latest movements of Ukrainians to Poland, caused by the war in Ukraine, but also took account of the previous emigration from Ukraine to Poland, motivated by economic reasons. Grabowska showed the short and long-term aid needs of war refugees and aid offered by the help givers – Poles and Ukrainian migrants from earlier waves and the gaps between them. Double standards in the treatment of war migrants and refugees depending on their origin were analysed in the presentation too, while implications for social theory and policy implementations were presented based on various data sources, including administrative statistics, surveys and data collected by MyMigration.academy.

"Impacts of interlocked crises (Brexit and Covid-19 pandemic) on racialisation of Polish essential workers in the UK" was presented by **Aneta Pieket**, who collaborated with Kasia Narkowicz, to show the ways in which global inequalities have become exacerbated and already precarious lives of many migrant workers became additionally aggravated. Based on a survey which included 1100 respondents and interviews with 50 Polish migrant workers to contribute new theorisations on racial capitalism in shaping their precarity and identity, Pieket argued for a combined conceptualisation of Poles as both Eastern Europeans and migrant workers through the lens of racialised capitalism to unpack their fragility in being 'white but not quite' and disposable as workers overrepresented in insecure jobs.

Dragan Umek discussed the emergence of the so called "long summer of migration" in 2015 and its development in 2016 which has shifted the geographical axis of the refugee-related migration, complementing the existing maritime routes in the central Mediterranean with new overland itineraries over the region of the Western Balkans. In his presentation "The role of Trieste in the migration routes towards Europe" he concentrated on the city of Trieste, in the northeastern border of Italy, which was involved in this informal migratory flow and soon became one of the nodal spot of the host system that Italian government had put in place to deal with the humanitarian crisis. He concentrated on the formation of a "semi-fluid community" of Afghan and Pakistani Diaspora, the different approaches to immigration policy implemented by local institutions and NGOs, as well as the social impact on local communities.

The challenges of asylum procedure in Serbia were in the focus of the presentation "Numbers do not lie – access to asylum effectively denied in Serbia" by **Dejan Pavlovic**. Starting from the human rights perspective, the right to asylum was scrutinized in detail in the national context in the longitudinal perspective. The complex asylum seeking procedure was analysed from the perspective of asylum seekers and their hardships in the process. The absence of the genuine will of the Serbian government to support asylum seekers to stay and integrate into society was clearly demonstrated in the last 15 years. Reasons for that range from the dominantly security based approach to asylum seekers and reluctant administrative capacities to tackle the issue, to the missing strategic orientations towards the inclusion and empowerment of migrants. The main claim in the presentation was that asylum seekers are discouraged from recognizing the Republic of Serbia as their final destination. In spite of relatively decent normative framework, the effects are

worrisome. There is symbolic speech involved – you are not really welcome. Push backs, arbitrary returns to third countries, language barriers, long administrative procedures accompanied with prohibition to work during the waiting period represent just some of the problems, as argued by Pavlovic. The final score for the Western Balkan countries is that since 2014 around 40,000 people had sought protection, while in only 303 cases refugee status was granted, whereas additional 361 people got the temporary protection. Since the establishment of the Serbian national asylum until December 2021 total number of asylums granted has been 208.

3.2.1.4 Panel number 3 – Violence, post-conflict societies and migration

The third panel titled "Violence, post-conflict societies and migration" was moderated by *Dejan Pavlovic*. It was focused on open and expansive citizenship in contested democratizations, temporary protection and former combatants. The panel comprised of three presentations as detailed below.

Jelena Dzankic presented the work she co-authored with Eleanor Knott and Szabolcs Pogonyi, "'Friends in, enemies out, others at bay'. Contradictions of open and expansive citizenship during upswings and downswings of democratization". As demonstrated in the presentation, scholarship has long examined the construction of membership in democratic societies, often associating open and expansive citizenship with democracy, inclusion and pluralism. Far less academic energy has been dedicated to the trajectories of citizenship policies in countries, which have become the site of growing illiberalism and democratic decline. Dzankic argued that, while there is necessarily no causal connection between falling democracy levels and a more restrictive regulation of citizenship, the evolution of nationality laws in post-Communist Europe reveals a number of incongruities with expectations based on academic literature.

"Temporary protection – A refugee protection mechanism or a migration policy tool?" was a presentation given by **Janja Simentic Popovic**. She discussed temporary protection as an exceptional measure aimed to provide immediate and temporary protection in the event of a mass influx or imminent mass influx of displaced persons from non-EU countries who are unable to return to their country of origin. The experiences triggered by the Ukrainian conflict demonstrated that temporary protection clearly can serve as a migration policy tool. The EU approach to this situation was to offer quick and effective assistance to people fleeing the war in Ukraine. The

beneficiaries of temporary protection get residence permit for the entire duration of TP, access to asylum procedure, access to employment, accommodation and housing, social welfare, medical care and education (for persons under 18 years) showed Simentic Popovic.

Migration experiences and strategies of former combatants of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, highlighting their efforts to maintain cohesion in the context of a divided, dangerous and unequal city were explored in another post-conflict society (such as those of the Western Balkans) by **Henry Staples**. In his presentation "Former combatants as migrants: rethinking armed group reintegration in Colombia" the analysis was placed within the context of a shifting landscape characterised by new forms of territorial organising and resistance across Latin America and beyond. Namely, new evidence indicates that former combatants often desire to stay with their unit, that pre-existing social and political ties between members can facilitate the pursuit of a meaningful life, and that policymakers ought to better account for and utilise these incentives for continued cohesion.

The presentation of Stefan Surlic "Internally displaced persons in the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina. Why did they fail to return?" was cancelled due to objective reasons.

3.2.2 Day II of the MIGREC Conference

3.2.2.1 Keynote speech number 2 – "The New Pact on Migration and Asylum: lessons from Greece for the Western Balkans"

The second keynote speaker, **Angeliki Dimitriadi** presented her work "The New Pact on Migration and Asylum: lessons from Greece for the Western Balkans" which was moderated by *Natalija Perisic*.

Angeliki Dimitriadi presented the consequences of the New Act on Migration and Asylum for the countries of the Western Balkans, with the focus on the innovated solutions of the European Union. In her view, the Pact itself emerged as a result of connections between migration and political crises in the Union and the Pact's functioning is strongly jeopardized when it comes to the challenge of the return of migrants. She started from two facts of importance: that Greece is not a desirable country

for irregular migrants to stay and that Greece is to serve as a shield of Europe. In terms of that, there are similarities and analogies among Greece and the region of the Western Balkans, from the point of view of procedures and policy outcomes. Dimitriadi focused on the challenges associated with pre-screening procedures and consequent periods outside the asylum procedures in Greece. She pointed to challenging accommodation for irregular migrants and services offered to them there, highlighting the need to prioritize the reception, which has been too long of critical importance. Namely, the Pact is especially controversial when it has to offer the solutions for non-returnable migrants. Relations between the European Union and the region of the Western Balkans are the relations of mutual dependence. Therefore, there is a need for capacity building and development, migration "diplomacy" and negotiation between all stakeholders involved. It is frequently forgotten, she said, that the (member) states are in charge of migration policy production and that bi-lateral agreements work.

3.2.2.2 Panel number 4 – Ambivalences in (ir)regularizing migrants

The fourth panel titled "Ambivalences in (ir)regularizing migrants" was moderated by *Ryan Powell*. It was focused on emigration from Serbia and Kosovo*[2] and challenges of (re)integration and return. The panel comprised of two presentations as detailed below.

Danica Santic and **Milica Langovic** presented the work "Geography Adjusting to (a new) life upon return to Serbia: is it a home always sweet home?" co-authored by Marija Antic. Presenting the dilemma of a returnee "Where do I belong?", Santic and Langovic explained the reasons for return – return of failure, conservatism, retirement and innovation. Their presentation was positioned in the national context and dealt with the national-wide data and data surveyed in eight municipalities. The majority of respondents returned due to family reasons (almost half of them), followed by the visa expiration and inability to integrate in the same percentage of 11.6% each. Interestingly, their data showed that 44.2% respondents planned to re-emigrate, 46.5% of them did not plan to re-emigrate, whereas the remaining 9.3% did not decide yet.

In the presentation "Emigration trends from Kosovo*: a need to redress information asymmetry among potential emigrants" **Ardiana Gashi** explained that emigration to Western Europe remains an important demographic characteristic of Kosovo*'s population, with accounting for nearly half of

[2] * This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

the domestic population. Germany is one of the main destination countries. The most important driver for the emigration is the poor labour market situation of young people, which is reflected in an exceptionally high youth unemployment rate and an ever-increasing share of Kosovar* youth not in education, employment or training. On the other hand, some young Kosovars* find work in international markets or companies, which not only contributes to employment but also exerts pressure to advance human capital.

The presentation of Beatrice Berghi and Nermin Oruc and "How to attract 'desirable' migrants?: Determinants of internal mobility of skilled immigrants in destination countries" was cancelled due to objective reasons.

3.2.2.3 Panel number 5 – Critical narratives, discourses and representations of migrants

The fifth panel titled "Critical narratives, discourses and representations of migrants" was moderated by *Anita Burgund Isakov*. It was focused on nation, race and class in anti-migrant narratives, public narratives on migrants during COVID-19, images on migrants in newspapers and discursive strategies regarding migration policies in the public spheres. The panel comprised of four presentations as detailed below.

Scrutinisation of the structure and constituents of narratives accusing migrants for the housing crisis and colonization in Serbia and their wider contextualization, while focusing on the underlying nationalist, racial and class aspects was the topic of the presentation "'Who is replacing us in our homes?' Nation, race and class in anti-migrant narratives in Serbia" by **Marta Stojic Mitrovic** and **Ana Vilenica**. The presentation took into account both Asian and African migrants with irregular status who have been transiting Serbia and refugees from Ukraine and Russia who came to Serbia after the invasion to Ukraine. Unlike the clear anti-migrant stance toward people from Asia and Africa, ambivalent attitudes toward Russian and Ukrainian citizens led the discussion towards the problem of the unregulated rental sector and impoverishment of people in Serbia unable to afford homes on the modified rental market.

The changed pattern of public narratives about refugees and asylum seekers from the positive and humanitarian one when a large number of refugees arrived in 2015 in Serbia into the negative, with the start of 2019 and throughout 2020 with the Covid-19 pandemic was analysed by **Violeta**

Markovic, Danijela Pavlovic and **Sanja Polic Penavic** in their presentation "'We are closed in the houses so that the government can settle migrants all over the country' – Public narratives on refugees and asylum seekers during Covid 19 pandemic in Serbia". Data were obtained through a qualitative research which was performed using focus groups with 13 professionals and interviews with seven key informants who are working in the system of protection of refugees and asylum seekers in Serbia.

Aleksandra Krstic presented about contested discourses, perceptions and misperceptions about irregular migrants in Serbian media in the presentation "Images of integration: migrants in Serbia's press". She showed the significant role media plays in representation of migrants and building narratives of their integration into the community. However, the media image of migration has been extremely polarised, showing migrants either as a threat to borders and public health or as victims of wars and crime. Her presentation examined how the integration of migrants and refugees transiting through Serbia has been represented in national and regional newspapers, based on the mixed method research of 469 photographs published between 2015 and 2020.

The presentation "Communication and Digital Media Refining or contesting the 'fortress': discursive strategies regarding migration policies in the public spheres of Greece and North Macedonia against the backdrop of instability and crisis" by **Panagiotis Pachalidis** shed light to the public discussions regarding migration policies in Greece and North Macedonia in 2022. In the Greek case, in particular, it was clear that a very important emphasis has been given on security and to a much lesser extent on integration policies. Thus, it seems that the "fortress" frame has become the most dominant approach. Therefore, Pachalidis analysed more explicit ways in which such a policy had been promoted by the Greek government and interpreted by the Greek media. He also explored similarities and differences in North Macedonia, a country which is inevitably affected by Greece's policies when it comes to migration management as the second transit country in the migrants' effort to reach Western and Northern parts of Europe.

3.2.2.4 Policy panel

The Migration Policy panel was moderated by *Danica Santic*. It was focused on support to migrants from the point of view of the UNHCR, UNICEF, NGO Group 484 and the Red Cross, their bi-lateral and mutual cooperation and empowering of migrants in Serbia. The panel included four presenters

from the mentioned organizations: Ljubimka Mitrovic, from UNHCR Office in Belgrade, Milena Timotijevic, from UNICEF Office in Belgrade, Miroslava Jelacic from NGO Group 484 and Natasa Todorovic from the Red Cross of Serbia.

While discussing with Danica Santic about the most pressing challenges in the migration policy and its implementation in Serbia in the recent period, the presenters structured their views around the following questions of the moderator: Which were the key areas of their work and priorities in the last five years? How the priorities shifted under the impact of COVID-19? Which policy changes should be embraced in the field of migration in order to have more efficient outcomes? Which policies should be pursued in the future and which should be more intensively implemented? Who is left behind and how to deal with this challenge?

The discussion at the Policy panel was accompanied by the presentation of the integration projects of the International Organisation for Migration, Office in Thessaloniki, Greece, which are being implemented in Greece with a view to integrating irregular migrants into society.

3.2.2.5 Panel number 6 – Critical narratives, discourses and representations of migrants

The sixth panel titled "Challenging 'integration' – experiences of migrant children, youth and families" was moderated by *Danijela Pavlovic*. It was focused on trauma informed approaches to migrant families, experience of migrant youth in collective care, access of migrant children to schools and social protection of migrants. The panel comprised of four presentations as detailed below.

Anita Burgund Isakov and **Violeta Marković** presented their "A systematic literature review on trauma informed approaches to migrant and refugee families" since there are no many references to the approaches that are trauma informed across different sections such as education, health, social welfare or protection of children in migration. Peer reviewed articles published after 2013 in English have been searched to enable the presenters to conclude that in most of the papers, trauma informed approaches referred to tools, models, perspectives, approaches and theories. Their presentation provided broader understanding in concept and contexts of trauma informed approaches to migrant/refugee families.

Arguments that young migrants experience complex, ongoing processes of 'unsettlement' rather than sanctuary, as a defining feature of their everyday experience were in the focus of the presentation "Unsettlement, endurance and collective care: the neglected experiences of migrant youth" given by **Ryan Powell** in co-authorship with Thea Shahrokh, Majella Kilkey and Hannah Lewis. Powell showed how learning from young people themselves through participatory and arts-based research in northern England, enabled insights that unsettlement experiences are undergirded by hostile immigration policies and made up of intersecting crises characterised by temporariness in accommodation, impoverishment and protracted waiting for asylum decision-making and life-building.

The presentation "Access of migrant children to schools – comparison of educational policies in Malta and Serbia" by **Tamara Mihajlovic** and **Ljiljana Cumura** has been contextualized within the broader debates about the issues of migrant children's access to education as well as the value of education for both the children and the state. Mihajlovic and Cumura analysed the strategic documents, laws, actions and compared the countries of Malta (as the EU member state in the Mediterranean region) and Serbia (as the EU candidate in the Balkan region), from the point of view of their roles in facilitating access to education for migrant and refugee children.

Due to the perception that irregular migrants are only transiting Serbia, their social protection has been very limited in scope and accessibility as high influx of migrants created pressures not only on the capacity of the country to accommodate migrants but also on its support systems. **Dragana Stoeckel** in her presentation "Social protection for migrants in Serbia: interplay between governmental and nongovernmental actors" examined four main, interconnected themes: the creation and development of social protection services for migrants/refuges and accompanying social work intervention; access to social protection; the role of NGOs; and challenges in social protection provision for migrants/refugees.

4. Lessons learnt and conclusions

Unsurprisingly, a lot of discussions and debates emerged around presentations of keynote speakers and panelists and a series of questions were raised in the discussion parts. Namely, the MIGREC's Final Conference was a big success. It created a space for fruitful exchange of ideas and expertise of academics and policy makers who would not have had the opportunity to do so. Inter and multi-

disciplinary perspectives presented at the Conference contributed to enhanced understanding of migration and migration related developments in the region of the Western Balkans. In such way, the Conference establishes a MICREC legacy of its own in terms of an established space for academics and policy makers to come together and challenge the boundaries of study and research of migration in the future and in Belgrade.

Some of the main lessons learnt from the conference are the following:

- Recent critical literature throws up interesting ideas about how migrants are viewed and how we should (not) study migrants. One of interesting arguments suggest a "demigranticisation turn" contrary to current "fetishisation" of migrants as "objects of study" whereas the very word 'migrant' becomes an innately differentiating, problematising and stigmatising category.
- Numerous terms and concepts already in usage should be re-considered and their meanings and interpretations unpacked. Only some of them are: What is social? What is political? When we think about migrants, what is agency and representation, (dis)engagement? Etc. Many of terms and concepts, such as borders and territories, governance, movements, etc. have been transforming the conceptualisation of states and statelessness.
- Human rights approach should be the guiding principle when designing and implementing migration policies. Approaches informed by voices of migrants and their perspectives and participation, i.e. co-production of policy and society, should become flagship initiative.
- Outward migration from the Western Balkans could be expected to continue, due to projections of slower economic growth and increased inequalities. Fundamental shifts in national policies in the region of the Western Balkans would be needed, first of all regarding the matching of labour market needs and educational choices. More ambitious harmonisation with the EU acquis could be beneficial in order to make this reality.
- The prolonged impact of COVID-19 in the field of migration is reflected in the feeling of precarity among economic emigrants, and dual discrimination: 1) in workplaces (low pay, low status, problems with career progression and professional recognition, etc.), 2) in being a migrant (seen as worse, less qualified, not speaking (good enough) language of the country of destination and seen as bodies spreading disease).
- There are a lot of organizations in the field in the region of the Western Balkans supporting migrants and advocating for their rights. However, despite their already established

connections, it is necessary to work more closely for the benefit of all migrants and refugees. The cooperation should be enhanced both among the countries and within the countries.

Upon the conclusion of the final conference, participants were strongly encouraged to fill in the online evaluation form which was provided via email. Eventually, the form collected 28 responses out of 46 to whom it was distributed. The overall feedback was highly positive, with the participants commending the organisation of the conference, the relevance of selected topics and the quality of the presentations.

The idea of organising the conference on an annual basis was unanimously embraced as an opportunity to enhance academic knowledge, to inform about relevant policy updates and to allow researchers to present their work.

Commenting on the length of the conference, a few respondents suggested that a shorter duration might favour the active engagement in all sessions and reduce a feeling of fatigue that is observed in longer events.

Overall, the key advantages highlighted were the opportunity for networking and the interdisciplinary character of the conference, which provided valuable insights into various aspects of migration, particularly in the region of South-east Europe.

Annex I – Agenda of the Conference

International conference

MIGRATION IN THE WESTERN BALKANS – RE-THINKING CRISIS NARRATIVES

University of Belgrade – Faculty of Political Science, Belgrade, Serbia,
Room number 3, 1st floor

February 2-3, 2023

PROGRAMME

February 2nd 2023

09:30 – 10:00 **Welcome**
Dragan Simić, Dean of the Faculty of Political Science
Natalija Perišić, Coordinator of MIGREC

10:00 – 11:30 **Plenary session**

Chair and discussant: **Claudio Minca**, University of Bologna – Department of History and Cultures

Russell King, University of Sussex
From types and transitions to turns and tropes: Reflections on the study of migration

11:30 – 11:45 Coffee break

11:45 – 13:30 ***Perspectives on migration from the Western Balkans***

Moderator: **Alexandra Prodromidou,** SEERC, CITY College – University of York, Thessaloniki

Dušan Reljić, former Head of Brussels office of the German Institute for International and Security Affairs
EU's enlargement policy in Southeast Europe: why it causes outward migration from the region

Ulas Sunata, Bahçeşehir University, Center of Migration and Urban Studies (BAUMUS) – Department of Sociology
Migration to Turkey and migrants in Turkey in the era of crises

Sanja Klempić Bogadi, Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies, Zagreb – Department for Migration and Demographic Research & **Sonja Podgorelac,** Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies, Zagreb – Department for Migration and Demographic Research
"I come when I want, I return when I want" – the new trends of return migration on the Croatian islands

Vojin Golubović, University of Donja Gorica, Podgorica
How migration, human capital and the labour market interact in Montenegro

Kosta Barjaba, Academy of Sciences of Albania (online presentation)
Rethinking Albanian migration into the new European and regional context

13:30 – 14:15 Lunch

14:15– 16:00 ***Crises frameworks***

Moderator: **Panagiotis Pachalidis**, ELIAMEP, Athens & University of Western Macedonia, Department of Communication and Digital Media

Izabela Grabowska, Kozminski University, Warsaw (online presentation)
#Ukrainians on the Big Move

Kasia Narkowicz, Department of Sociology and Criminology, Middlesex University & **Aneta Piekut,** Sheffield Methods Institute, University of Sheffield
Impacts of interlocked crises (Brexit and Covid-19 pandemic) on racialisation of Polish essential workers in the UK

Dragan Umek, University of Trieste
The role of Trieste in the migration routes towards Europe

Dejan Pavlović, University of Belgrade – Faculty of Political Science
Numbers do not lie – access to asylum effectively denied in Serbia

16:00 – 16:15 Coffee break

16:15 – 18:00 *Violence, post-conflict societies and migration*

Moderator: **Dejan Pavlović**, University of Belgrade – Faculty of Political Science

Jelena Džankić, Robert Schuman Centre – European University Institute, Florence, **Eleanor Knott**, Department of Methodology – London School of Economics & **Szabolcs Pogonyi,** Central European University – Nationalism Studies Program, Wien
"Friends in, enemies out, others at bay". Contradictions of open and expansive citizenship during upswings and downswings of democratization

Stefan Surlić, University of Belgrade – Faculty of Political Science
Internally displaced persons in the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Priština. Why did they fail to return?

Janja Simentić Popović, University of Belgrade – Faculty of Political Science
Temporary protection – A refugee protection mechanism or a migration policy tool?

Henry Staples, Sheffield Methods Institute, University of Sheffield
Former combatants as migrants: rethinking armed group reintegration in Colombia

20:00 Dinner in the city
Traditional restaurant "Tri šešira", Skadarlija

February 3rd 2023

09:00 – 09:45 **Plenary session**

Chair and discussant: **Natalija Perišić**, University of Belgrade – Faculty of Political Science

Angeliki Dimitriadi, ENA Institute, Athens (online presentation)
The New Pact on Migration and Asylum: lessons from Greece for the Western Balkans

09:45 – 10:45 ***Ambivalences in (ir)regularizing migrants***

Moderator: **Ryan Powell**, Department of Urban Studies and Planning, University of Sheffield

Danica Šantić, University of Belgrade – Faculty of Geography, **Milica Langović,** University of Belgrade – Faculty of Geography & **Marija Antić,** University of Belgrade – Faculty of Geography
Adjusting to (a new) life upon return to Serbia: is it a home always sweet home?

Ardiana Gashi, University of Prishtina – Faculty of Economics
Emigration trends from Kosovo: a need to redress information asymmetry among potential emigrants*

Beatrice Berghi & **Nermin Oruč,** Center for Development Evaluation and Social Science Research, Sarajevo (online presentation)
How to attract "desirable" migrants: Determinants of internal mobility of skilled immigrants in destination countries

10:45 – 11:00 Coffee break

11:00 – 12:45 ***Critical narratives, discourses and representations of migrants***

Moderator: **Anita Burgund Isakov**, University of Belgrade – Faculty of Political Science

Marta Stojić Mitrović, The Institute of Ethnography of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts & **Ana Vilenica**, Polytechnic and University of Turin
"Who is replacing us in our homes?" Nation, race and class in anti-migrant narratives in Serbia

Violeta Marković, University of Belgrade – Faculty of Political Science, **Danijela Pavlović**, University of Belgrade – Faculty of Political Science & **Sanja Polić Penavić**, University of Belgrade – Faculty of Political Science
"We are closed in the houses so that the government can settle migrants all over the country" – Public narratives on refugees and asylum seekers during Covid 19 pandemic in Serbia

Aleksandra Krstić, University of Belgrade – Faculty of Political Science
Images of integration: migrants in Serbia's press

Panagiotis Pachalidis, ELIAMEP, Athens & University of Western Macedonia, Department of Communication and Digital Media
Refining or contesting the "fortress": discursive strategies regarding migration policies in the public spheres of Greece and North Macedonia against the backdrop of instability and crisis

12:45 – 13:30 Lunch

13:30 – 14:30 **Policy panel**

Chair and discussant: **Danica Šantić**, University of Belgrade – Faculty of Geography

Miroslava Jelačić, Group 484
Milena Timotijević, UNICEF Office in Belgrade
Ljubimka Mitrović, UNHCR Office in Belgrade
Nataša Todorović, Red Cross of Serbia
Uroš Živković, Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs

14:30 – 14:45 Coffee break

14:45 – 16:15 ***Challenging "integration" – experiences of migrant children, youth and families***

Moderator: **Danijela Pavlović**, University of Belgrade – Faculty of Political Science

Anita Burgund Isakov, University of Belgrade – Faculty of Political Science & **Violeta Marković**, University of Belgrade – Faculty of Political Science
A systematic literature review on trauma informed approaches to migrant and refugee families

Thea Shahrokh, University of Sheffield, **Ryan Powell**, Department of Urban Studies and Planning, University of Sheffield, **Majella Kilkey**, Department of Sociological Studies, University of Sheffield & **Hannah Lewis**, University of Sheffield
Unsettlement, endurance and collective care: the neglected experiences of migrant youth

Tamara Mihajlović, University of Belgrade – Faculty of Political Science & **Ljiljana Ćumura**, University of Belgrade – Faculty of Political Science
Access of migrant children to schools – comparison of educational policies in Malta and Serbia

Dragana Stoeckel, University of Belgrade – Faculty of Political Science
Social protection for migrants in Serbia: interplay between governmental and nongovernmental actors

17:00 Belgrade tour

20:00 Dinner in the city
"Mezestoran Dvorište", Svetogorska 46

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Annex II – List of atendees

International conference
MIGRATION IN THE WESTERN BALKANS RE-THINKING CRISIS NARRATIVES

University of Belgrade – Faculty of Political Science
Belgrade, Serbia
February 2 – 3, 2023

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