



European Union's Migration Policies: Strengthening Europe's Security and Stability, a Case of the Western Balkan Route

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords: Immigrant, Action Plan, European Union, Western Balkans

Received: 19, January

Revised: 20, February

Accepted: 30, March

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to evaluate the European Union's policy to improve the security and stability of the Western Balkans region from illegal immigrants. The Western Balkans region is crucial to the European Union's policy in managing migration issues. A significant increase in the 2021-2022 period on the western Balkan route attracted the attention of the European Union and made it a priority in order to maintain security in the European Region. This research was analyzed based on European Union policies maintaining the security and stability of the Western Balkans. This study uses a descriptive qualitative method using a literature study. Findings of this study explain that at least there is an action plan formulated by the European Union in December 2022, which sets out a series of measures to strengthen European Union support to states facing increasing migration pressure along the Western Balkan route.

INTRODUCTION

Migrants in the Western Balkans region refer to individuals living in or moving through countries in the region, such as Bosnia, Albania, Kosovo, Herzegovina, Serbia, and Montenegro. These migrants are generally people seeking international protection, seeking employment, or fleeing conflict or economic hardship in their home countries. The Western Balkans have been an important migration route to Europe in recent years. Migrants passing through this region usually come from the Middle East, Asia, and Africa, with their main goal being to reach EU countries located around the Western Balkans. (Buonfino, 2004) The living conditions of migrants depending on several factors such as legal status, access to health and social services, and support from local and international organizations. Many migrants face challenges on their journey, including security risks, exploitation, and difficulties in meeting their basic needs.

International organizations, governments, and local NGOs strive to provide assistance and protection to migrants in the Western Balkans region. This involves trying to provide basic services, such as food and medical care, as well as support in the process of seeking asylum or social integration in their destination countries. The situation of migrants in the Western Balkans is complex and changing. Efforts are ongoing to understand and address the challenges faced by migrants and to improve coordination between countries in the region to address migration issues in a just and humane manner. (Carrera, 2019).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Intergovernmentalism Theory

The theory of intergovernmentalism is a perspective for examining EU policies that underscores the significant contribution of member states to the decision-making and policy coordination within the European Union. This theory underscores the continued dominance of member states as the primary and independent entities responsible for decision-making and setting policy courses within the EU. According to Andrew Moravcsik, intergovernmentalism is an approach that underscores the central involvement of member states in the EU's policy-making process. He contends that decisions are reached through negotiations and that the individual national interests of member states have a significant impact on these decisions. (Moravcsik, 1993)

The European Union's efforts to resolve the Balkan conflict through a common foreign security policy (CFSP). This thesis seeks to examine the European Union's endeavors to address the Balkan conflict, highlighting the EU's reputation as a robust and resilient institution. The study scrutinizes the European Union's approach to resolving Balkan conflicts as outlined in the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). The primary goal of this policy is to reinforce "security building" to prevent conflicts and ensure regional stability. This involves facilitating peaceful and constitutional agreements through diplomatic means and the deployment of peacekeeping forces. The study's findings indicate that the European Union, guided by the CFSP, is tasked with a comprehensive resolution of the Balkan conflict using a strategy rooted in "soft

politics." However, while progress is made in resolving various conflicts faced by Balkan countries, residual issues remain that could potentially evolve into new conflicts in the future, posing challenges for the EU. The study also delves into the collaboration between the European Union and Balkan countries, particularly concerning immigration matters, which is closely tied to the research's scope.

METHODOLOGY

This research uses descriptive qualitative methods using literature study as a data collection technique. This method tries to explain complex phenomena through the collection and analysis of non-numerical data, such as interviews, participatory observation, or content analysis. The Annual Report journal of the European Union institutions, as well as data from the official European Union website, were used in this research. The purpose of this research is to find out the condition of migrant smuggling and the modus operandi of smugglers. Then this research also wants to know the actions of the European Union in preventing migrant smuggling and protecting victims.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The new European Union Action Plan for the Western Balkans outlines its priorities as enhancing border management and aligning visa policies. These steps are aimed at addressing the growing number of attempts at irregular crossings observed at the EU borders with Western Balkan nations. Presented on December 5 by the European Commission, this Action Plan was introduced prior to the EU-Western Balkans Summit held in Tirana. This event followed the EU-Western Balkans Justice and Home Affairs Ministerial that occurred on November 3 in the same city. During this Ministerial, the Western Balkans governments committed to a comprehensive and unified approach. (European Union, 2022)

The Western Balkans route has gained renewed importance in managing irregular migration. According to the Action Plan, Frontex reported nearly 130,000 attempted irregular border crossings at EU external borders on Western Balkan routes since the beginning of 2022. This figure is three times higher compared to the same period in 2021. (Frontex, 2021)

European Union Action plan highlights an increase attributed to the lack of alignment between the visa policies of various Western Balkans nations and the EU's visa policy, which it prioritizes. And also contributing to illegal migration include economic pressures and ongoing conflicts. The Commission's document aims to enhance collaboration concerning migration and border management with Western Balkans partners. This is particularly pertinent given their distinct status in terms of the EU accession perspective and their continuous efforts to harmonize with EU regulations. (Huysmans, 2000)

The Action Plan revolves around five fundamental principles, each consisting of a set of 20 suggested operational actions. These five principles include enhancing border control measures along established pathways, accelerating asylum processes while enhancing the capacity for accommodating asylum seekers, countering the activity of migrant smuggling, enhancing

collaboration for the process of taking back and returning migrants, and attaining consistency with visa policies.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study explain that there is an action plan formulated by the European Union in December 2022, which sets out a series of measures to strengthen the European Union's support to states facing increasing migration pressure along the Western Balkan route. The action plan highlights five priorities for the European Union and the Western Balkans countries: improving border management, strengthening reception capacity, taking action against migrant smuggling, strengthening cooperation in the readmission of migrants, and harmonizing with EU visa policies. However, there are some challenges in its implementation. The European Union and the Western Balkan countries must have some cooperation in handling illegal immigrant cases in order to maintain security and stability in the European Region, especially in the Western Balkans.

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