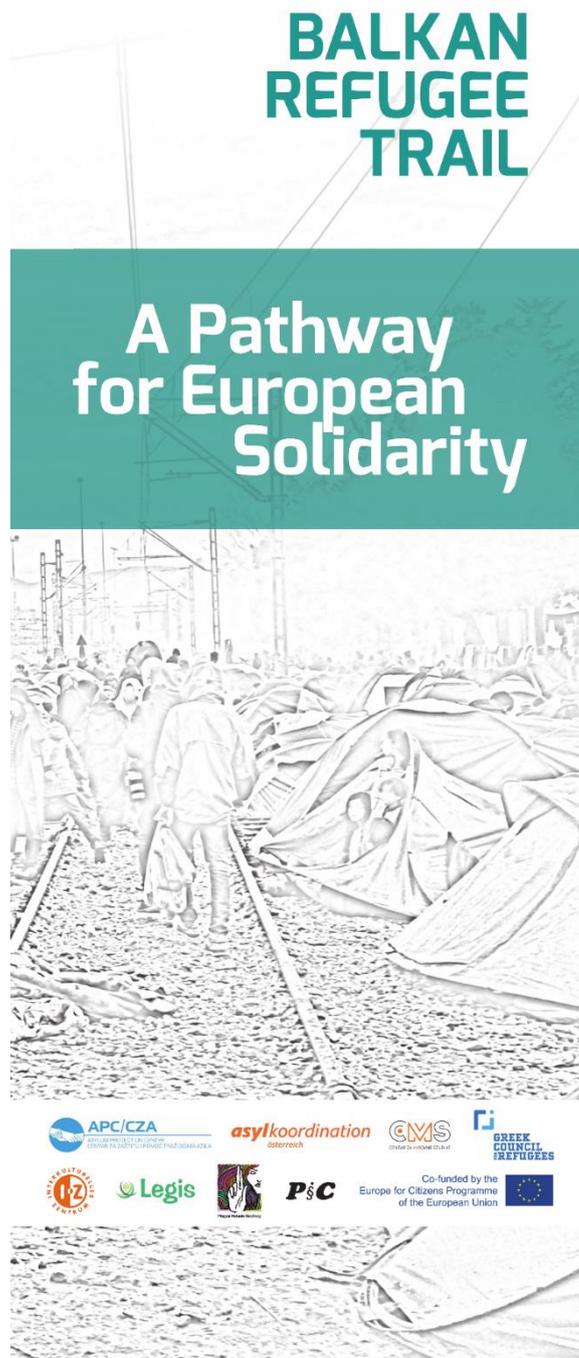


The project Balkan Refugee Trail – a pathway for European Solidarity »  
was funded with the support of the European Union under the  
Programme "Europe for Citizens"



Applicable to the Strand 2 – Measure 2.2 "Networks of Towns"

**Measure 2.3 "Civil Society Projects"**

Strand 1 – "European Remembrance"

## 10 events have been carried out within this project:

### **Event 1: Exchange Meeting Vienna, Austria**

**Participation:** The event involved 25 citizens, including

- 15 participants from Austria Vienna and Austrian regions,
- 2 participants from Zagreb, Croatia,
- 2 participants from Skopje, Macedonia,
- 1 participant from Athens, Greece,
- 2 participants from Ljubljana, Slovenia,
- 2 participants from Belgrade, Serbia,
- 1 participant from Budapest, Hungary

**Location / Dates:** The event took place in **Vienna, Austria**, from 06.10.2016 to 07.10.2016

#### **Short description:**

The aim of the Meeting was teambuilding and getting to know each other, development of a Joint Management Strategy, development of an ongoing Monitoring and Evaluation Plan and appropriate mechanisms for data collection, agreement on the Action Plan & Task Division and the general financial management.

Meeting Activities:

#### 6. October 2016

1. Welcome Address
  - By Gerhard Moßhammer (IZ) and Franjo Steiner (IZ)
    - Main questions/tasks of the project:
      - Build European solidarity
      - How can EU programmes support sustainability of civic engagement?
2. Introduction of Partners
3. Country Reports (Greece - Elina Sarantou, Macedonia - Besnik Hamiti, Serbia - Rados Djurovic, Slovenia - Miha Nabergoj, Hungary - Miriam Ekiudoko, Austria - Herbert Langthaler)
4. Project and upcoming Event presentation
  - a. Symposium "Flight- Migration- Democracy" (Angela Wieser)
  - b. Aware and Active! (Gerhard Moßhammer)
5. Group Discussions

#### 7. October 2016

6. Working groups topics:
  - Aim to promote solidarity (using of local experience on EU level)
  - Learn from experience (research work)
  - Share experience (conference design)
  - Give recommendations (publication)
7. Discussion of organizational issues
8. Closing Comments by all partners

### **Event 2: Local Meeting Zagreb, Croatia**

**Participation:** The event involved 110 citizens, including

- 2 participants from the city of Vienna (Austria),
- 104 participants from Zagreb and other regions of Croatia,
- 1 participant from Skopje, Macedonia,
- 1 participant from Budapest, Hungary
- 1 Participant from India,
- 1 Participant from Roma, Italy

**Location / Dates:** The event took place in **Zagreb, Croatia**, from 13.10.2016 to 15.10.2016

#### **Short description:**

Rethinking innovations in culture, and readiness to operate within a wider socio-political context has directed the participants of independent culture to reflect on and advocate the model of the socio-cultural center. The purpose

of these centers is to respond to the transdisciplinary and trans-sector culture needs, the organization of civil society, other fields of social action and the local community. In this sense, socio-cultural centers are, or may become, important places for citizens coming together and the active involvement of local communities in a variety of activities of civil society organizations and beyond. In addition to providing more access to culture and creative activities, they are also areas in which social integration is achieved through development of various intercultural programs targeted to minorities and refugees to increase their visibility in society, encourage their active involvement in the community and promote their rights.

The Local event organised in Zagreb within the project „Balkan Refugee Trail“ was part of the conference of the platform “Operacija grad: Upgrade, which consists of a wide range of organisations from broad social spectrum, among others Center for Peace Studies – who is a Croatian partner within the EACEA project „Balkan Refugee Trail“. Beside the European Commission the conference was supported by National Foundation for Civil Society Development, Kultura Nova Foundation, European Cultural Foundation, Ministry of Culture, City Council of Zagreb, Austrian Development Agency and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung.

Panelists on the conference were looking at this contemporary phenomenon from a critical perspective and examples of good practices on the level of various experiences of EU countries, and were suggesting specific suggestions, models and solutions.

### **Local forum within the conference, organised by Centre for Peace Studies**

- Friday – October 14th, 16:00, panel

#### ***EU integration policies: criticism***

Speakers: Franjo Steiner (Interkulturelles Zentrum, Vienna, Austria), Faika El Nagashi (Grüne Austria, Sprecherin für Integration, Migration und Menschenrechte)

Moderator: Drago Župarić-Ilić (Institut for Migration and Nationality)

EU integration policies: criticism – focused on the critical analysis and study of integration policies conducted by various EU Member States that have had good and bad effects on the societies in which they were implemented. Together with speakers from individual EU Member states, several practical examples were discussed, tried to figure out what future societies will look like, and defined the basic tenets on which a society should be built on given current socio-political challenges.

Academy of Performing Arts, Frankopanska 22

#### ***Rustom Bharucha: Rethinking interculturalism from performance to policy***

In this dialogic intervention, Rustom Bharucha has mapped how ‘interculturalism’ as a category has been used in Euro-American performance practice and theory since the 1970s. He has called attention to some of the primary motifs underlying his critique of interculturalism within the larger ethos of liberal individualism by focusing on the politics of appropriation, de-contextualization, the exotic use of the Other and cultural tourism. Against this background, he has positioned how interculturalism as a policy is now being advocated widely in Europe by politicians and policy-makers, more often than not as a backlash to the perceived failures of multiculturalism. Highlighting the schism that exists between the performative discourse of interculturalism and its contemporary usage in debates around public policy, he has thrown out some critical speculations on what can be learned at the level of policy from creative interactions in the performance sector, with particular attention to the marginalized sectors of society.

- Saturday – October 15th, 10:00, panel

#### ***Integration policies: then and now***

Speakers: Eleonora Camilli (Independent Journalist, Italy), Miriam Ekiudoko (Ebony African Cultural, Arts and Human Rights Organization, Budapest, Hungary)

Moderator: Viktor Koska (CEDIM, Faculty of political sciences University of Zagreb)

The conversation focused on the specific processes in the creation of integration policies of individual EU countries by drawing a parallel between the basic tenets of these policies then and now.

Topics: How have the assimilation, multiculturalism and interculturalism models contributed to the social atmosphere, and how have they harmed it? Do certain policies create fear from the start? Or are openness and trust, that may result in very positive examples like the one in the small Italian town of Riacce, a better approach.

### **Event 3: Local meeting Vienna, Austria**

**Participation:** The event involved about 140 citizens, including 104 active participants – as

- 63 active participants from Vienna and surrounding area, Austria
- 5 participants from Stockholm, Sweden,
- 5 participants from Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina
- 4 participants from London, Cambridge, England,
- 4 participants from Zagreb, Croatia,
- 2 participants from Budapest, Hungary,
- 3 participants from Rom, Bologna, Italy,
- 2 participants from Athens, Greece,
- 6 participants from Belgrade, Serbia,
- 1 participant from Sofia, Bulgaria,
- 2 participants from Berlin, Germany
- 5 participants from Skopje, Macedonia,
- 3 participants from Ljubljana, Slovenia,
- 1 participant from Istanbul, Turkey.

**Location / Dates:** The event took place in **Vienna, Austria**, from 29.11.2016 to 02.12.2016

#### **Short description:**

The event AKTIONSTAGE (**ACTION DAYS: FLIGHT-MIGRATION-DEMOCRACY**) took place from November 29 to December 2, 2016, in Vienna. Stakeholders from a wide range of disciplines and fields of activity, participants and guests gathered during the event to address questions from a theoretical and practical perspective to approach the current situation around the concepts of flight, migration and democracy, based on historical and geographical comparisons and analyzes of current events and activities. AKTIONSTAGE were initiated and supported by a large number of organizations.

The four-day event took place at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna and at ÖBB headquarters at the Vienna Main Station and was rounded off with a film screening of the documentary LogBook\_Serbistan, followed by a discussion with the film director and producer in Stadtkino at the Künstlerhaus.

The scientific part of AKTIONSTAGE was titled "**The New Face of Democracy! EUROPEAN EXPERIENCE IN COMPARISON**". Drawing upon experiences from the past, experts used inputs and podium discussions to explore the impact of current refugee movements on the understanding of democracy in Europe and on how new feelings of belonging are created within Europe.

Numerous participants, lecturers and representatives of various institutes, organizations and universities filled the first two days of AKTIONSTAGE with critical discussions about: the so-called "securing of the external borders of the EU", quotas for refugees, influences on the democratic self-image of the European Union, (common) European asylum system, solidarity, austerity, community actions (rural or urban), political awareness, participation and action, creating of the concepts of "friend and foe", human rights, deep analysis of the need for social acceptance, the division of responsibilities, the role of the state, etc. Concepts, being fundamental parts of the discourse, were critically examined and the final panel discussion was devoted to the recent academic disputes and critical academic thinking and research efforts.

The theme of the second part of AKTIONSTAGE was "**The new face of solidarity! Civil Society and Activism**". During these two days an exchange of experience and the networking between international and regional stakeholders as well as an interlacing of theory and practice took place. The focus lied on new forms of civil society activism, especially along the so-called "Western Balkan Route", in Sweden and in rural areas. Representatives of transnational civil society got a chance to speak, described their experiences and reported about the complex actions which were taken to support the refugees.

Two workshops series were organized, one on the topics "Transnational Civil Society Cooperation", "Civil Society as Substitute for the Governmental Activity" and "Crisis - Migration - Authoritarianism: International Solidarity at the Turning Point?"; and the other one on "Work", "Education" and "Housing". During the workshops experts, participants and guests came together once again to focus on these topics and solution approaches. In addition, a public debate was broadcasted by OktoTV, where journalists from Slovenia, Turkey, Croatia and Austria were invited to address issues relating the "construction of the refugee crisis by involving the media".

The AKTIONSTAGE were complemented by socio-cultural contributions: The shadow theater group Schattentheatergruppe St.Pölten presented a performance in the seminar room of the ÖBB Headquarters and draw audience's attention to the incidents, obstacles and burdens refugees had to experience before, during and after they took the escape route and when they arrived to their "host country". The film LogBook\_Serbistan closed the event and was followed by a conversation with film's director Želimir Žilnik and producer Sarita Matijević who talked

about what it means to start an attempt to give the audience a cinematic insight into the interior of fleeing people and to give the topic artistic expression.

One of the many positive results of the meeting and exchange between different actors and interested parties, as well as of the presentation of different perspectives, was the opportunity to analyze together current events, share different perspectives and think through steps for the future. A spotlight was put on the dangers fomented by an indiscriminate construction of the "refugee crisis" and the lack of display of positive aspects of the recent refugee movement. The ACTION DAYS: FLIGHT-MIGRATION-DEMOCRACY showed in this way how crucial is to intensively treat these themes, to listen to diverse voices and perspectives and how important it would be to invest more time, space and financial means to realize further series of workshops and to support this kind of exchange and networking.

#### **Event 4: Local meeting Belgrade, Serbia**

**Participation:** The event involved 40 citizens, including

- 18 participants from the city of Belgrade, Serbia,
- 1 participants from the city of Warsaw, Poland,
- 2 participants from the city of Vienna, Vienna,
- 1 participant from the city of Prague, Czech Republic,
- 4 participants from the city of Trieste, Italy,
- 3 participants from the city of Skopje, Macedonia,
- 1 participant from the city of Athens, Greece,
- 2 participants from the city of Ljubljana, Slovenia,
- 1 participant from the city of Brussels, Belgium,
- 2 participants from the city of Zagreb, Croatia,
- 1 participant from the city of Budapest, Hungary,
- 1 participant from the city of Sofia, Bulgaria,
- 1 participant from the city of Tirana, Albania,
- 1 participant from the city of Podgorica, Montenegro,
- 1 participant from the city of Sarajevo, Bosnia Herzegovina

**Location / Dates:** The event took place in **Belgrade, Serbia**, from 02.03.2017 to 03.03.2017

#### **Short description:**

The Intention, aim of the event:

Asylum Protection center APC organized a local event in Belgrade on 2-3 March 2017, under the name "What holds the future for Europe's migration and asylum policy? Sharing best knowledge and EU practice on integration of migrants and existing challenges in Balkan countries, through Italian and Austrian models and best practices", funded under the project Balkan Refugee Trail, a Pathway for European Solidarity by the European Commission Europe for Citizens Programme. This event brought together about 30 experts from governmental and non-governmental sectors from 14 European countries influenced by the "refugee crisis", presenting discussions and panels on how to ease integration of migrants and promote solidarity among various actors on local, national and regional communities, all in order to launch a virtuous cycle that enables interaction between refugees and local communities, reduce the risk of discrimination and boosts solidarity, integration, knowledge and competences of the CSO and government operators in various European countries.

Overall, the Conference realized 5 panels and gathered 30 experts from governmental and non-governmental sectors from 14 European countries influenced by the "refugee crisis":

- First panel was on the reform of the EU asylum system and of the European model of integration. The panel gathered important CSO representatives from Poland, Czech Republic and Serbia, and has led an important dialog on the highly questionable policy development in the EU with regards to migration and asylum, and by producing relevant conclusions about principles of nondiscrimination, solidarity and human rights.
- Second panel presented a discussion on the new expanded roles for EASO and Frontex, and how these organizations will impact the behaviors and roles of EU member and candidate countries and CSOs with regards to integration and reception of asylum seekers.
- Third panel presented the state of play of the refugee crisis in Western Balkans and in Italy. The discussion was held on the common challenges and concerns about push-backs, reception conditions,

and increasing negative perceptions of refugees, spreading fears and prejudices, and how all these different facets influence asylum seekers' integration and acceptance into local societies.

- Forth panel was called "Solidarity in crisis", and it presented the current state of affairs complimented with a discussion as to what will be the future role of the countries on the Western Balkan route and Italy, with an emphasis on integration efforts.
- The fifth panel tackled challenges of integration into European societies, whereby representatives from Austria and Italy presented examples of integration, lessons learned through many years of integration efforts, and how should those efforts be conceptualized to Western Balkan societies. Austrian and Italian CSO operators also shared good practices in the integration of migrants through the co-participation in activities at the educational, social, cultural, professional, and sportive level. The Austrian representative presented the Austrian integration system which functions as small center for integration techniques modules, while the experienced Italian field operators presented Italian protection System for Refugees and Asylum seekers, the SPRAR system.

#### **Event 5: Local meeting Athens, Greece 1**

**Participation:** The event involved 81 citizens, including

- 78 participants from the city of Athens and Greek island, Greece
- 1 participant from the city of Skopje, Macedonia,
- 1 participant from the city of Ljubljana, Slovenia
- 1 Participant from the city of Vienna, Austria

**Location / Dates:** The event took place in **Athens, Greece**, from 20.03.2017 to 21.03.2017

#### **Short description:**

The main theme of the conference was the refugee issue as it has evolved since the spring of 2015 and up to today, a year after the controversial EU -Turkey declaration. The symposium consisted of five sections. The first one included a presentation of the key findings of the "Monitoring of Entry Points, Asylum and Conditions Reception and Procedures for Refugees in Greece" project, which was implemented with funding from the Open Society Foundation and aimed at the monitoring of asylum and reception procedures and conditions for refugees in Greece at entry points. The second section focused on the EU - Turkey statement and the challenges around this. In the third section, representatives from organizations from different countries, which are participating in the framework of "Balkans Refugee Trail - A Pathway for European Solidarity" project, contributed with their own experiences, gave their own input on to what is. The fourth section focused at the asylum procedure mainly with regard to newcomers and the way the situation has developed after the closure of the borders and the signing of the statement. In the last section the emphasis was placed on the reception and identification procedures and the reception conditions at entry points - where the refugee population still remains trapped. Each session was followed by open discussion.

The Symposium took place in Impact Hub. Impact Hub Athens is part of an international network of social driven professionals and a variety of high impact creative professionals that are dedicated into prototyping the future of business. From social inclusion and social integration to environment and fair trade, Impact Hub Athens is engaging expertise from its worldwide presence and creating a net of intercultural, high impact community that acts locally and internationally. For the Symposium we used Impact Hub's Open Space meeting room and one of the smaller Co-Working spaces.

The Symposium created news links between different organizations and put many faces to names. Participants gave a very positive evaluation of the Symposium as an "amazing day of learning and sharing".

GCR in the context of Balkan Refugee Trail and other relevant projects will continue striving to enhance collaboration and cooperation with the other NGOs, state and civil society actors, as well as grass roots initiatives, in order to continue promoting a better and safer protection, reception and integration services for refugees and asylum seekers.

#### **Event 5.1: Local meeting Athens, Greece 1**

**Participation:** The event involved 150 citizens, including

- 150 participants from the city of Athens and Greek island, Greece

**Location / Dates:** The event took place in **Athens, Greece**, on 15.12.2017

#### **Short description:**

The event's objective was to ensure that the project results, including but not limited to our joint research outcomes were appropriately disseminated among the event's participants. At the beginning of the event, a general presentation of the project rationale and the project partners took place and afterwards, the project's outputs and a short analysis of project's results was presented. Emphasis was placed on the fundamental importance of advancing cross-sector partnerships between the different civil society actors, the national authorities, the European and the international community.

#### Results:

The event provided a platform for asylum experts from multi-disciplinary backgrounds to learn from the experience of other stakeholders, with a focus on the project's partners. Emphasis was given to the fact that a healthy and articulate European civil society can be the driving force for positive developments in the areas of human rights, democracy, solidarity and the rule of law, since it has proven that even under very critical conditions, they play a pivotal role in providing services, making governments more accountable and in fostering awareness within societies. This trend is even more apparent in cases of weak central/ regional or local state structures or in times of unanticipated crises, where civil society actors make, unquestionably, a basic contribution to the provision of basic social services. In these cases, solidarity is felt in all levels; among everyday people, among national and international NGOs, among almost every actor in the European arena.

### **Event 6: Local meeting Skopje, Macedonia**

**Participation:** The event involved 85 citizens, including

- 77 participants from the city of Skopje and regions, (Macedonia),
- 3 participants from the city of Belgrade, (Serbia),
- 2 participants from the city of Athens, (Greece)
- 1 participant from the city of Vienna, (Austria),
- 1 participant from the city of Paris, (France)
- 1 participant from the city of Budapest, (Hungary)

**Location / Dates:** The event took place in **Skopje, Macedonia**, from 27.03.2017 to 28.03.2017

#### **Short description:**

##### Intention, aim:

The conference aimed to provide an answer on the main theme: **Past, present and future: What kind of challenges people face on the Western Balkan migration route?** through four sub-panels looking on the Legal challenges, Human Rights challenges, the challenges of cooperation between CSOs and the challenges in Integration and Adaptation of refugees in the Western Balkan Countries. The themes were divided according to the legal and humanitarian obstacles on the Western Balkan route and had an integrated human rights violations as main part of the discussion with introductory video testimonies from Syrian, Afghan and Iranian survivors of various abuses that transited along the Balkan Route in 2015 and 2016.

Guest contributors to the panels were both representatives from Institutions, UN Agencies, International Organizations as well as Civil Society Sector representatives and Activists from Macedonia, Greece, Serbia, Croatia, Hungary and Austria. The selected panelists gave their input and presented their realities on the topic and discussed the possible solutions to improve our work and provide better access to rights and protection for refugee and migrant population. Additional discussions involving the participants and guests of the event was moderated to give space for the variety of opinions and questions regarding the themes of each panel.

#### **27 March 2017**

**The opening:** Dr. Agim Nuhiu, Minister of Internal Affairs (MK), Besnik Hamiti, Legis (MK), Franjo Steiner, Interkulturelles Zentrum (AU)

The Minister of Interior, Agim Nuhiu at the opening of the conference declared that there is no space for relaxed approach on the migration, and that the system and the institutions, try regional and global collaboration, must be always ready for taking exact steps for resolving the problems. For successful dealing with migration needs good coordination and solidarity, because it is not just national problem. Also, the institutions must be opened for all the factors, including the civil society, in a way of seeking optimal suggestions, projects and results that will contribute for quality system of functioning for the migrations subject.

Franjo Steiner from Interkulturelles Zentrum declared that the Balkan route became main transit route in the past two years and that was very important to be made collaboration between the NGOs that are active from those countries, so the situation would not go out of control. He also mentioned that the solidarity is still alive and that the civil sector is still helping the refugees and migrants, promoting the European solidarity in practice as a future of Europe.

Besnik Hamiti from Legis had the welcome note in behalf of the organizer, where he thanked to the participants from the governmental institutions, civil sector and volunteers, especially to all national media and news agencies who covered this first international conference on this subject in Macedonia.

**Video testimony:** This and following video testimonies are from the refugees who are now in EU. They talked about their experiences traveling try the Balkan route.

### **Panel 1: Legal challenges for refugees and migrants transiting on the Western Balkan Route**

What are the main legal obstacles for migrants and refugees transiting the Western Balkan route? What kind of documentation and registration procedures exist and how they influenced/burdened the processes of transit, access to asylum or subsidiary protection? What kinds of readmission and deportation procedures exist and are they applicable?

**Moderator:** Voislav Stojanovski, Macedonian Helsinki Committee (MK)

**Speakers:** Martina Smilevska, MYLA (MK); Snezana Teodosievska Jordanovska, Ombudsman office (MK); Andjelka Pantovic, APC-CZA (RS); Konstantinos Tsitselikis, Professor of HR Law (GR)

The access to rights and justice for refugees and migrants on the so-called Western Balkan route is burdened by the slow judicial or administrative procedures/legal practices in each country. The Dublin regulations and the Western Balkan 17 points plan failed to provide humane and legal conditions for access to protection of people in need. The so-called Balkan countries, regardless of their EU status, made interventions in their national asylum legal frameworks disregarding international HR and humanitarian standards and civil society actors involved in the refugee and migrant crisis. Populist measures taken to secure the borders of nation-states stimulate illegal and criminal channels, further endangering the lives of the ones in need of protection. Those practices should be challenged in front of the European Court for Human Rights in order for judicial decisions to have effect on legislations in collision with international HR and humanitarian standards.

**Video testimony:** This and following video testimonies are from the refugees who are now in EU. They talked about their experiences traveling try the Balkan route.

### **Panel 2: Human rights challenges: Access to rights and protection of refugees and migrants on the Western Balkan Route**

What kind of threats people face on the Western Balkan route using regular and irregular means of transit or arrival to Europe? Do Western Balkan countries have mechanisms through which they can provide protection for the migrant population (if yes/no please elaborate)? Is there a way to protect the people from organized crime groups and in the same time provide them with to protection in procedures against smugglers? What kind of practices is noticed on field and what is the institutional response to those practices?

**Moderator:** Besa Arifi, Proffesor (MK)

**Speakers:** Elena Brmbeska, Macedonian Helsinki Committee (MK); Mersiha Smailovic, Legis (MK); Blaze Kojcevski, UNHCR (MK); Emilie Pesselier, (FR)

The differences in the national legislations and lack of cooperation between governments in the region lead to impunity and complete disregard of international HR and humanitarian standards in asylum, readmission, relocation and family reunification processes. In order to provide humane and dignified transit, asylum or integration of refugees and migrants, governments have to refrain from promotion of political/nationalistic security agendas and provide legal access to territory for people in need of protection. It is a political decision of governments to combat organized crime groups and not the people who are forced to use those illegal services for transit or transport towards Western Europe. The closing of the borders enabled organized crime groups to endorse huge profits without prosecution while people in need are without protection. Positive outcome of changes in legislations can provide long-term solutions if the intention of legislators is to respect, consolidate and implement policies based on HR and humanitarian standards. Laws take time to be implemented and justice needs time to create practice. But, we have to be persistent in demanding changes as they will produce long-term positive outcome for people perceived as refugees and migrants. National asylum legislations will define the future of European countries and their interaction in regional and European governmental organizations.

**28 March 2017**

**Video testimony:** This and following video testimonies are from the refugees who are now in EU. They talked about their experiences traveling the Balkan route.

**Panel 3: Challenges of regional cooperation and solidarity for NGOs, formal and non-formal groups/networks**

What was the initial response of the civil society in the beginning of the so-called refugee and migrant crisis? How did the regional cooperation begin and how it developed in the last 2 years? What were the challenges on field and what was the response from local and international NGOs or non-formal groups? Where there any obstacles in the regional cooperation? Is there cooperation and solidarity among civil society actors, if yes/no please elaborate? What were the positive and negative effects for service providers?

**Moderator:** Suad Misini, ICGO (MK)

**Speakers:** Jasmin Rehxepe, Legis(MK); Sara Benceković, Are You Syrious? (HR); Vasilis Tzartznis, Activist (GR); Kelsey Montzka, North Star (RS); Franjo Steiner, Interkulturelles Zentrum (AU)

The regional cooperation and solidarity for NGOs, formal and non-formal groups/networks today is in decline if compared with the level of cooperation between civil society actors in 2015 when the refugee and migrant flow reached the level of humanitarian crisis. The NGOs, formal and non-formal humanitarian or other assistance can be beneficial and push for systematic changes or serve as outlet for governments to maintain status-quo and push political agendas. These effects became visible after the closing of the borders and analysis of the civil society actors' work within closed or semi-open facilities and camps. Self-reflection, reorganization and revitalization of the cooperation in spirit of solidarity, rather than project-oriented activities are needed. Several factors contributed to decrease of cooperation, especially on solidarity basis or:

- a. The economic and social gaps between activists define their (in)ability to volunteer their time in humanitarian, legal or advocacy activities;
- b. The late response of State and International NGOs in the refugee and humanitarian crisis took no consideration for the activities and good practices established on field of local NGOs, formal and non-formal civil groups and individuals;
- c. The differences in the economic, legal and political/ideological development of countries in Europe make conditions for strong/unified regional or European civil response to far-right security agendas;
- d. The lack of cooperation and inclusion of civil society actors in decision-making processes by governments in the Western Balkan region directly affects the trust among civil society actors and well-being of the people in need of protection;
- e. The individual project and donor oriented activities of NGOs, formal or non-formal groups further defocuses civil society actors as they lack time and means to agree on structured and organized civil response to far-right propaganda;

**Video testimony:** This video testimonies are from the refugees who are now in EU. They talked about their experiences traveling try the Balkan route.

**Panel 4: Challenges of integration and adaptation in the Western Balkan countries**

What was the institutional response for acceptance of refugee and migrants in the transit border centers/ camps? Were any cultural aspects taken into consideration given the refugees and migrant countries of origin? What were the main problems faced by institutions and civil society actors within closed, semi-open or open camps/centers for transit or asylum seekers? Are there obstacles for integration and adaptation of asylum seekers in the Western Balkan countries, if yes, what are those obstacles? What kind of policies one needs to introduce in the system to improve the integration and adaptation processes in future?

**Moderator:** Jasmina Golubovska, Legis (MK)

**Speakers:** Dragi Zmijanac, First Childrens' Embassy - Megjashi (MK); Dushko Petrovski, Center for Crisis Management (MK); Maja Varoshlija, Open Gate La Strada (MK); Srdjan Amet, SOS Children village (MK)

The legal and political uncertainty within the country diminishes positive outlook on possibilities to create Strategies for integration and adaptation of foreigners regardless of their obtained or lack of legal status of refugee or person in need of subsidiary protection. Although there are limited number of people on the territory, one should consider the treatment and conditions of people seeking asylum or being stranded in transit border and reception centers as a result of the closing of the borders in March 2016. At this moment all educational and psycho-social services are provided by local and international NGOs. These practices were noted even before the refugee and humanitarian crisis, as adaptation and integration activities for the last decade are provided by NGOs in the official center for

reception of asylum seekers. Outdated National inclusion strategies and other primary and secondary legislation are in collision with International Human Rights and humanitarian standards. Therefore, civil society actors work in conditions of legal uncertainty, preventing proper access to asylum i.e. adaptation and integration processes. Public pressure should be oriented towards changes of current practices and insist on the respect of human dignity, cultural, religious and ethnical diversity of people being stranded or seeking protection.

Civil society and State actors have to pay greater attention to vulnerable groups among refugee and migrant population such as unaccompanied minors, as the statistical data shows staggering numbers of more than 10.000 children and minors gone missing in the past 2 years. Access education, health, social security and full respect of the dignity of individuals and families transiting or residing in the country must be established through the State institutions and in best interest of the people in need for protection. NGOs can assist with expertise and knowledge, having in mind their current role in fulfilling gaps of the system.

### **Conclusion**

This conference was very important for the Macedonian public and media because for first time it gathered all institutions, international and local organizations and volunteers that were key factor for the refugee crisis during 2015 and 2016 in Macedonia. Also, all the participants were high representatives of their institutions that increased the level of credibility and professionalism of the conference. Legis consider this conference as very important and recorded the speeches of the conference. In following, please find the links of the videos of the speeches and the links from the news from the main media that reported about the conference.

### **Event 7: Local meeting Rakitna (Ljubljana), Slovenia**

**Participation:** The event involved 33 citizens, including

- 29 participants from the city of Ljubljana and Slovenian regions, Slovenia
- 2 participants from the city of Vienna, Austria,
- 1 participant from Belgrade, Serbia,
- 1 participant from Zagreb, Croatia

**Location / Dates:** The event took place in **Rakitna (Ljubljana), Slovenia**, from 06.04.2017 to 07.04.2017

### **Short description:**

The first day of the workshop, the participants met with a representative of the Ministry of the Interior, Nina Gregori and Mag. Pina Stepan (national contact point for integration at the EU level and contact point at the directorate for absorption of funds from the Asylum Fund). Their presentations about the integration of the refugees were followed by questions by participants. The following day, Mojca Špec Potočar, the Head of the new government's Office for the care and integration of migrants, also paid a visit.

At the end of a two-day workshop, the participants laid the foundations for the development of the strategy regarding the integration of migrants. On this basis, the group of migrants will be integrated, following by the update on the draft strategy. The document is expected to be completed by the end of April, and there will be the presentation of the document to the government and to the new Office in May. The participants also gathered a few ideas to improve cooperation between them and the new Office at the operational level.

**Social protection and accommodation:** The major identified problems were unsuitability and isolation of asylum centres, unsuitable facilities for children, delay of financial support, deficiencies in the institute of family reunification, unsystematic and centralized approach to finding accommodation, discrimination in access to accommodation and social transfers. Some solutions were also suggested for the mentioned issues, like opening asylum centres in the city center, staying outside asylum centres (upon prior identification of suitable places for accommodation), enactment of the minimum standards for the children's facilities, reintroduction of a single financial support, simplifying family reunification procedures and establishing the right of access to the social housing.

**Health care:** The most striking aberrations in this area are incompetence of the personnel, inadequate psychological assistance for asylum applicants, only medical emergency provided for them, problems with translators and cultural mediators. Some solutions were suggested, such as education and handbooks for healthcare professionals (National institute for public health), establishing a system of translators, educating experts for providing psychological support, the same health insurance for all, better and more systematic information for asylum applicants about their healthcare rights.

**Employment and work:** The most important identified issues were discrimination, administrative obstacles, active employment policy, language and legal rigidity. Possible solutions for the problems mentioned include: raising awareness among employers through workshops and strategy papers, social inclusion of asylum applicants and their motivation, active inclusion of all the institutions and yearly incentives for asylum applicants.

**Education and learning the Slovenian language:** Major identified problems were low quality and quantity of the courses of Slovene language, problems with recognition of educational achievement, motivation and lack of education for translators. There were also some solutions recognized for the issues mentioned, such as greater support for trainers, improvement of learning tools, more innovative and individualized approaches, higher number of lessons, the employment of teaching staff from different cultural backgrounds, establishment of an educational document's nostrification (academic validation) system, establishment of a system for obtaining documents from abroad and encouraging parents to involve children in school.

**Open society:** The most important issues recognized were negative reaction against migrants at the local level, ineffective media coverage, lack of an intercultural themes in the education system and lack of opportunities for intercultural exchange. Possible solutions could be early and effective provision of information at the local level, engaging local population in the decision-making process, financial incentives for municipalities, journalist's education, inclusion of the migration-related issues in the educational program, mobilization of the passive supporters, early introducing of the intercultural education in schools, etc.

**Information and awareness:** The major identified problems were the precedence of the security related public discourse instead of human rights related discourse, lack of awareness and incompetence for the human rights based approach, lack of a media landscape for balanced and focused debates, passivity and lack of participation by the refugees, lack of information and the resulting fear of the refugees. Some solutions were suggested, such as the change of the discourse, mapping of good practices, systematic raise of public awareness, respect for all democratic mechanisms, provision of the timely access to all important information, empowerment and inclusion of the refugees (information about their rights) and an in-depth approach to the work with local communities. The participants also briefly mentioned the cross-sectional issues, which must not be ignored in the development of the platform for integration policy. These issues are, in particular, family reunification, backlogs in asylum procedures, cross-sectoral cooperation, lack of a strategy for combating racism and discrimination, lack of a strategy regarding human rights and children's rights, and also lack of institutions in this area.

#### **Event 8: Local meeting Budapest, Hungary**

**Participation:** The event involved 25 citizens, including

- 20 participants from the city of Budapest, (Hungary)
- 2 participants from the city of Vienna, (Austria),
- 1 participant from the city of Belgrade, (Serbia),
- 1 participant from the city of Ljubljana, (Slovenia)

**Location / Dates:** The event took place in **Budapest, Hungary**, from 14.09.2017 to 14.09.2017

#### **Short description:**

In 2015, the Western Balkans became the most important channel for migration to half of Western Europe, with hundreds of thousands moving in the hope of a better life. The Faculty of International and European Studies at the National Civil Service and the Interkulturelles Zentrum, located in Vienna, examined the challenges of a lot of crisis the affected states face and how representatives of the civil society could help the often incomplete government capacity to improve the humanitarian situation. The event was opened by NETK by Dr. János Bóka International Deputy Dean who stated that similar events are essential for a better understanding of the events. Herbert Langthaler, the associate of Asylkoordination Österreich, emphasized the importance of dialogue.

Dr. Viktor Marsai, Assistant to NKE NETK, spoke about migration routes in the Middle East and Africa, and the expected trends, with particular reference to Libya's importance. Zoltán Egeresi, SVKK of NKE, analyzed the behavior of the Balkan states and Turkey. Finally, the panel was closed by Dr. Abdessamad Belhaj, a staff member of the Migration Research Institute who presented the reactions and strategy of the Hungarian government.

In the second part of the panel discussion, Austrian, Serbian and Slovenian guests from different civil society organizations presented their activities (Herbert Langthaler from asylcoordination austria, Jana Stojanovic, Asylum Protection Center, Serbia, Urša Regvar from Legal-informational Centre for Nongovernmental Organizations, Slovenia).

There was a consensus that the assistance of NGOs was indispensable in dealing with the crisis and that many governments were not prepared for the emerging migration crisis.

In the afternoon, the participants discussed some strategic issues: the role of development in mitigation of migration, the expected trends and processes. In connection with this, the majority were pessimistic, and although they did not report a wave similar to 2015, they agreed that the migration pressure towards Europe would be maintained.

### **Event 9: Final Conference, Vienna, Austria**

**Participation:** The event involved 84 citizens, including

- 51 participants from the city of Vienna and regions (Austria),
- 2 participants from the city of Berlin (Germany),
- 5 participants from the city of Belgrade (Serbia),
- 6 participants from the city of Skopje (Macedonia),
- 4 participants from the city of Athens (Greece),
- 4 participants from the city of Zagreb (Croatia),
- 6 participants from the city of Ljubljana (Slovenia),
- 2 participants from the city of Moscow (Russia),
- 2 participants from the city of Trieste (Italy),
- 1 participant from the city of Budapest (Hungary),
- 1 participant from the city of Brussels (Belgium).

**Location / Dates:** The event took place in **Vienna, Austria**, from 02.10.2017 to 03.10.2017

#### **Short description:**

The final conference (Vienna Conference) was organized on the 2nd and 3rd of October in order to bring findings, outcomes and experiences together. This report will focus on the happenings as well as findings gathered during the Balkan Trail Conference, held at Europahaus Wien. The Balkan Refugee Trail Conference was structured into Key Note Speeches, a Press Meeting, Panel Discussions, Interactive Workshops, Artistic Interventions and an Art Exhibition.

### **Agenda “Vienna Conference”**

#### **Monday, October 2<sup>nd</sup> 2017**

- **Opening Speeches**
  - Gerhard Moßhammer, Director of Interkulturelles Zentrum, Austria
  - Franjo Steiner, Project Coordinator, Interkulturelles Zentrum, Austria
  - Herbert Langthaler, asylkoordination österreich, Austria
  - Marianna Fragkou, Greek Council for Refugees, Greece
  - Anna-Laura Schreilechner, Interkulturelles Zentrum, Austria
- **Key Note Speech: European Refugee Policy & Solidarity**
  - Hannes Swoboda, Former Austrian Delegate in the European Parliament
  - Comment: Jasmin Redjepi, President of Legis, Macedonia
- **Press Meeting**
  - Karl Kopp (Pro Asyl, Germany), Arye Wachsmuth (Artist and Activist, Vienna), Radoš Djurović (Asylum Protection Center, Serbia), Danai Leivada (Greek Council for Refugees), Herbert Langthaler (asylkoordination österreich), Franjo Steiner (Interkulturelles Zentrum)
- **Artistic Intervention I**
  - Artists: Johanna Folkmann, Rosie Benn, Magdalena Kovačić, Julian Schellauf, Enrico Tomassini in cooperation with “The Ground Tour Project”, Milly Reid
  - Creative Processing: Tatia Skhirtladze
- **Panel Discussion I: Solidarity as functional force of democracy (visions)**
  - Christoph Reinprecht, University of Vienna, Austria
  - Vedran Džihic, Austrian Institute for International Affairs
  - Julija Kranjec, CMS, Croatia
  - Ana Kalin, University Ljubljana, Slovenia
  - Moderation: Andjelka Pantović, Asylum Protection Center, Serbia

- **Key Note Speech: Refugee Routes and Borders – A Common European Perspective**
  - Radoš Djurović, Executive Director, Asylum Protection Center, Serbia
  - Comment: Victor Marsai, Philosopher, Hungary (unfortunately cancelled last-minute) – replaced by: Stefano Volpicelli, Italian Consortio for Solidarity (ICS) and Karl Kopp, Pro Asyl
- **Artistic Intervention II – Enrico Tomassini** in cooperation with the “Ground Tour Project”
- **Panel Discussion II: Civil Society – Impact and Scope of Action**
  - Ursula Struppe, Department for Diversity and Integration, Austria, Gerhild Salzer, Diakonie Flüchtlingsdienst, Austria, Stefano Volpicelli, Italian Consortio of Solidarity (ICS) Ufficio Rifugati, Italy, Miha Nabergoj, PIC-Legal information center for non-governmental organizations, Driton Mailqi, Legis, Macedonia, Karl Kopp, Pro Asyl, Germany
  - Moderation: Maria Skiada, GCR Social Unit, Greece
- **Workshops**
  - WS 1: Transnational Solidarity Asset and drawbacks  
Moderation: Herbert Langthaler, asylkoordination österreich, Austria
  - WS 2: Good practices / Lessons learned  
Moderation: Mareike Spilger-Karagöz, Caritas Bildungszentrum Vienna, Austria
- **Exhibition: Collections of Artists from Macedonia, Croatia & Serbia**
  - Opening: Robert Atanasovski, Macedonia
  - Presentation of ‘We want to love you art’ by Davor Konjikusic (Croatia), ‘We, You, They’ by Milena Apostolovic (Macedonia), A well-chosen collection of a photography series by Robert Atanasovski (Macedonia), ‘Each of us has a story’ by Nemanja Krstić (Serbia), a series of photography creating during many encounters with asylum seekers in Serbia by Ana Melentijevic (Serbia),

**Tuesday, October 3<sup>rd</sup> 2017**

- **Artistic Intervention III by Magdalena Kovacic & Julian Schöllauf – ‘Others**
- **Key Note Speech: Reform of the Common European Asylum System – Risks and Challenges in the current Reform Negotiations**
  - Kris Pollet, European Council for Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), Belgium
  - Comment: Miha Nabergoj, Legal information center for non-governmental
- **Artistic Intervention by Milly Reid – After The Stand**
- **Panel Discussion III: Common European Asylum System Revised – Challenges and Imperatives**
  - Christoph Pinter, UNHCR, Austria
  - Anny Knapp, asylkoordination österreich, Austria
  - Vanja Bakalovic, CPS, Zagreb, Croatia
  - Victor Nagy (cancelled)
  - Katharina Bervar-Sternad, PIC-Legal information center for non-governmental organizations, Slovenia,
  - Suad Missini, Macedonia
  - Moderation: Jasmina Golubovska, Legis, Macedonia
- **Key Note Speech: Public Awareness / Opinion and impact of the media**
  - Adelheid Wölfl, Der Standard, Austria
  - Comment: Hajo Boomgaarden, Department of Communication, University of Vienna, Austria (cancelled)
- **Panel Discussion IV: Public Awareness / Opinion and the impact of Media**
  - Adelheid Wölfl, Der Standard, Austria, Ivana Perić, Journalist, Croatia, Uroš Škerl Kramberger, Dnevnik, Slovenia, Peter Tchet, Freelance journalist, Hungary, Vojkan Kostić, BETA media agency, Serbia
  - Moderation: Marijana Hameršak, Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research, Croatia
- **Workshops**
  - **WS 1: Public intervention and media** (Civil Society initiatives portrayed in the media – challenges and approaches)  
Moderation: Danai Leivada, GCR Media Officer, Greece
- **WS 2: Art intervention and public attention**

- Input: Arye Wachsmuth - “A small chronology: bearing witness and aid work as a form of an occupy opposition”
- Moderation: Arye Wachsmuth, Vienna / Röske-Idomeni-Lesbos-Beograd
- **WS 3: Interactive WS approach – CHOSEN TOPIC: Recreational and Language Training Activities**
  - Input: Gerasim Dimitrov, Deutsch ohne Grenzen
- **Conference Closing, Final Comments**

### **Conclusion**

The transnational project ‘Balkan Refugee Trail – A Pathway for European Solidarity’ included and benefitted a large number of people – project partners, experts from theory and practice, conference audiences (local events as well as final BRT Conference), involved artists and civil society initiative representatives. The final conference served as time and space for post- and pre-processing, reflecting on the past, present and future, for networking and strengthening cooperation and solidarity among various institutions, organizations and individuals.

Two productive days were solely aimed at bringing people from different backgrounds together in order to share their insights, findings and experiences in order to be able to create networks, approaches and management and coordination plans for the future. A unique asset to the discussions amongst theoreticians, civil society representatives, social workers, volunteers, activists, interested civilians, media representatives etc. was the involvement of artistic perspectives, shedding light on spots which often left in the dark – namely emotions as well as philosophically abstract concepts.

For the detailed description of the Conference results please see the attached “**Conference Report\_BRT - A Pathway for European Solidarity\_2. 3.October 2017**”.