

The total cost for hosting the asylum seekers from WB5 in the EU countries should be reallocated into productive investment.

Decreasing the number of asylum seekers in the EU is becoming one of the top priorities on the policy agenda of the Western countries. Merkel's plan "to reduce the number of Balkan asylum seekers from 40% to almost zero"¹ have implications for the WB 5 countries, since it requires re-integration of the asylum seekers whose number reached to 79.010 in 2015.² This decision mainly is based as a response to the recent migration crisis with the increased inflow of Syrian refugees. This has a "crowding out" effect for the asylum seekers from WB 5, and is correlated with the policy response by the EU countries.

It is argued that majority of the asylum seekers are Roma³, and such policy of returning them back to their countries might cause a reversal effect on the process of integration of Roma and furthermore deepen the social exclusion. That question aside, two other main challenges also affect the asylum issue of the WB 5 and their re-integration:

Firstly, WB 5 countries fail to provide sustainable long – term solutions for the Roma that gave legitimacy to the people to look for an alternative for better life in the exit out of the country. The perturbing fact for the EU countries is that there is still an increasing

number of asylum applications from the WB 5, with an average increase of 38% for the period 2008 – 2015. This trend demonstrates that most of the policies undertaken by the domestic authorities such as: ethnic profiling at the borders, information campaign, stricter control to the travel agencies, which are not efficient and moreover have negative implications for the Roma. On the other side, also, it shows that the numbers of asylum applications are rigid on the policy measures taken by the Western countries such as shortening the period of responding to the applicants, reduced cash benefits provided during the procedure to stop the inflow of Roma.

Secondly, the migration of Roma into EU countries contributes to advance the Anti – Gypsyism phenomenon, which perpetuated with the negative media coverage, raise the popularity of the ring-wing parties and increase their electorate power. It is not surprising the fact that the public opinion and statements of some of the EU politicians compare the situation of the migrants with the Roma, articulating that countries are unduly burdened by its Roma population.⁴

As such, the increased number of Roma asylum seekers itself represents a problem to the EU and WB 5 countries, and moreover returning them back in the domestic countries regress their integration.

This Policy Brief provides policy recommendations aimed to confirm that temporary and/or permanent systems of re-integration for Roma asylum seekers in the WB 5 countries work effectively.

¹ Mohdin, A. (2015, December 14). Angela Merkel wants to deport migrants, with a "friendly face". Retrieved May 01, 2016, from <http://qz.com/572985/angela-merkel-wants-to-deport-migrants-with-a-friendly-face/>

² Eurostat. (2015). First instance decisions on applications by citizenship, age and sex Annual aggregated data (rounded). Retrieved May 02, 2016, from http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/-/migr_asydcfst

³ Roma represent 85-90 % of the Serbian claimants, 50-70 % of the Macedonian, and some of the Bosnian and Montenegrins. See ESI and EASO reports: <http://www.esiweb.org/pdf/New%20facts%20and%20figures%20on%20WB%20asylum%20claims%206%20April%202015.pdf>; http://www.esiweb.org/pdf/esi_document_id_132.pdf; <https://easo.europa.eu/wp-content/uploads/BZ0213708ENC.pdf>

⁴ Cunningham, B. (2015, September 24). Migrants are Central Europe's new Roma. Retrieved May 02, 2016, from <http://www.politico.eu/article/migrants-are-central-europes-new-roma-refugees-viktor-orban-robert-fico/>

1. *Migration of Roma in EU – Challenges and Trends*

1.1 *Factors for Migration of Roma*

The motives for migration from WB 5 can be divided into three categories: ethnic tensions (conflicts) after the breakup of Yugoslavia in 1990, economic factors (privatization) and most recently, the visa liberalization. In this regard, the ethnic conflicts in Bosnia (1992), Kosovo (1998) and Macedonia (2001) had an enormous impact on the migration flow from WB 5, among whom Roma in large groups migrated westwards as refugees. Lately, this migration wave continued as labor mobility to escape from economic hardship in countries in transition. The transitions of the systems have also influenced the Roma people to migrate from WB 5. After the collapse of socialism, many Roma who were unqualified and had little education lost their jobs, and they were not anymore able to compete for jobs.⁵ These reasons pushed them into bigger poverty, and they became the biggest losers of the transition to capitalism. Most recently, the visa liberalization that was granted to WB 5⁶ significantly adds to the Roma migration in the Western Europe, which can be seen by the increased number of asylum applicants.

However, the most important push factor for fleeing the country especially for the Roma people are the unemployment and the poverty they face in their domestic countries. The high percentage of the unemployment rate in WB 5 and the problems accessing the labor market

forced many people to rely solely on social benefits which are also insufficient for decent life. Due to the discrimination, the Roma people face from WB 5 they still have problems with the access to public goods. All these problems are deeply rooted in WB 5 and the governments still have a lack of interest to tackle the issues of Roma people.

1.2 *Trends and implications*

Along with the visa liberalization of WB 5, the number of people that applied for asylum from WB 5 in the period 2008 - 2015 increased by 91%, reaching 375,790 people. As it can be seen from the Infographic (Annex 2), there is an increasing trend in asylum applicants from WB 5, particularly from Macedonia and Albania. On the other side, it can be noticed that the number of positive first instance decisions decreased from 13.1% in 2008 to 2.2% in 2015. Though it can be seen that Albania has the highest number of positive decisions and Macedonia with the lowest number of positive decisions.

The response to the number of asylum applicants increased from WB 5 the European Commission and some of the European countries started to threaten the WB 5 with reintroducing of the visa requirement. For overcoming the situation, the European Commission gave some recommendations to the WB 5 such as information campaigns, investigations of bus companies, strengthening the exit controls and increasing the assistance for the Roma communities. Although the recommendations were implemented by WB 5, they have not worked because of their inappropriateness and ineffectiveness. The

⁵ Trehan, N., & Sigona, N. (2009). *Romani politics in contemporary Europe: Poverty, ethnic mobilization, and the neoliberal order*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

⁶ Visa liberalization to Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro was granted in 2009, while to Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina was granted in 2010.

implementation of the exit controls at the borders have simply worsened the situation of Roma and contributed to ethnic profiling and to

another layer of discrimination

against Roma. These measures were heavily criticized by the Commissioner for Human Rights, Thomas

Hammarberg, who argued that these pressures on preventing people from traveling jeopardize already established human

rights such as the right to leave.⁷ As a consequence, selection was made on the basis of ethnic profiling and targeted just the Roma population. The investigations of bus companies and facilitators of irregular migrations have also turned to be ineffective. Some of the WB 5 have also amended their criminal laws adding provisions to prosecute bus companies and facilitators for transporting “fake” asylum seekers to the EU. Some of the travel companies were closed down and were sanctioned financially, and some managers or employees were even jailed. Transporting people perse with a valid passport cannot be considered illegal. Furthermore, the EU has introduced a new legal provision⁸ allowing the

member states of the EU and the Commission to suspend the free visa regime. Implementing this measure could be wrong because it would

| | Measures | Implications |
|-----|--|---|
| EU | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shortened the duration of the normal asylum procedure • Reorganized their processing and resources to deal with peak flows • Reduced cash benefits provided during the procedure • Strengthened voluntary or forced return programmes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suspension mechanism • Increased Anti-Gypsism • Possible returned around 258,195 people from WB5 in the last years • Increasing trend of asylum applications |
| WB5 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information campaigns • Investigate bus companies and tour operators • Conduct exit controls at the borders • Closely cooperate and exchange information with EU member states | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethnic Profiling • Restricting the freedom of movement • Increased Anti-Gypsyism in the domestic countries |

hinder the accession of the WB 5 to the EU. Another implication that occurred and that Roma people face in the destination, and domestic countries is the media propaganda which contributes to rising the anti gypsyism towards Roma. Whenever Roma migrate from one country to another, they are perceived as a threat which is not a case with other people from other nationalities. This, later on, is helped with the rhetoric of the governments and media propaganda for “gypsy criminality” and as a result, we are witnessing a high number of attacks and deportation of Roma from EU countries. The people from the domestic countries WB 5 also blame their Roma fellow citizens that EU might withdraw the visa liberalization because of them.

⁷ Council of Europe. (2011, November 22). Human rights comment from the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights: "the right of the individual to leave his or her country is an established human right", from <http://www.ein.org.uk/news/coe-right-leave-ones-country-should-be-applied-without-discrimination>

⁸ European Parliament, & Council of European Union. (2013). Amending Council Regulation (EC) No 539/2001 listing the third countries whose nationals must be in possession of visas when crossing the external borders and those whose nationals are exempt from that requirement. Official Journal of the European Union, 347/74-347/80.

2. Policy recommendations

In order to respond to the current issue of returning the asylum seekers and ensure integration of the Roma from WB 5, the Policy Brief offers the following policy recommendations:

Policy Recommendations WB 5

1. Reintegration of the asylum seekers

The WB 5 countries must ensure access to public goods and services to all asylum seekers, with a focus on Roma in the short – run by:

- Housing: The WB 5 must provide social or temporary housing to those returnees with no immediate housing solution, especially for Roma who sold their houses in order to get money for “migration”. Also, support in housing reconstruction should be offered based on the strong participation of the beneficiary in finding a durable solution.
- Education: Schooling assistance program for children who dropped from school by tailored programs including counseling, individual training, and social class activities.
- Health: Returnees that might have suffered from physical or mental health problems upon arrival in their countries of origin might be in need of medical health care. The states should provide them with a free health care for at least one year until they are included in the regular health care system.

2. Implementation of the National Strategy for Roma

In the long run, the WB 5 have to commit to allocating adequate percentage from the budget for the Roma integration, with some specified budget markers for the “populations at risk of poverty”. These budget markers have to be in line with the objective and indicator from the National strategy.

Also, under the IPA funds, a dedicated grant scheme on the returnees and monitoring on the Roma Decade should be incorporated, in order to tackle the issue of migration of Roma.

Policy Recommendations for EU countries

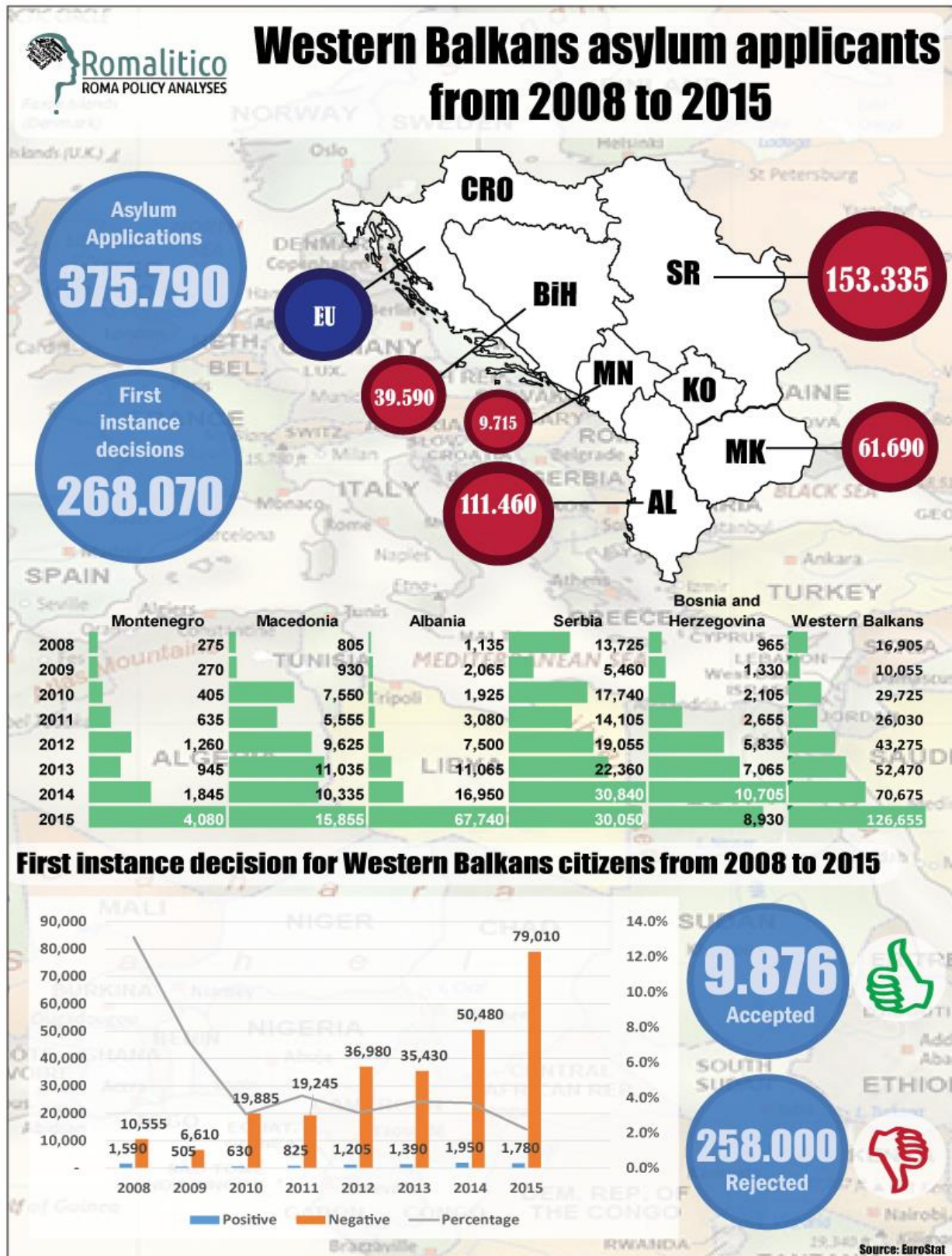
3. Economic reintegration

In the short run, the EU countries must prepare potential returnees for economic reintegration in the host countries while their applications are still processing. In this regard, the rejected asylum seekers should be allowed to work, attend vocational training, computer or language courses to acquire certain skills that will increase their chances to get a job in the domestic country.

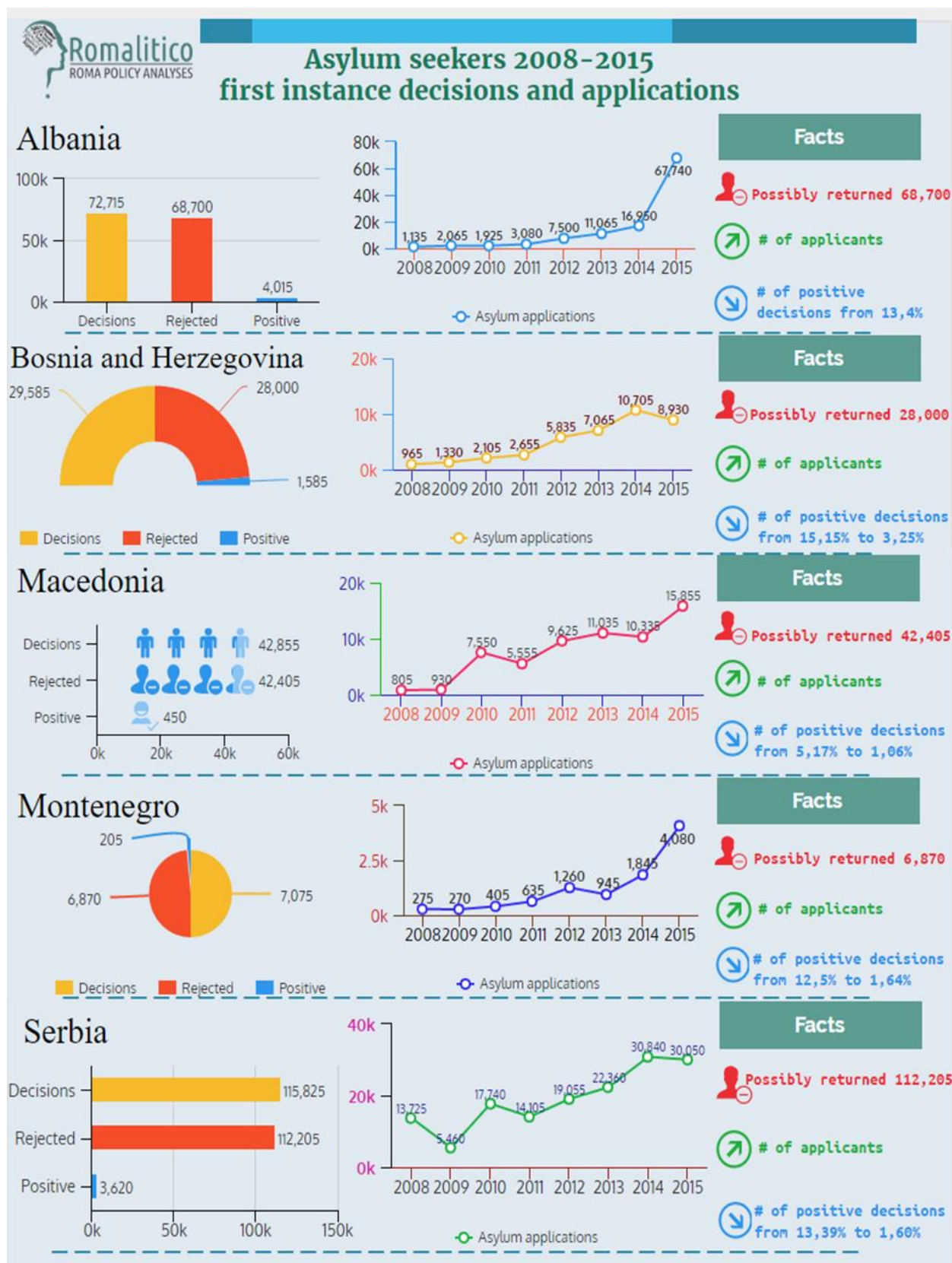
4. Relocation the costs into productive investment

The cost per capita⁹ for hosting the asylum seekers that EU countries spend on the WB 5 applicants should be reallocated into productive investment. Investments in human capital, particularly in support for opening small businesses and education will contribute to the financial security of people. A second possibility is to provide conditional cash transfers, which will support education and job training of the “critical group” with an aim of increasing their employability. The amount of million euros spent on all asylum seekers should not be neglected, which combined with state resources and policies can increase access to all public goods and services (education, health, employment, and housing)

⁹ Accommodation, Monthly allowance, Administration cost, Cost for deportation, Voluntary returning



Annex 2



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10. Accommodation, Monthly allowance, Administration cost, Cost for deportation, Voluntary returning