

Western Balkans Annual Risk Analysis 2012





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List of abbreviations used

BCP	border-crossing point
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
CIRAM	Common Integrated Risk Analysis Model
EU	European Union
EUR	euro
FRAN	Frontex Risk Analysis Network
fYROM	former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
MS	Member State
PIDS	Perimeter Intrusion Detecting System
PVLMM	Post visa-liberalisation monitoring mechanism
RAU	Frontex Risk Analysis Unit
SBP	Serbia's Border Police
THY	Turkish Airlines
UK	United Kingdom
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USD	United States dollar
WB	Western Balkans
WB-ARA	Western Balkans Annual Risk Analysis
WB-RAN	Western Balkans Risk Analysis Network

Executive summary

The geographical position of the Western Balkans, extensive regional trade and good road infrastructure regularly produce large cross-border flows of people and goods.

Regular flow in both directions at the Slovenian-Croatian border, for example, exceeded 47 million persons and 21 million vehicles in 2011. The two numbers represented roughly 6% and 5% increases, respectively, compared to 2010. The Slovenian-Croatian border was also clearly the busiest EU external land border section.

Irregular cross-border flows evolved further during 2011. The evolution was driven by (a) the extension of visa liberalisation to cover biometric passport-holders from Albania and Bosnia-Herzegovina (b) progressively increasing irregular migration pressure at the Greek-Turkish borders and (c) expanding direct air links between the Western Balkans and Turkey.

(a) The extension of the visa liberalisation

By the end of 2010, visa-free travel was extended to biometric passport-holders from Albania and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Unsurprisingly, the new legal option led to a significant reduction in detections of illegal border-crossing at the Greek-Albanian borders (6 472 in 2011, down from 52 700 the year before) and subsequent increases in refusals of entry, as seen already in the case of Serbia one year before. Worryingly, asylum claims from nationals of both Albania and Bosnia-Herzegovina in the EU rose by almost 70% during 2011 compared to 2010.

Despite a 20% decrease in relation to 2010, Serbian nationals continued to be the single

largest visa-exempt nationality claiming asylum in the EU during 2011. Combined, asylum applications from the five visa-exempt Western Balkan nationalities amounted to roughly 95% of all asylum applications submitted by visa-free nationalities in the EU.

(b) Progressively increasing irregular migration pressure at the Greek-Turkish borders

Increasing irregular migration flow at the Greek-Turkish borders continued to have a negative knock-on effect on all Western Balkan countries, as already seen during 2010. Starting from the second part of 2011, the situation further deteriorated. This was in particular the case for Serbia's borders with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, where detections rose more than four times compared to 2010.

Other border sections were experiencing a similar trend. Importantly, contrary to the situation in 2010, the Romanian border with Serbia was increasingly under pressure during the second half of 2011.

In terms of nationalities, with almost 7 400 detections, or 28% of the total, Afghans dominated at the common borders between the Western Balkans and the EU. As in the case of the Greek-Turkish border, they were closely followed by Pakistani nationals (a 25% share).

(c) Expanding direct air links between the Western Balkans and Turkey

Turkey has successfully negotiated free-trade agreements with all Western Balkan countries. The agreements with Montenegro and Serbia were the last to enter into force in 2010. In combination with visa-free



travel with Turkey (all Western Balkan countries including the territory of Kosovo), these agreements helped boost both trade between Turkey and the Western Balkans and regular passenger flows to unprecedented levels.

Turkish regular passenger flow to the Western Balkans increased as a result and with it refusals of Turkish nationals at all regional air borders, particularly in Serbia. Consequently, Turkish nationals remained by far the most refused nationality at regional air borders (63% of the total).

Somewhat connected, Slovenia, Hungary and Croatia reported a significant increase in detected illegal border-crossings of Turkish nationals trying to enter the Schengen area from Croatia or Serbia. Most have arrived legally to the Western Balkans by air.

The main risks

Analysis of both regular and irregular flows (the context) formed the basis for identification of the main risks. The risk assessment was done through examination of three main components of risk: threat, vulnerability and impact. However, vulnerabilities are not discussed in the present report meant for public release.

The risk of secondary movements of non-European irregular migrants from Greece

through the Western Balkans was considered the most elevated because the current mitigating measures remain largely ineffective in terms of deterring new arrivals from Greece.

Worryingly, the attractiveness of travel through the Western Balkans increased during 2011 after it became more difficult to exit Greece by intra-Schengen ferry links to Italy or by air to other Member States.

Outlook

As long as illegal entry to the EU in Greece is perceived as relatively easy, new migrants will continue to arrive from Turkey. A substantial proportion is likely to use the Western Balkan land route to continue to their destination EU Member States.

Importantly, Croatia's EU membership (1 July 2013) will probably not impact the composition or the size of the transiting flow through the Western Balkan region, despite Croatia's long sea borders in the Adriatic Sea.

On the other hand, should both Bulgaria and Romania join the Schengen area (not likely before 2013), Greece will no longer be a Schengen exclave. This would create new travel options for both migrants staying illegally in Greece and new arrivals from Turkey. Consequently, a general bypassing of the Western Balkans route could be the result.

1. Introduction

As was the case with the previous two issues, this third edition of the Western Balkans Annual Risk Analysis (WB-ARA) 2012 has been prepared by the Frontex Risk Analysis Unit (RAU) in cooperation with the competent border-control authorities of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia.

The joint analytical activity is an integral part of the Frontex-led Western Balkan Risk Analysis Network (WB-RAN) in which all the mentioned Western Balkan countries actively participate.

The WB-ARA 2012 primarily assesses the situation at the common borders between Western Balkan countries and neighbouring EU Member States. Given the current scope

of regular information exchange in the context of WB-RAN and Frontex Risk Analysis Network (FRAN), the WB-ARA 2012 analysis is structured around the following elements: (1) a description of the situation at common borders; (2) identification of the main risks, impacting both the area of the Western Balkans and Member States; and (3) the outlook.

The statistical annex of the WB-ARA 2012 includes summary tables, describing the six key indicators of irregular migration in detail. In addition, several specific tables are included.

The Frontex Risk Analysis Unit would like to thank EU Member States, Schengen Associated Countries and WB-RAN participants for their active involvement throughout 2011 and valuable input provided during the WB-RAN expert meeting on 14 March 2012.



2. Methodology

2.1. Data collection plan

* The Common Integrated Risk Analysis Model (CIRAM) was originally developed in 2002 by a European Council Expert Group, and resulted in the Helsinki Risk Analysis Centre being established and tasked with compiling joint risk assessments at the European level. A key development in the current CIRAM update is the adoption of a management approach to risk analysis that defines risk as a function of threat, vulnerability and impact. Such an approach endeavours to reflect the spirit of the Schengen Borders Code and the Frontex Regulation, both of which emphasise risk analysis as a key tool in ensuring the optimal allocation of resources within constraints of budget, staff and efficiency of equipment.

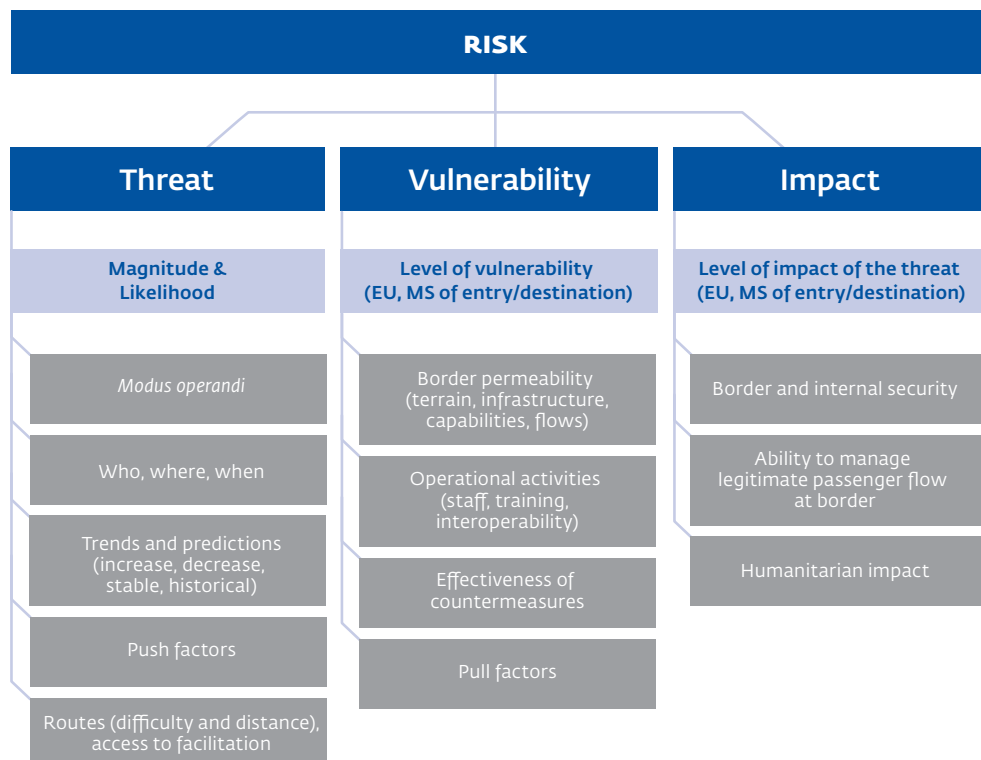
The core of this analysis are the Western Balkan and neighbouring EU countries monthly statistical data (only common borders) covering 2011. The six key indicators of irregular migration considered are: (1) detections of illegal border-crossing, (2) detections of facilitators, (3) detections of illegal stay, (4) refusals of entry, (5) asylum applications and (6) detections of false documents.

In addition, the 2012 issue of WB-ARA introduces the notion of risk as defined by the

updated Common Integrated Risk Analysis Model (CIRAM*, see Fig. 1).

Other sources were used, in particular, bi-monthly and quarterly analytical reports of both Member States and WB-RAN countries, FRAN and WB-RAN Quarterlies, several Tailored Risk Analyses produced in 2011, Frontex reporting in the context of the post-visa-liberalisation monitoring mechanism and Frontex reporting from different Joint Operations coordinated by Frontex.

Figure 1. The Common Integrated Risk Analysis Model (CIRAM)



Additional sources of information were also effectively exploited. Among others, these sources included reports issued by government agencies, EU institutions and international or non-governmental organisations.

2.2. Quality of available data

Consistent with other law-enforcement indicators, variation in administrative data related to border control depends on several factors. The number of detections of illegal border-crossing and refusals of entry are both functions of the amount of effort spent detecting migrants and the flow of irregular migrants. For example, increased detections of illegal border-crossing might be due to an actual increase in the flow of irregular migrants, or they may in fact be an outcome of more resources made available to detect migrants. In exceptional cases, an influx of resources may produce an increase in reported detections while effectively masking the actual decrease in the flow of migrants resulting from the increased deterrent effect.

2.3. Application of the Common Integrated Risk Analysis Model (CIRAM)

A key development in the CIRAM update released in 2011 is the adoption of a management approach to risk analysis that defines risk as a function of threat, vulnerability and impact. Such an approach endeavours to emphasise risk analysis as a key tool in ensuring the optimal allocation of resources within constraints of budget, staff and efficiency of equipment.

According to the model, a 'threat' is a force or pressure acting upon the external borders that is characterised by both its magnitude and likelihood; 'vulnerability' is defined as the capacity of a system to mitigate the threat and 'impact' is determined as the potential consequences of the threat. In this way, the structured and systematic breakdown of risk is presented in the risk assessment and outlook chapters. It should be noted, however, that the present report meant for public release does not discuss vulnerabilities.



3. Situation at the common and regional borders – the context

Table 1. **Overview of indicators**

As reported by WB-RAN Members

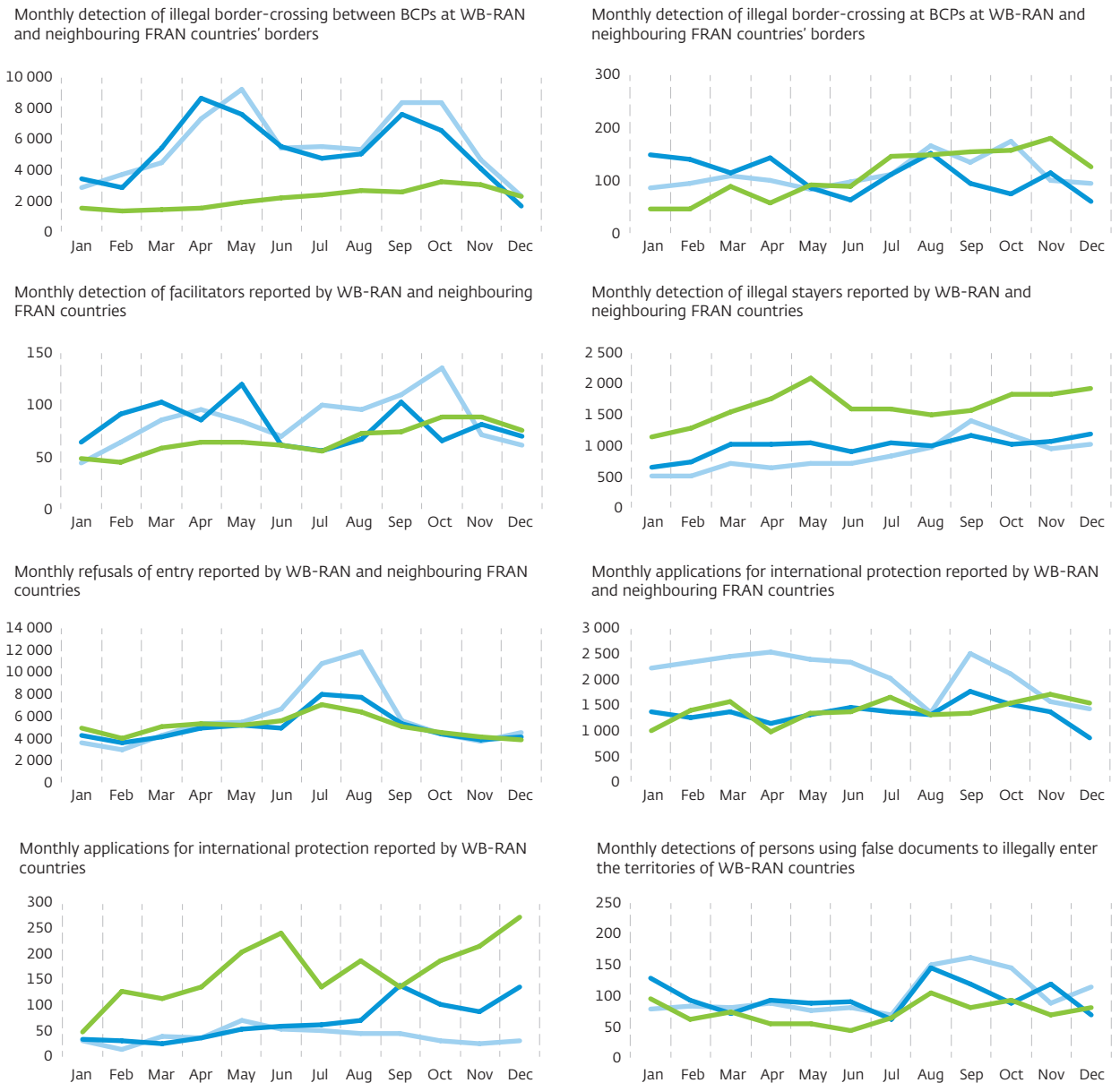
WB-RAN indicator	2009	2010	2011	% change on previous year
Illegal border-crossing between BCPs	67 519	62 965	26 238	-58
Clandestine entries at BCPs	1 376	1 325	1 421	7.2
Facilitators	1 015	966	796	-18
Illegal stay	10 162*	11 916*	19 614	<i>n.a.</i>
Refusals of entry	69 382	60 353	61 181	1.4
Asylum applications**	25 241	16 075	16 681	3.8
False travel-document users	1 215	1 164	879	-24

* Total does not include detections from Greece

** Applications for asylum for EU Member States include all applications received in the territory of the Member States, not limited to claims made at the Western Balkan borders.

Source: WB-RAN and FRAN data as of 12 March 2012.

Figure 2. WB-RAN and FRAN indicators – common borders



Source: WB-RAN and FRAN data as of 12 March 2012



Figure 3. General map of the Western Balkans region

3.1. Border controls

Regular passenger flows at land borders

The Western Balkans has traditionally been a region with high volumes of regular cross-border movements, driven by tourism, regional trade and extensive commercial links between Western and South-Eastern Europe. In this context, the border sections on the Pan-European Corridor X regularly report significant numbers of regular passengers and cross-border trading volumes. The Corridor runs between Salzburg in Austria and Thessaloniki in Greece and passes through Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

As shown in Figure 4*, the border section between Croatia and Slovenia is by far the busi-

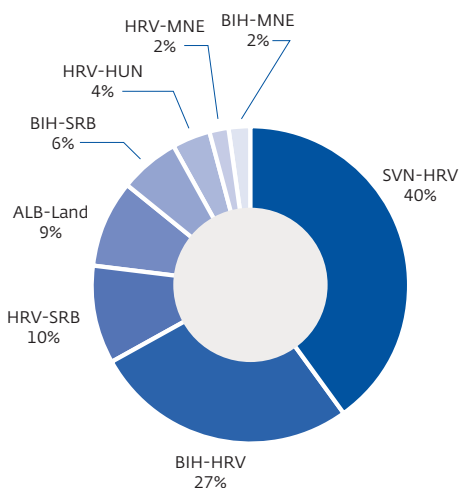
iest, both in terms of the regular passenger flow and the flow of goods. In fact, there were more than 24 million entries from Croatia to Slovenia during 2011. In total, the passenger flow in both directions surpassed 47 million persons and almost 22 million vehicles. The two numbers represented roughly 6% and 5% increase, respectively, compared to 2010.

Regular passenger flows in the Western Balkan region tend to follow quite pronounced seasonality with summer highs and winter lows. The differences are significant given that July-August peaks can be up to four times higher compared to the January-February lows. This observation is particularly important in the case of Slovenia's border with Croatia, where monthly crossings (entry/exit) can exceed seven million passengers. The optimal mobilisation of resources

* Data is not available for all border sections

Figure 4. Annual comparison between different border sections shows that Slovenian-Croatian border remains the busiest border section and the main transport (entry and exit) point between the EU and the Western Balkans

Shares of cross-border passenger flow at border sections for which data are available.



Source: WB-RAN data as of 15 March 2012, Statistical Office of Slovenia (SORS)

Figure 5. Obrezje-Bregana is the busiest BCP between Slovenia and Croatia. It handled more than 15% of all cross-border traffic in 2011 at the Slovenian-Croatian border (7.5 million passengers and almost 3.3 million vehicles). There are 47 BCPs at this border section; however, half of the annual traffic between Slovenia and Croatia goes through four BCPs – Obrezje, Gruskovje, Jelsane and Dragonja



Source: Slovenian Border Police



is therefore the key to avoiding undue waiting times for bona fide travellers.

Composition of regular passenger flows

When planning resources for border checks a sound understanding of the composition of the regular flows at a given border is quite important. In the case of the Western Balkans and neighbouring EU Member States, most regular passengers at the regional or the common borders are either EU nationals or come from the region itself.

Given the visa liberalisation process and the fact that the Western Balkan countries all have bilateral visa-free arrangements in place, a vast majority of passengers during 2011 did not need a visa to cross the borders. The only notable exceptions from this general rule were nationals of Turkey, persons arriving from the territory of Kosovo and Ukrainians.

Looking specifically at the border between Slovenia and Croatia, slightly more than 13.5 million persons that entered the EU from Croatia during 2011 (or 57% of the total entries) did so in vehicles with EU licence plates, and were therefore assumed to be EU nationals. The rest of the passengers were most probably composed of nationals of Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey (often *en route* towards Germany).

The available data for other border sections is not as precise; however, underlying assumptions about the composition of the regular passenger flows at Slovenian-Croatian border are as equally valid for most other regional border sections.

Vehicle traffic and trading volumes

More detailed cross-border traffic data is only available for the Slovenian-Croatian border,

therefore, this border section is analysed in more depth. Altogether, roughly 11 million vehicles entered the EU at Slovenia's borders with Croatia during 2011. A vast majority consisted of passenger cars (93%) and the rest were so-called goods vehicles (lorries and vans).

During August 2011, BCP Gruskovje-Macelj reported more than 300 000 vehicle entries to Slovenia. This represented an average of 400 cars per hour, the highest monthly figure recorded for any BCP during 2011.

Unsurprisingly, the average rate of refusals of entry measured against the passenger flow decreased from one refusal per 1 800 passengers during March 2011 to one refusal per 4 500 passengers during the summer peak month. This in turn indicates that the increases of regular flows were mostly due to bona fide travellers (tourists).

In addition to the significant flow of passenger vehicles, more than 797 000 lorries and vans crossed from Croatia into Slovenia during 2011, transporting roughly 8.5 million tonnes of goods. On average, the relevant authorities of Slovenia and Croatia checked almost 4 200 such vehicles each day in both directions. While similar data is not available for all external borders of the EU, it is clear that the numbers at Slovenian border with Croatia are very high by any comparison.

Somewhat interestingly, while the numbers of lorries and vans entering Slovenia during 2011 increased by a marginal 2% compared to 2010, Slovenian and Croatian authorities detected 53% more irregular migrants hiding in vehicles. The increase was driven by Afghan migrants *en route* from Greece to other Member States. The detections (202) were, however, still largely negligible compared to the number of lorries and vans crossing the border (an average rate of one detection per 4 000 vehicles).

Table 2. Slovenia: cross-border traffic of vehicles, passengers and goods at the border between Slovenia and Croatia is significant and increased during 2011

	Cross-border flow					Percentage change	
	Oct-11	Nov-11	Dec-11	2011 Q4	Total 2011	2011 Q4 on Q3	2011 on 2010
Vehicles (1 000s)							
entries	819	692	613	2 124	11 048	4.0	4.8
passenger vehicles	750	622	556	1 928	10 251	4.6	5.1
of which from the EU	179	137	115	431	2 891	9.6	4.0
goods vehicles	69	70	57	195	797	-1.4	1.7
of which from the EU	8	8	6	22	94	-6.3	-0.5
departures	802	618	705	2 125	10 751	2.8	4.7
passenger vehicles	736	553	646	1 934	9 992	3.0	4.8
of which from the EU	172	116	144	433	2 782	8.6	3.7
goods vehicles	67	65	59	190	758	0.6	3.3
of which from the EU	9	8	8	25	98	3.9	4.0
Passengers (1 000s)							
entries	1 860	1 448	1 310	4 618	24 324	7.5	6.0
in vehicles with Slovenian registration	465	377	343	1 186	6 207	8.3	9.0
in vehicles with foreign registration	1 394	1 071	967	3 432	18 117	7.3	5.0
of which from the EU	510	341	278	1 129	7 313	15	4.8
departures	1 846	1 257	1 517	4 620	23 441	6.4	6.2
in vehicles with Slovenian registration	501	341	387	1 229	6 117	13	10
in vehicles with foreign registration	1 345	916	1 131	3 391	17 324	4.3	4.9
of which from the EU	473	280	353	1 106	6 924	7.3	3.8
Goods (tonnes)*							
inbound	751	767	585	2 103	8 469	-0.6	3.4
outbound	781	737	680	2 198	8 879	-0.1	4.2

* Transit is included

Source: Statistical Office of Slovenia (SORS)

Passenger flows at air borders

The numbers of regular passengers at regional air borders are by and large significantly smaller compared to land borders. In the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina for example, the share of air borders in overall border-crossings (entry/exit) stood at 1.6% of the total number of passengers during 2011 (641 000 passengers). In the case of Croatia, just over 3% of all border-crossings occurred at its air borders.

The only notable exception from this rule is Albania, largely due to its geographical posi-

tion, extensive maritime links with Italy and lower quality of road infrastructure connections with the rest of the region. There, air borders accounted for 14% of all crossings during 2011. An additional 9% or 1.2 million were due to maritime ferry connections between Albania and Italy (see Fig. 6).

Composition of the flow at the regional air borders mirrors somewhat the flow at the land borders. It is therefore mostly composed of EU nationals and passengers from the region itself. One notable difference are Turkish nationals whose estimated shares in the total are much higher compared to their shares



at land borders. In the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the share of Turkish nationals at its air borders during 2011 was almost 14%. More details about the flow of Turkish nationals are provided further in the analysis.

3.2. Irregular migration

During 2011, the irregular migration pressure at the common borders between the Western Balkan countries and neighbouring EU Member States evolved further compared to 2010. The evolution was driven by: (a) the extension of the visa liberalisation to cover biometric passport-holders from Albania and Bosnia-Herzegovina; (b) progressively increasing irregular migration pressure at the Greek-Turkish borders; and (c) expanding direct air links between the Western Balkans and Turkey.

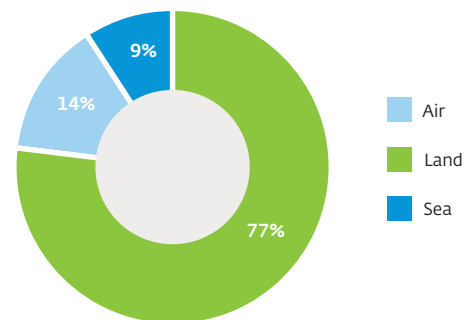
As shown in the overview map, all three developments impacted most of the indicators used to measure the magnitude of the main regional border security threats. Detections of illegal border-crossing, refusals of entry, illegal stay and asylum applications have been in the forefront, both in terms of the overall numbers, trends and affected border sections. Changes in other indicators were less directly affected by the three processes and/or were different in scale.

The extension of the visa liberalisation

Visa liberalisation occurred in two subsequent stages, the first one at the end of 2009 (Serbia, Montenegro, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) and the second one at the end of 2010 (Albania and Bosnia-Herzegovina).

By the beginning of 2011, visa-free travel was thus extended to a region with almost 21 million inhabitants. As stated earlier, the decisions to lift visa obligations for biometric passport holders from the five Western Bal-

Figure 6. Regular passenger flows in Albania, percentage shares by border type in 2011



Source: Albanian Border Police

kan countries impacted a wide range of indicators used to monitor irregular migratory flows in the Western Balkans.

The four factors linking together the relevant changes in all indicators during 2010 and 2011 were: (1) reduction of costs, both financial and in terms of time or planning needed, associated with travelling to the EU; (2) opening-up of legal travel channels to previously non-eligible specific marginal groups; (3) significant reduction in local demand for smuggling/facilitation services (e.g. false travel and 'breeder'* documents, clandestine entry); and (4) expanded choice of available travel methods and entry points.

While cost reductions were mostly benefiting bona fide travellers, they also expanded available entry options for groups previously considered as irregular migration risk by the consular authorities of Member States. Namely, before visa-free travel, these groups were either not travelling to the EU or used illegal methods to do so. In the case of Albanian circular migration towards Greece, the main *modus operandi* used prior to visa liberalisation was simple illegal border-crossing.

Unsurprisingly, the new legal option led to a significant reduction in illegal border-crossings at the Greek-Albanian borders (6 472

* Different documents used to generate successive instances of fraudulent documentation, genuine Schengen visas in this case. Breeder documents include (inter alia) driver's licences, birth certificates, employment certificates, bank statements, invitation letters, hotel reservations and student enrolment-documents.

in 2011, down from 52 700 the year before) and subsequent increases of refusals of entry given that the vetting of travellers was de facto displaced from consulates of Member States to the external border of the EU.

These trends, however, should not be interpreted as a reduction of Albanian circular

labour migration to Greece. Reports suggest that Albanians are still circular migrants to Greece, but that this flow is now routed through land BCPs. In addition, the new legal travel channel has provided more opportunities for would-be labour migrants from Albania to diversify their destination choices away from Greece and Italy.

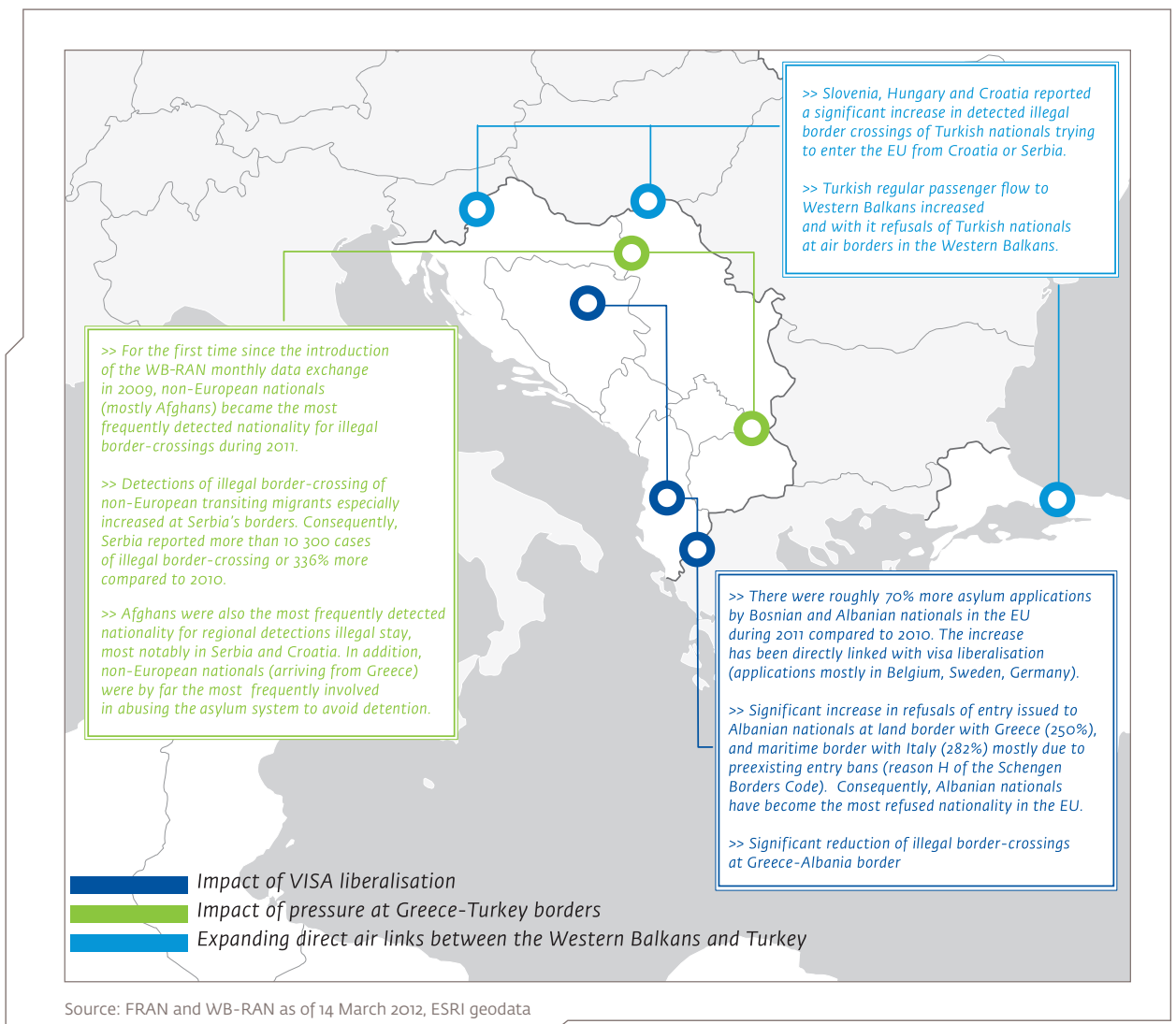


Figure 7. Overview map describing the main drivers of the changes seen in FRAN and WB-RAN indicators of irregular migration during 2011



Figure 8. Annual detections at Greek-Turkish border (sea and land) and subsequently *en route* from Greece to other Member States through the Western Balkans (both sides of the border)

The reduction in illegal border-crossings has allowed Albanian border-control authorities to refocus some of their surveillance efforts on other cross-border criminal activities, resulting in significantly increased cannabis seizures.

In conclusion, increasing numbers of largely unfounded asylum applications in several EU Member States have been by far the most noticeable and publicised consequence of visa liberalisation. This abuse started in 2010 and has continued throughout 2011, although at lower levels. Worryingly, asylum claims from nationals of both Albania and Bosnia-Herze-

govina rose by almost 70% during 2011 compared to 2010.

Increasing irregular migration pressure at the Greek-Turkish borders

Detections of illegal border-crossing at Greek-Turkish land borders have increased by 14% during 2011 compared to 2010 and have peaked at 54 340. This in turn meant that eight out of ten detections of illegal border-crossing at external land borders of the EU during 2011 occurred in at Greek-Turkish land border.

In previous years, the detections at this border followed a remarkably seasonal pattern, invariably peaking in the third quarter. During 2011, however, the peak was reached during the last three months of the year when almost 20 000 migrants, or 22% more compared to the same quarter in 2010, crossed illegally from Turkey to Greece. An important increase in detections, particularly in October 2011, contributed to this development. The border section between Greece and Turkey thus became (by the end of 2011) the only section of the external borders of the EU where the flow was both high in volume and sustained for a prolonged period of time.

The six most commonly detected nationalities at Greek borders with Turkey were from Asia (Afghan, Pakistani, Bangladeshi) and Africa (Algerian, Moroccan and Congolese).

The number one nationality most commonly detected at the external land borders of the EU was Afghan migrants, representing 16% of the EU total in 2011. Detections of migrants from Pakistan increased massively (276%) compared to the previous year to reach almost 15 400 detections (95% detections occurred in Greece). Important increases were also reported for Moroccans (from 1 200 to 1 900 or 62%), Bangladeshi (from 1 460 to 3 500 or 140%) and Syrian (from 345 to 969 or 180%) migrants.

The most significant percentage increase was associated with Congolese migrants whose detections increased to almost 1 800 in 2011, up from only 96 during 2010. This was most probably a result of better screening of migrants which led to a reduction in nationality swapping (many Congolese were declaring themselves as Somali in 2010).

Knock-on effect on the Western Balkans route

These worsening developments continued to have a negative knock-on effect on detections of transiting migrants in all WB-RAN countries, as already seen during 2010. However, starting from the second part of 2011, the situation deteriorated further (see Fig. 8).

More precisely, the border between the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia became the top-ranking section in the Western Balkans for the first time since the establishment of the WB-RAN monthly statistical data exchange in 2009. The detections there were more than four times higher compared to 2010 and were largely following the same seasonal pattern as detections at the Greek-Turkish borders.

This increase resulted from the combination of increasing flows and more efforts undertaken by the Serbian authorities to detect migrants at their green borders. Consequently, Serbia's 2011 share in the region's overall total for illegal border-crossing rose to a massive 40%, up from just 3% during 2010.

Other border sections were experiencing a similar trend given that migrants were able to continue their transit towards Hungary or Slovenia.

Importantly, contrary to the situation in 2010, the Romanian border with Serbia became increasingly targeted during the second half of 2011 with detections on both sides increasing from only 49 to more than 2 000 during 2011.

In terms of nationalities, with 28% of the total, Afghans dominated at common borders. As in the case of Greek-Turkish border, they were closely followed by Pakistani nationals (a 25% share). Detections of both have increased compared to 2010 by massive amounts (195% and 1550%, respectively). The number of Ara-



Figure 9. Average number of flights per week from Istanbul to Western Balkans airports (based on flight schedules of Turkish Airlines, Pegasus and Balkan national air companies)

bic-speaking migrants also increased significantly compared to 2010, thus indicating that the Western Balkans transit route gained in popularity among migrants having arrived in Greece from Turkey.

The described trends at the common green borders were mirrored in detections of illegal border-crossing at BCPs (at lower levels), which mostly indicate attempts to cross the border while hiding in vehicles. Namely, Serbia's share in the regional total was even higher than along the green borders (51%). Trend-wise, Serbia reported a 71% increase compared to 2011, due almost entirely to detections of Afghans hiding in vehicles at

border sections with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Hungary and Croatia. The latter two and Slovenia also reported significant increases compared to 2010 providing thus an additional indication of a possible changes in the *modus operandi* used by a proportion of transiting migrants from Greece.

Finally, Afghans, Moroccans and Algerians, all arriving from Greece, were by far the most frequent to use the asylum application as a method to avoid detention and continue towards destination EU Member States. Compared to 2010, asylum applications rose especially in Croatia (from 286 to 798, or 179%), the former Yugoslav Repub-

lic of Macedonia (from 162 to 646, or 299%) and Montenegro (from 10 to 237, or 2 270%).

Expanding direct air links between the Western Balkans and Turkey

The Western Balkans has historically been a region with a strong Turkish economic and political presence. Turkey has successfully negotiated free-trade agreements with all Western Balkan countries. The agreements with Montenegro and Serbia were the last to enter into force in 2010. Combined with visa-free travel (all Western Balkan countries including the territory of Kosovo), these agreements helped boost both trade between Turkey and the Western Balkans and regular passenger flows to unprecedented levels.

The air transportation sector in the Western Balkans has particularly attracted Turkish attention in the recent period. There are currently around 67 weekly direct flights – up from 48 in 2010 – connecting Turkey to Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia (including Kosovo), and operated mostly by Turkish Airlines (THY). Turkish regular passenger flow increased as a result and with it refusals of Turkish nationals at all air borders in the Western Balkans.

Somewhat connected, Slovenia and Hungary reported a significant increase in detections illegal border-crossing of Turkish nationals trying to enter the Schengen area from Croatia or Serbia. Most have arrived in the Western Balkans by air.



4. Risk assessment



Frontex risk assessment is guided by the CIRAM working definition of risk as a function of three main components: threat, vulnerability and impact. A systematic examination of each component allows for classification of risks in categories of significance.

Establishing a general context in which border authorities from the Western Balkans and the neighbouring EU Member States operated during 2011, is therefore important for identifying the main border security risks.

To narrow down the selection, a detailed analysis of the available monthly statistical data (both FRAN and WB-RAN), Frontex operational data, bi-monthly or quarterly analytical reports and previous WB-RAN annual risk analyses was performed. The following four main risks should be considered (in order of importance):

1. Risk of large and sustained secondary movements from Greece through the Western Balkans;
2. Risk of large and sustained misuse of international protection system in EU Member States by nationals from the five visa-exempt Western Balkan countries;
3. Risk of abuse of international protection system in the Western Balkans to avoid detention and frustrate return procedures;
4. Risk of facilitated irregular migration from Turkey through the Western Balkans towards the EU.

Each identified risk is accompanied with a description of the threat and impact. As this report is meant for public release, vulnerabilities are not discussed here. A summary risk table at the beginning is added allowing for a rapid understanding of the issues at stake.

4.1. Risk of large and sustained secondary movements from Greece through the Western Balkans

Table 3. Summary Risk Table

Risk name	Risk of large and sustained secondary movements from Greece through the Western Balkans
Threat	Large and sustained irregular border-crossings of non-European irregular migrants from Greece through the Western Balkans – secondary movements
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocation of technical resources and surveillance equipment • Internal security of some Western Balkan countries and EU Member States • Humanitarian situation
Main border sections	Serbia-regional, Serbia-EU, Croatia-EU, Albania-EU

4.1.1. Description of the threat

Greece is typically not considered as the final destination for irregular migrants that enter the EU through Greek-Turkish borders. Most plan to travel to other Member States, either immediately or after sufficient means are raised to finance their onward journey. In essence, migrants have three main options to exit Greece and reach other Member States: (a) by air on an intra-Schengen flight, (b) by sea on an intra-Schengen ferry to Italy or (c) by land, either through the Western Balkans or Bulgaria.

The advantages of options A and B are direct routing and speed; however if detected, irregular migrants risk being returned to Greece and can therefore lose their financial investment made for purchasing of false travel documents, tickets and/or other facilitation services.

During 2011, the attractiveness of the land option increased further compared to the other two since it has become more difficult to successfully exit Greece by ferry or airplane. In fact, the Albanian authorities suggested that practically all non-European irregular migrants that came to Albania from Greece did so after finally giving up attempting to reach Italy on a regular intra-Schengen ferry.

Importantly, re-entering the Schengen area through the Western Balkans is also shorter compared to going through Bulgaria and Romania. Therefore, most irregular migrants that opt for this route try to reach Hungary from Serbia, a smaller percentage opts for entering Slovenia from Croatia after crossing Serbia, while others opt for the route through Albania, Montenegro, Croatia and Slovenia.

Transiting irregular migrants from Greece still rely on basic instructions regarding the Western Balkan route and the direction to



Source/Photo: Molnár-Edvárd

Figure 10. Afghan migrants living in makeshift tents outside the city of Subotica and preparing for crossing into Hungary – they have all arrived from Greece



take. However, during 2011 the level of reliance on smuggling services increased (see Section on New trends below, point c). The migrants usually carry handwritten maps showing the detailed route from Greece to Hungary or Slovenia and further to Austria or other Member States (see Fig. 11).

New trends in secondary movements during 2011

Apart from a general increasing trend, described previously in the analysis, three new important trends were identified during 2011.

(a) Changes in routing

During 2011, detections at Romania's border with Serbia surpassed those at Slovenia's border with Croatia for the first time. Romanian authorities detected more than 1 000 illegal border-crossings during 2011, up from only six during 2010. Unsurprisingly, the increase was exclusively due to secondary movements of non-European migrants from Greece, in particular Arabic speakers. Most of these detections occurred very close to Hungary (the tri-border area between Serbia, Romania

and Hungary). They should be considered as displacement from the main Serbia-Hungary route, where additional measures by the Serbian and Hungarian authorities made it more difficult to cross the border illegally.

During the last quarter of 2011, Bosnia and Herzegovina also started to detect cases of migrants crossing from Serbia to BiH on a boat across the border river Drina. The size of the flow remained small though.

(b) Hiding in vehicles to cross regional borders

Starting from mid-2011 the numbers of irregular migrants hiding in vehicles at different regional border sections started to increase, thus indicating changes in *modus operandi* and the extent of previously undetected flow of transiting migrants en route from Greece to other Member States.

The increase was led by detections of mostly Afghans and to lesser extent also Pakistanis arriving from Greece hidden in vehicles at different BCPs in Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia (see Fig. 13 below).

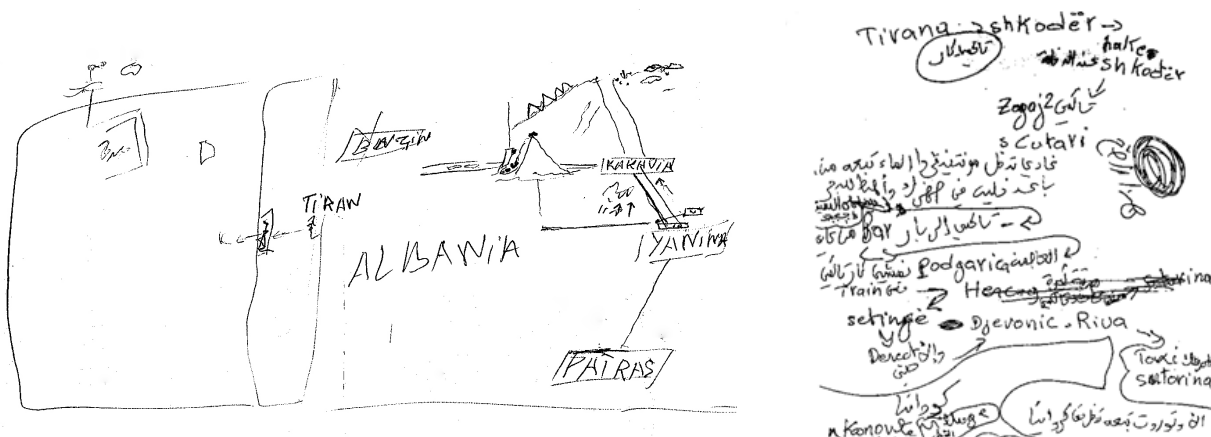
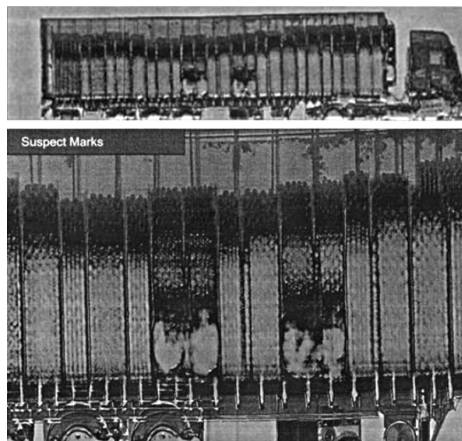


Figure 11. Typical handwritten instructions describing the route from Albania to Croatia found in Montenegro and Albania during 2011

Source: Government of Montenegro, Police Directorate, Border Police of Albania

Importantly, detections at Serbia's border with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia have risen the most due in part to extensive use of mobile heartbeat detectors and body scanners. While initially migrants were detected hiding in lorries without the driver's knowledge (migrants hopped on vehicles at different stops in the vicinity of BCPs), two incidents in December 2011 demonstrated a worrying trend. They both involved custom-built special compartments designed to hide irregular migrants. Furthermore, the smugglers all came from EU Member States and were aiming to transport irregular migrants from Greece directly to destination Member States. The detections were only possible after the two vehicles were scanned with mobile technical equipment (see Fig. 12).



Source: Serbian Border Police

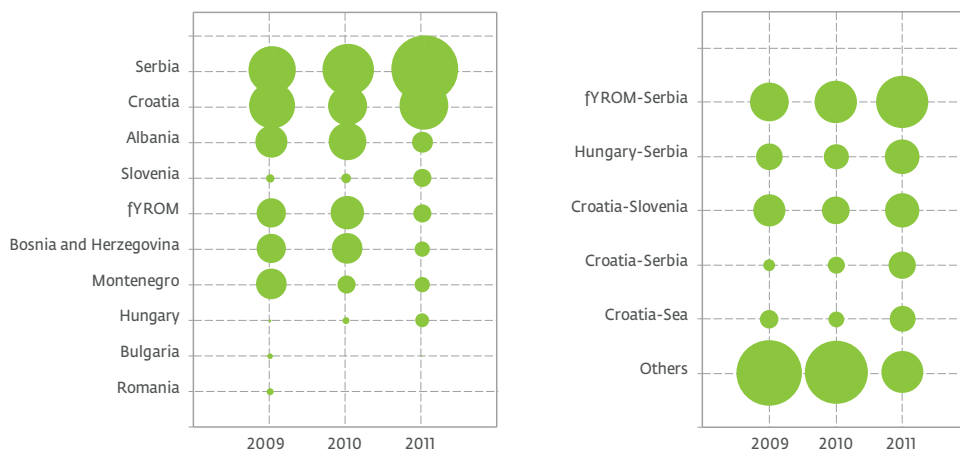
Figure 12. The photo is showing migrants hiding in custom-built compartments of a lorry detected in Serbia

Likewise, starting already in September 2011, Croatia reported eight cases with 52 persons who tried to enter hidden in lorries and vans. This *modus operandi* was detected mainly at the Croatian borders with Serbia and Slovenia. Before, practically all illegal border-crossings occurred at the green borders or close to

one international railway crossing between Croatia and Serbia (BCP Tovarnik).

Furthermore, BiH authorities have also started to detect transiting migrants hidden in lorries arriving from Serbia. In all these cases, migrants boarded the lorry without the driver's knowledge. This is the same *modus operandi* as initially reported by Serbia.

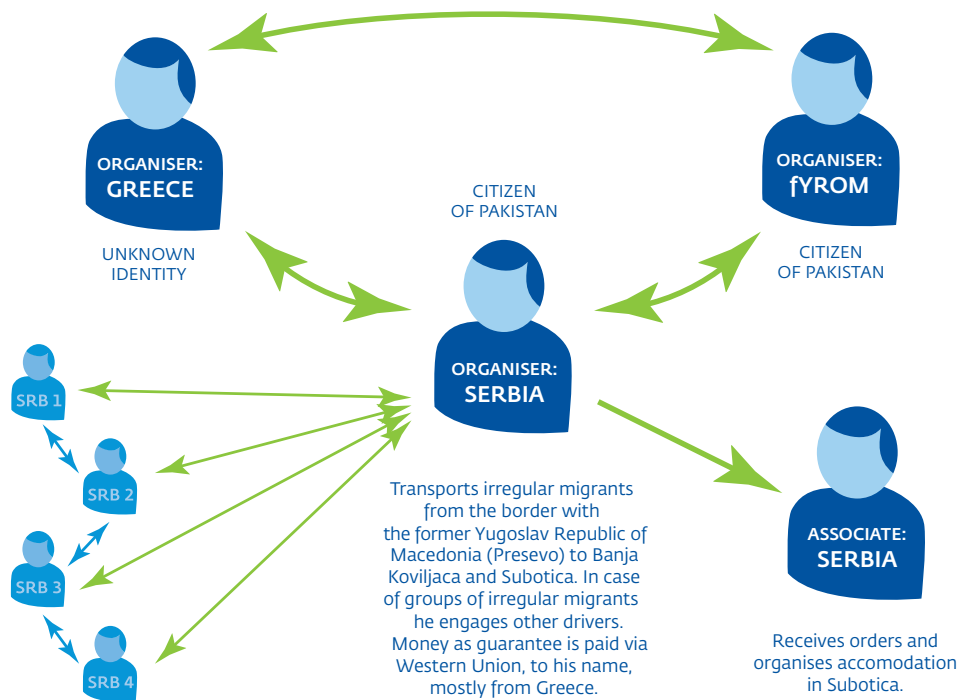
Figure 13. Serbia reported the most detections of migrants illegally crossing the border at BCPs



Source: WB-RAN and FRAN data as of 12 March 2012



Figure 14. Facilitation organigram at a glance



Source: Serbian Border Police

(c) Greater reliance on facilitation/ smuggling services

During the second half of 2011, the Serbian authorities detected more migrants that had been facilitated by non-hierarchical small criminal networks of Afghan or Pakistani organisers from Greece and their local contacts in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia.

The facilitation was done in stages and involved transport, accommodation and guidance through different green borders (on foot). These services were usually provided by local associates, mostly nationals from the two mentioned Western Balkan countries. Payments were made in stages via Western Union money transfers.

In the case of crossing the border between the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia, the guides often were of the same ethnic background as the facilitated migrants. They were mostly former migrants themselves who had been detected illegally crossing the border many times, giving different identities on each occasion and always managing to return back to Greece and facilitate another group.

Guiding migrants through the green borders between Serbia and Hungary was usually done by local Serbian guides who were associates of the main organisers. The guiding was done in pairs, one in front and one at the end of the group of migrants. The guides wore face masks and there was no oral communication with the migrants. Both measures

complicate potential criminal case against the guides since they can not be identified by the detected migrants.

4.1.2. Impacts

Internal security

Most of the transiting migrants have limited financial means to afford travel across the Western Balkans and further on to several Member States. This in turn makes petty crime like shoplifting more likely.

Serbia was experiencing important internal security issues, given the sheer numbers and the fact that, apart from petty crime, protests by residents also became more frequent. For example, there were several protests by the local inhabitants in the areas close to the main nexus points (e.g. asylum centre in Banja Koviljaca) and media reports suggested that some parents even temporarily stopped their children from attending school due to elevated security concerns.

Albania considers it possible that members of different extremist religious organisations or terrorist groups could be using the Western Balkans as a transit area to reach western Europe undetected. By and large, the main problem in this regard is a lack of proper identification after detection for illegal border-crossing or illegal stay.

Humanitarian situation

Severe weather conditions further exacerbate living conditions in which transiting migrants find themselves during their travel across the Western Balkans. Reports from Serbia suggested a particularly dire situation during 2011 for those with little financial means.

For example, there were up to 3 000 migrants at times trying to get some sort of temporary accommodation in Banja Kovil-

jaca where the main asylum centre is located. Since there are only 80 beds available in the centre, most were staying outdoors or in abandoned buildings, prompting the Serbian government to search for temporary accommodation in old military barracks.

In Subotica, many migrants have settled in makeshift camps in or around the city's main garbage collection site, waiting for their chance to cross illegally to Hungary. Local charity organisations and the UNHCR helped by providing food and temporary accommodation during the coldest days.

Allocation of resources, personnel and equipment

The surge in transiting flow and related internal security concerns prompted Serbia to further strengthen its measures on the border between the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia by redeployment of Serbia's Border Police (SBP) staff and equipment.



© Vesela Lalos, Vesti online

Figure 15. A Pakistani migrant waits in appalling living conditions and low temperatures for his chance to illegally cross from Serbia to Hungary



Source: Border Police of Albania



Figure 16. **A group of irregular migrants crossing from Greece to Albania, detected by the PIDS**

As a part of broader package of additional measures, the SBP also joined forces with other relevant organisational units of the Serbian Ministry of the Interior. The move was designed mainly to improve inland controls, especially in nexus points such as Banja Koviljaca (the main asylum centre), Loznica and Subotica.

In Albania, in response to the transiting flows, new border surveillance equipment was installed during 2012. Namely, a so-called Perimeter Intrusion Detecting System (PIDS) is a new feature at Albania's green border with Greece.

Croatian Border Police has stepped-up its cooperation with Customs to implement stricter checks of lorries, vans and cars. In doing so, they are now able to utilise fully all Customs-owned equipment such as heart beat detector, X-ray scanner and CO₂ detector. In addition, Croatia has redeployed some of its surveillance equipment from other borders to the one with Serbia (mainly thermo-vision devices, both static and mobile).

4.2. Risk of large and sustained misuse of international protection system in EU Member States by nationals from the five visa-exempt Western Balkan countries

Table 4. Summary risk table

Risk name	Risk of large and sustained misuse of international protection system in EU Member States by nationals from the five visa-exempt Western Balkan countries
Threat	Abuse of legal travel channel
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity to process asylum applications Capacity to perform border checks
Main border sections	Croatia-Slovenia, Serbia-Hungary, Serbia-Croatia

4.2.1. Description of the threat

The case of Western Balkans clearly showed that visa liberalisation can produce significant negative consequences with fairly small minority groups having a disproportionate impact. Unfounded asylum applications from particularly marginalised groups in Serbia and to a lesser extent also in other Western Balkan countries have significantly increased after the new legal travel channel became available.

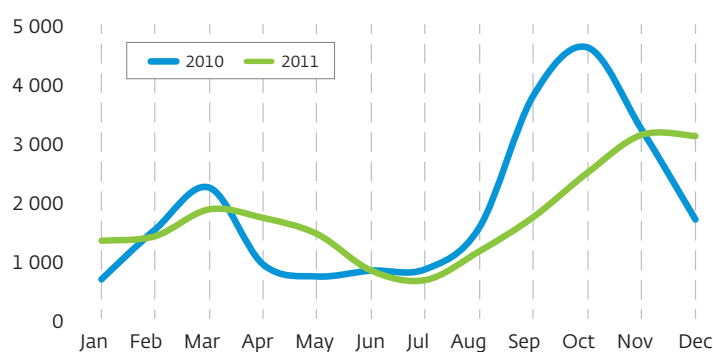
In 2011, the overall number of asylum applications made by nationals from the five visa-exempt Western Balkan countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro) in all the Member States decreased by roughly 8% compared to 2010. The numbers still remained relatively high at more than 21 000 or 8.5% of all asylum applications submitted in the EU (down from 11.4% share recorded in 2010).

As during 2010, the vast majority of all asylum seekers were travelling mostly by bus in small family groups with up to three children, targeting predominately Germany, Sweden, Belgium and Luxembourg. The large majority entered the EU legally at the external land

borders in Hungary and to lesser extent also in Slovenia.

Similar to 2010 developments, asylum claims occurred in two subsequent waves, one in the spring and the other in late autumn. Moreover, the second wave was again larger compared to the first one (see Fig. 17). Somewhat different to the last year though, the peak was reached roughly one and a half months later, a development linked with seasonally mild weather during September and October 2011.

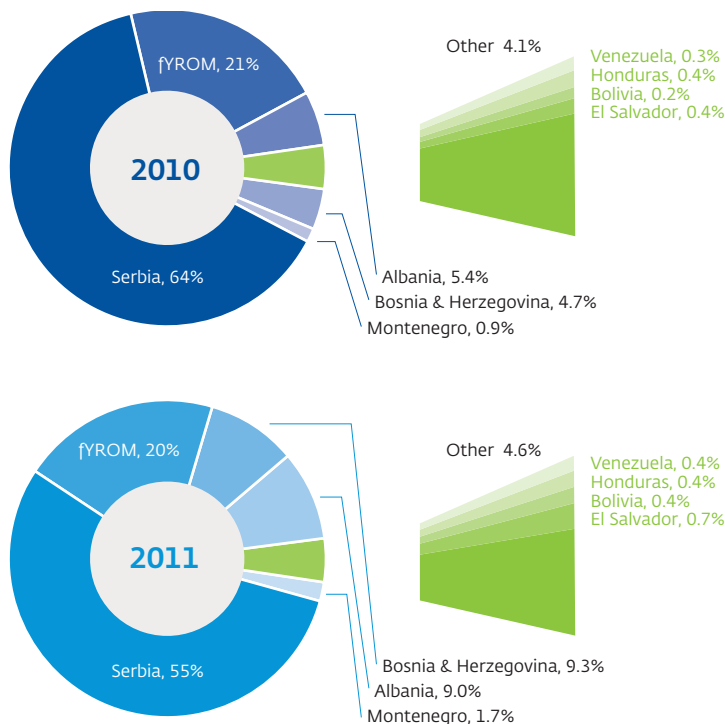
Figure 17. Two waves of asylum claims indicate that claiming asylum in the EU is part of Roma overall seasonal strategy for their livelihood



Source: FRAN as of 15 March 2012



Figure 18. Other visa-free nationalities submit negligible numbers of asylum claims in the EU compared to those submitted by the five Western Balkans nationalities



Source: FRAN as of 15 March 2012

Unsurprisingly, asylum recognition rates for the five visa-exempt nationalities remained extremely low in EU Member States, indicating the largely unfounded nature of most claims.

Despite a 20% decrease compared to 2010, Serbian nationals continued to be the single largest visa-exempt nationality claiming asylum in the EU during 2011. With more than 12 400, or 5% of total asylum intake in the EU in 2011, Serbs remained the second-ranked nationality (after Afghans) of asylum applicants in the EU. Combined, asylum applications from the five visa-exempt Western Balkan nationalities amounted to roughly 95% of all asylum applications submitted by visa-free nationalities (see Fig. 18).

* Blood feud or vendetta is a long-running animosity characterised by a cycle of retaliatory violence, with the relatives of someone who has been killed or otherwise wronged seeking vengeance by killing or otherwise physically punishing the culprits or their relatives.

New emerging trends

At the beginning of 2011, Frontex was tasked by the European Commission to establish an alert reporting in the context of the wider Commission-led post visa-liberalisation monitoring mechanism (PVLMM).

According to the European Commission, the Frontex reporting has provided an in-depth analysis and has anticipated new emerging trends concerning the inflow of persons from the region. The list below summarises the most important new trends for 2011:

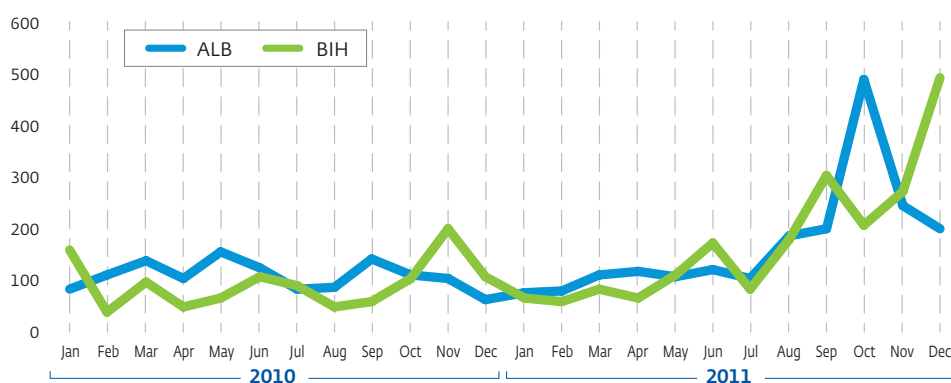
(a) Increasing asylum applications from Bosnia-Herzegovina and Albania

While there was no noticeable effect of visa liberalisation on asylum claims in the first half of 2011, subsequent reporting from several EU Member States suggested important increasing trend with regards to nationals of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Albania. As a result, almost 70% more (or 4 144 altogether) asylum applications were submitted during 2011 by the two nationalities in EU Member States compared to 2010.

In the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, most of the increase has been associated with asylum claims from Roma people, while Albanian asylum applicants were largely of Albanian ethnic background.

Albanian asylum applications in EU Member States rose significantly mainly during the September–November 2011 period (see Fig. 18). Albanian asylum applicants made their claims based on certificates (often false) that they were victims of the so-called 'blood feud'.* While the increase was mostly limited to Belgium, the authorities in the UK also reported a noticeable increase in inland asylum claims by Albanian nationals.

Figure 19. Comparison between 2010 and 2011 shows that increases in asylum applications by BiH and Albanian nationals occurred mostly in the second part of 2011



Source: FRAN as of 15 March 2012

This sharp increase of Albanian applications in Belgium resulted from the combination of misconceptions about the asylum system there, availability of the mentioned certificates in exchange for money, deliberate attempts by some applicants to pocket possible return incentives (once their asylum claims were rejected) and wide-spread rumours that asylum seekers are allowed to work in Belgium.

Belgian authorities reacted swiftly by engaging with their Albanian counterparts. The authorities there were asked to investigate the practice of issuing fake certificates and relaunch the public campaign about visa-free travel in general and the Belgian asylum system in particular.

Subsequent investigation and media reports further corroborated the assumption that most Albanian asylum applicants in Belgium procured fake certificates of blood feud in exchange for money. In one reported case, the NGO in question demanded as little as EUR 250 to deliver the certificate based on entirely fabricated story.*

(b) Adapting travel methods to prolong asylum procedures and/or avoid refusal of entry at the external borders of the EU

By the end of 2011, the Swedish authorities have noticed that asylum applicants were increasingly single women with several children. The authorities believed that applying as a single parent was a deliberate attempt to extend the duration of asylum procedure.

Would-be asylum seekers from the five visa-exempt nationalities became also increasingly aware of different measures taken at the external borders of the EU, in particular with regards to targeting and profiling groups travelling in buses. As a case in point, BiH authorities reported that some would-be asylum seekers switched from travelling by bus to cars in response to increased focus on the so-called 'asylum buses' at the borders.

With a similar intent, roughly half of Albanians that have submitted their asylum applications during the big October 2011 surge in Belgium arrived there indirectly, mostly from Italy, regardless of the fact that a direct low-cost connection between the two countries exists. This was interpreted as a method to

* Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, February 2012, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4f5f1ab32.html>



avoid possible refusals by Belgium authorities at their air borders.

(c) Serbian applications increasing in Switzerland by the end of 2011

Switzerland started to be increasingly targeted by mostly Serbian asylum seekers during the last three months of 2011. In December 2011 Serbian asylum applications in Switzerland peaked (369).

In response, Frontex has invited Swiss authorities to join the alert reporting Task Force given that Switzerland became the second-ranked asylum destination country (after Germany) in terms of asylum intake from the Western Balkans during the last month of 2011.

4.2.2. Impact

Impact of this threat is understood rather narrowly, mostly in the context of border controls. Namely, a clear distinction should be made between the impact on the capacity of a Member State's asylum system to process asylum applications and the impact on the resource at different land borders in the region when trying to counter the threat.

Capacity to process asylum applications

Compared to other Member States, Luxembourg was subjected to the highest pressure during 2011 when measured in *per capita* terms.

Likewise, the Swedish Migration Board was facing challenges regarding accommodation for asylum seekers despite the fact that the asylum process has been shortened. Given the high numbers and the fact that asylum seekers from the Western Balkans were scattered around Sweden, the staff of the Swedish Migration Board had to travel long distances in order to conduct the activities required for processing the asylum claims.

Capacity to perform border checks

Border-control authorities from all five visa-exempt Western Balkan countries and neighbouring EU Member States have invested additional efforts in streamlining their border-check procedures, training officers and improving their capacity to identify risk groups of travellers.

As of yet, this tactical changes have only had marginal negative impact on the flow *bona fide* travellers.

4.3. Risk of abuse of international protection system in the Western Balkans to avoid detention and frustrate return procedures

Table 5. Summary risk table

Risk name	Risk of abuse of international protection system in the Western Balkans to avoid detention and frustrate return procedures
Threat	Circumventing entry and stay provisions through abuse of international protection system
Impact	Integrity of borders, circumventing entry provision, rendering border surveillance and detections null and void
Main border sections	All regional and common borders

4.3.1. Description of the threat

The threat of circumventing entry and stay provisions through abuse of international protection system in the Western Balkans is not a new phenomenon. It has been extensively described in the last two annual WB-RAN analyses. No significant changes were identified during 2011. In fact, the only major difference is the magnitude of the threat itself given that both asylum applications and the intentions to do so rose significantly in almost all Western Balkan countries.

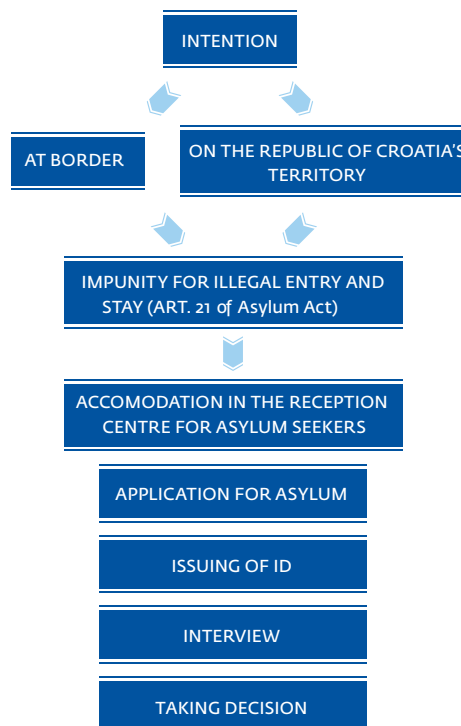
Simple *modus operandi*

The prevailing *modus operandi* is rather simple and can be described by citing the situation in Croatia, broadly corresponding to experiences in other five Western Balkan countries as well.

Croatia has an asylum procedure which is in line with the European standards. As such, the asylum procedure is usually done in two steps: expression of intention and the actual application for international protection (see Fig. 20).

After detection at borders or inland, migrants express an intention to apply asylum and so

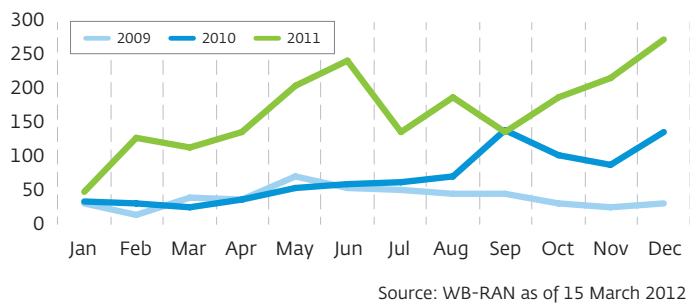
Figure 20. Two-stage asylum procedures in Croatia is often abuse by absconding irregular migrants



Source: Croatian Border Police



Figure 21. **Monthly asylum applications in all WB-RAN countries have increased significantly during 2011 compared to the previous two years, particularly in Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**



avoid being prosecuted for illegal border-crossing or illegal stay.

They are then instructed to report to asylum centre. Often, transport is provided by the authorities in order to prevent them from simply continuing their journey towards the EU.

After arriving at the centre, some migrants abscond only a few days after expressing the intention to file an application for asylum. Most of the rest abscond after formally submitting the application. In fact, during 2011 more than 80% of all asylum cases in Croatia were terminated due to reasons associated with applicants simply leaving asylum reception centre.

Further still, while the overall number of asylum applications in Croatia rose by almost 200%, the number of actual first instance decisions on granting or refusing protection during 2011 remained basically the same compared to 2010 (around 50, out of which only three positive decisions). This in turn indicates further the extent of the abuse.

The main reported nationalities during 2011 in all Western Balkan countries were identical to those reported for illegal border-crossings and therefore consisted of mostly Afghans, Pakistanis and Arabic-speaking migrants from North Africa.

Temporary legalisation of stay used for money transfers

By claiming asylum, migrants also temporarily legalise their stay and are issued with a special identity card. Most commonly, the transiting migrants use the card for money transfer services. Often, transfers are made through Western Union, whereby asylum applicants receive additional financial means from their relatives or friends allowing them to continue travelling towards their final destination in the EU. Carrying large sums of money is risky; hence the need to receive money transfers in stages.

4.3.2. Impacts

By and large, this threat is impacting mostly the integrity of borders since it renders border surveillance and detections practically null and void. While the capacity of Western Balkan countries to perform border surveillance is adequate, the end result is that detected migrants continue on their journey to the EU.

Secondly, asylum abuse can redirect resources away from persons who are genuinely interested in getting international protection in the Western Balkans.

4.4. Risk of facilitated irregular migration from Turkey through the Western Balkans towards the EU

Table 7. Summary risk table

Risk name	Risk of facilitated irregular migration from Turkey through the Western Balkans towards the EU
Threat	Abuse of legal travel channels by Turkish nationals to enter the Western Balkans and subsequently illegally migrate to the EU
Impact	Allocation of resources, personnel and equipment
Main border sections	Regional air, Croatia-EU, Serbia-EU

4.4.1. Description of the threat

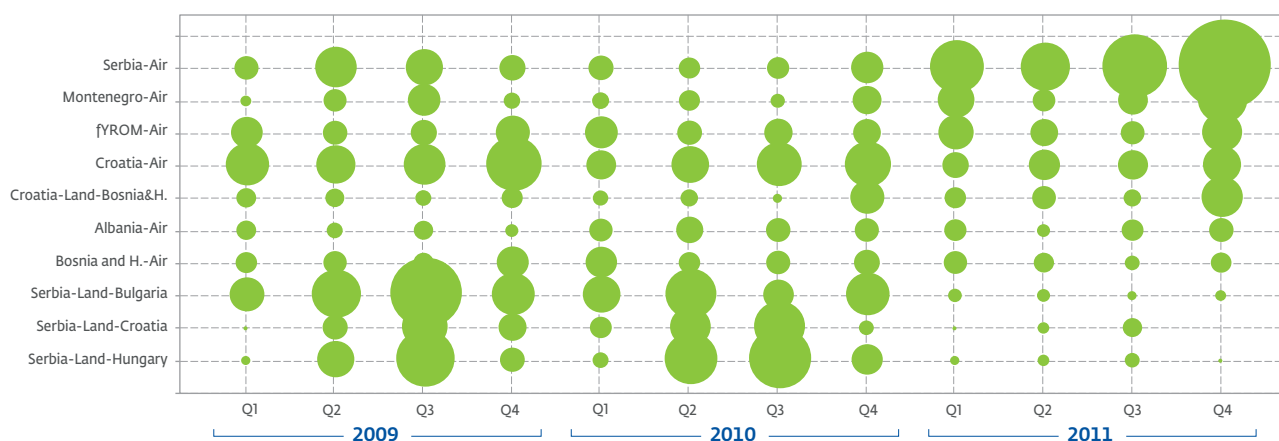
While most of the Turkish irregular migrants arrive in the EU legally and simply overstay afterwards, there is also a flow that uses the Western Balkans as a transit region before illegally entering the EU. Namely, Turkish migrants use existing legal travel options to enter the area of the Western Balkans by air since they enjoy visa free status in all six Western Balkan countries. Unsurprisingly, Turkish nationals remained by far the most refused nationality at air borders in the Western Balkans during 2011 (more than 2 000 or 63% of the total at air borders).

The refusals have particularly increased at Serbia's air border (584%), making Serbia by far the top refusing Western Balkan country for Turkish nationals.

In terms of its magnitude, the flow of Turkish nationals through the Western Balkans is still relatively small compared to the transiting flow from Greece, yet it is quite organised with a high level of facilitation (see box).

Once would-be Turkish migrants reach the Western Balkans, they use public transport to travel by land. Illegal border-crossings into the EU are facilitated by small, flexible and

Figure 22. Refusals of entry for Turkish nationals show important increasing trends at air borders of Serbia and Montenegro





adaptable criminal groups. Usually, migrants are split into groups of up to four persons.

Bosnian authorities note that Turkish nationals use Istanbul–Sarajevo direct flight, stay in Sarajevo for a while and then move closer to the border with Croatia with the intention to reach Slovenia and possibly Hungary.

During 2011, both Slovenia and Hungary experienced important increases with more than 450 Turkish nationals detected for illegal border-crossing (up from 96 in 2010, see Fig. 23). The increase at the two border sections largely compensated for the decreasing trend in Italy and Greece, thus suggesting that a displacement of routing towards the Western Balkans occurred during 2011.

4.4.2. Impact

Importantly, most Western Balkan countries consider Turkish nationals as high risk category of travellers. Their resources and focus are therefore already firmly put on this group.

Consequently, the impact of this threat is largely limited to management and allocation of resources (personnel and equipment) at air borders. Flow of bona fide passengers is not affected.

Given the low numbers of detected Turkish irregular migrants, there is only a marginal impact on internal security in both WB-RAN countries and neighbouring EU Member States.



Facilitation networks uncovered in Albania and Turkey

During 2011 the Albanian authorities identified a well-organised group that was smuggling people from Turkey using the air connection between Istanbul and Tirana with the intention to transit Serbia, Croatia and illegally enter the EU. The facilitators were all Turkish nationals and have recruited persons who lived in Turkey's remote rural areas. A package deal from Turkey to the destination Member States amounted to EUR 5 000.



Source: www.elazig.pol.tr

Likewise, after six months of investigation in several cities, the Turkish Department of Anti-smuggling and Organized Crime (KOM), arrested 17 members of a network that was sending migrants to the EU via the Western Balkans. The migrants were paying up to EUR 6 000 to fly to Western Balkan countries and then illegally enter Hungary. When arrests were made, bank (payment) statements, passports, cell phones, USD 17 100 and a gun were found (see photo).



Figure 23. Quarterly detections of Turkish nationals for illegal border-crossings at external borders of the EU show an overall stable yearly trend in 2011, yet indicate a displacement towards Hungary and Slovenia





5. Outlook

The outlook chapter is structured around the main developments that were identified as having a major impact on all four identified threats, both in terms of their magnitude and likelihood. Therefore, visa liberalisation process, the size and composition of the irregular flow from Turkey to Greece and likely further extension of air links between Turkey and the Western Balkans are considered. The focus is put on 2013.

By the same token, Croatia's future membership in the EU and possible enlargement of the Schengen area are also considered in the outlook.

Visa liberalisation process

The large majority of travellers from the visa-free Western Balkan countries will remain bona fide travellers and thus in conformity with the genuine purpose of visa liberalisation – to facilitate people-to-people contacts, enhance business opportunities and cultural exchanges, and give the possibility to the people of the region to get to know the EU better.

Nevertheless, EU Member States will soon have available a new mitigating measure to counter possible abuse of visa liberalisation. The so-called 'Visa safeguard clause' is basically a proposal for an amendment of Regulation 539/2001 that would allow for a temporary suspension of the visa waiver for any third country, including the five visa-exempt Western Balkan countries. According to the European Commission, the updated regulation will come into force during 2012.

All Member States will thus have the opportunity to notify the European Commission if

they are confronted with one or more of the following circumstances leading to an emergency situation due to substantial and sudden increase of:

- (a) Illegal stay over a six-month period compared to the same period prior to visa liberalisation
- (b) Asylum applications which are manifestly unfounded or which do not fulfil the conditions for international protection
- (c) Rejected readmission applications submitted by a Member State to a visa-free third country in question.

Such a mechanism will only be a measure of last resort and can be applied to any third country exempted from the visa obligation. Importantly, a request by a Member State will not automatically lead to the re-imposition of the visa obligation for the citizens of the third country concerned. The European Commission will consider a number of elements in its assessment, including reporting from Frontex. In any case, the European Commission will have to submit its proposal within three months after receiving a request to re-impose the visa obligation; however, the temporary suspension of the visa waiver will only be possible for periods up to six months.

Turkish expanding air links with the Western Balkans

The THY is the only non-EU company that operates in all Western Balkan countries, including on the territory of Kosovo. The Turkish national carrier also acquired 49% of Bosnia-Herzegovina Airlines in 2009, and has since expressed interest in reviving MAT (national carrier of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) and purchasing Serbia's JAT Airways.

In the infrastructure sector, Turkish airport operator TAV Airports obtained a 20-year concession on Skopje and Ohrid airports, pledging a 200-million-euro investment to transform Skopje airport into a regional transportation hub. TAV is also contracted for a new terminal at Zagreb airport and is interested in managing Belgrade's Nikola Tesla airport in Serbia.

Consequently, while most Turkish regular passengers will remain bona fide travellers, more direct flights will increase the size of the flow and with it also the risk of facilitated irregular migration from Turkey through the Western Balkans towards the EU.

Size and composition of the flow at the Greek-Turkish borders

Apart from the seasonal variations, the irregular flow from Turkey to Greece will most likely remain fairly large. In fact, during the first two months of 2012, the situation progressively worsened with more than 5 000 irregular migrants detected by the Greek authorities. The vast majority are still released shortly after detection in what has been described in Frontex previous annual reports as a 'catch-and-release' policy.

It should be stressed that while Greece's migration and asylum system is struggling with enormous pressure, more is needed to improve the detection-to-effective return ratio.

In conclusion, as long as illegal entry to the EU in Greece is perceived as relatively easy

(low return risk), new migrants will continue to arrive from Turkey. A substantial proportion is likely to use the Western Balkan land route should the mitigation measures there remain largely unchanged. Likewise, facilitation services offered by non-hierarchical groups, highly specialised and often headed by former migrants could only expand.

Croatia's future membership in the EU and possible enlargement of the Schengen area

Importantly, Croatia's membership has been set to 1 July 2013 and should therefore be considered as certain. However, this is not the case with the possible enlargement of the Schengen area to include both Bulgaria and Romania.

Apart from changes of the geographical location and the length of the external land borders of the EU, Croatia's membership in the EU will probably not impact the composition or the size of the irregular flow transiting the Western Balkan region. This holds largely true for Croatia's long sea borders in the Adriatic.

On the other hand, should both Bulgaria and Romania join the Schengen (not likely before 2013), the impact on the transiting flow through the Western Balkans will be significant. In fact, with Greece no longer a Schengen enclave, new travel options for both migrants staying illegally in Greece and new arrivals from Turkey could result in a general bypassing of the Western Balkans route.



6. Statistical annex

Explanatory note:

For the indicators on Illegal border-crossing between BCPs, Illegal border-crossing at BCPs, Refusals of entry and Persons using false documents, the detections reported for EU Member States are those at the common land borders on entry only. For Facilitators, detections at the common land borders on entry and exit are included. For Illegal stay, detections at the common land borders on exit only are included. For Asylum, all applications (land, sea, air and inland) are included.

For Western Balkan countries, all indicators – except for Refusals of entry – include detections (applications) on exit and entry at the land, sea and air borders.

Each section in the tables (Reporting country, Border type, Place of detection, Top five border section and Top ten nationalities) refers to: for Western Balkan countries – the total number of detections reported; and for EU Member States – the total number of detections reported along the neighbouring land borders.

LEGEND

Symbols and abbreviations: n.a. not applicable
: data not available

Source: WB-RAN and FRAN data as of 12 March 2012, unless otherwise indicated

Note: 'Member States' in the tables refer to FRAN Member States, including both 27 EU Member States and three Schengen Associated Countries

Annex Table 1A. Illegal border-crossing between BCPs

Detections reported by border type and top ten nationalities

	2009	2010	2011	% change on previous year	per cent of total
Border type					
Land	67 439	62 914	26 218	-58	99.9
Sea	80	51	20	-61	0.1
Top ten nationalities					
Afghanistan	2 225	2 498	7 369	195	28
Albania	58 385	53 078	6 671	-87	25
Pakistan	38	202	3 331	1549	13
Serbia	3 354	1 520	1 539	1.3	5.9
Algeria	1	217	1 026	373	3.9
Palestine	217	1 621	794	-51	3
Morocco	7	128	702	448	2.7
Somalia	87	375	617	65	2.4
Turkey	257	249	592	138	2.3
Tunisia	5	109	581	433	2.2
Others	2 943	2 968	3 016	1.6	11
Total	67 519	62 965	26 238	-58	

Annex Table 1B. Illegal border-crossing at BCPs

Detections reported by border type and top ten nationalities

	2009	2010	2011	% change on previous year	per cent of total
Border type					
Land	1 048	943	1 196	27	84
Sea	146	195	176	-10	12
Air	182	187	49	-74	3.4
Top ten nationalities					
Afghanistan	82	125	474	279	33
Serbia	411	298	203	-32	14
Pakistan	1	9	163	1711	11
Turkey	250	164	80	-51	5.6
Italy	22	30	61	103	4.3
Albania	192	234	50	-79	3.5
Somalia		5	35	600	2.5
Bosnia and Herzegovina	124	57	34	-40	2.4
YROM	122	85	33	-61	2.3
Iran	2	5	31	520	2.2
Others	170	313	257	-18	18
Total	1 376	1 325	1 421	7.2	

Annex Table 2A. **Facilitators**

Detections reported by place of detection and top ten nationalities

	2009	2010	2011	% change on previous year	per cent of total
Place of detection					
Land	917	928	695	-25	87
Inland	85	20	90	350	11
Sea	13	9	9	0	1.1
Not specified	0	0	1	n.a.	0.1
Air	0	9	1	-89	0.1
Top ten nationalities					
Serbia	222	215	326	52	41
Albania	321	310	125	-60	16
Croatia	104	63	45	-29	5.7
fYROM	28	40	44	10	5.5
Bosnia and Herzegovina	25	25	40	60	5.0
Greece	112	81	33	-59	4.1
Slovenia	35	91	27	-70	3.4
Germany	11	11	14	27	1.8
Pakistan	1	4	14	250	1.8
Afghanistan	1	1	13	1200	1.6
Others	155	125	115	-8.0	14
Total	1 015	966	796	-18	

Annex Table 2B. **Illegal stay**

Detections reported by place of detection and top ten nationalities

	2009	2010	2011	% change on previous year	per cent of total
Place of detection					
Land	2 474	2 616	9 857	277	50
Inland	7 080	8 394	9 009	7.3	46
Not specified	608	906	748	-17	3.8
Top ten nationalities					
Afghanistan	645	885	4 346	391	22
Serbia	2 249	2 030	3 129	54	16
Croatia	1 129	1 280	1 484	16	7.6
Pakistan	13	61	1 290	2 015	6.6
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1 275	1 214	1 124	-7.4	5.7
fYROM	1 079	973	1 122	15	5.7
Iraq	22	116	726	526	3.7
Turkey	462	622	635	2.1	3.2
Morocco	12	71	512	621	2.6
Palestine	17	595	505	-15	2.6
Others	3 259	4 069	4 741	17	24
Total	10 162*	11 916*	19 614	n.a.	

* Total does not include detections from Greece

Annex Table 3. Applications for asylum

Applications for international protection reported by place of detection and top ten nationalities

	2009	2010	2011	% change on previous year	per cent of total
Place of detection					
Inland	18 205	13 201	11 974	-9.3	72
Land	2 567	1 521	2 976	96	18
Sea	44	1 026	1 177	15	7.1
Not specified	4 375	229	367	60	2.2
Air	50	98	187	91	1.1
Top ten nationalities					
Pakistan	3 937	2 904	2 923	0.7	18
Afghanistan	3 964	1 988	2 774	40	17
Georgia	2 396	1 272	1 195	-6.1	7.2
Iraq	1 387	959	774	-19	4.6
Algeria	80	188	725	286	4.3
Bangladesh	1 921	1 009	648	-36	3.9
Syria	1 039	276	639	132	3.8
Morocco	182	140	570	307	3.4
China	515	626	477	-24	2.9
Nigeria	901	476	424	-11	2.5
Others	8 919	6 237	5 532	-11	33
Total	25 241	16 075	16 681	3.8	

Note: Applications for asylum for EU Member States include all applications received in the territory of the Member States, not limited to claims made at the Western Balkan borders.



Annex Table 4A. **Refusals of entry**

Refusals reported by border type and top ten nationalities

	2009	2010	2011	% change on previous year	per cent of total
Border type					
Land	66 233	57 752	57 743	0	94
Air	2 826	2 380	3 214	35	5.3
Sea	323	221	224	1.4	0.4
Top ten nationalities					
Serbia	9 410	10 775	11 401	5.8	19
Albania	3 891	4 841	10 984	127	18
Bosnia and Herzegovina	12 657	10 398	9 361	-10	15
Croatia	6 415	5 192	4 776	-8.0	7.8
Turkey	3 591	3 536	3 478	-1.6	5.7
ŷROM	3 082	4 240	3 196	-25	5.2
Ukraine	1 374	1 304	1 629	25	2.7
Bulgaria	1 658	2 035	1 598	-21	2.6
Russia	1 616	1 387	1 414	1.9	2.3
Slovenia	1 075	1 044	1 380	32	2.3
Others	24 613	15 601	11 964	-23	20
Total	69 382	60 353	61 181	1.4	

Annex Table 4B. **Persons using false documents**

Detections reported by border type and top ten nationalities

	2009	2010	2011	% change on previous year	per cent of total
Border type					
Land	959	817	660	-19	75
Air	148	187	137	-27	16
Sea	108	160	82	-49	9.3
Top ten nationalities					
Serbia	470	428	368	-14	42
Albania	217	288	122	-58	14
Turkey	143	81	103	27	12
ŷROM	157	96	59	-39	6.7
Iran	1	11	28	155	3.2
Afghanistan	37	36	19	-47	2.2
Croatia	35	24	18	-25	2
Bosnia and Herzegovina	49	43	17	-60	1.9
Romania	3	4	15	275	1.7
Somalia	0	0	13	n.a.	1.5
Others	103	153	117	-24	13
Total	1 215	1 164	879	-24	





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