

European Studies of Population 26

Konstantinos N. Zafeiris
Byron Kotzamanis
Christos Skiadas *Editors*

Population Studies in the Western Balkans



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Konstantinos N. Zafeiris · Byron Kotzamanis ·
Christos Skiadas
Editors

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Editors

Konstantinos N. Zafeiris
Laboratory of Physical Anthropology
Department of History and Ethnology
Democritus University of Thrace
Komotini, Greece

Christos Skiadas
ISAST
Athens, Greece

Byron Kotzamanis
Laboratory of Demographic and Social
Analyses
Department of Planning and Regional
Development
University of Thessaly
Volos, Greece

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Preface

Western Balkans is a diverse area on economic, social and cultural grounds, with a fascinating history of national rivalries and conflicts. In the modern era, it has been at the epicentre of the international debate for geopolitical reasons, for the efforts of several of its countries to become members of the European Union and other issues. However, little is known about its population as the scientific literature is often fragmentary and, in some cases, incomplete.

This book presents the population trends and related issues, aiming to partially cover this gap and contribute to developing scientific dialogue and cooperation between scientists from different countries. It is then a collective work in which 31 experts from the countries of the Western Balkans and Italy participate. The book covers topics related to fertility, marriage, mortality, health, population dynamics and ageing, migration and related problems. We hope that it could be the starting point for the development of new scientific efforts aimed at a deeper understanding of the population of this area of Europe.

Komotini, Greece
Volos, Greece
Athens, Greece

Konstantinos N. Zafeiris
Byron Kotzamanis
Christos Skiadas

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Chapter 4

Temporary Migration and Policy Challenges in the Western Balkan Countries—Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and North Macedonia Perspectives



Jelena Predojević Despić  and Vesna Lukić 

Abstract Globalization has affected a rise in temporary labour and educational migration around the world. In this chapter, authors focus on the analysis of key trends of temporary migration in the context of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BH), North Macedonia (NM), and Serbia (RS), the determinants of this phenomenon as well as policy responses. Relying on desk research and statistical data analysis, the paper aims to highlight the temporary migration in the Western Balkan region. Results reveal that besides continuous increase of temporary migration flows from BH, NM, and RS to EU-27 countries, those three WB countries attract temporary migrants in increasing numbers, mainly temporary labour migrants. The analysis of the migration strategies confirms that during the last decade, in RS and NM, unlike BH, there is continuity in the development of a framework for wider utilization of temporary and circular migration, students and labour mobility in the WB region. However, it is necessary to overcome the significant challenges related to the implementation. A summary of lessons learned was also included. The authors argue that innovative approaches to effectively manage temporary migration should be developed, both from the perspective of countries of origin and destination, including mobility rise in the entire WB region. Therefore, it is necessary to direct policy towards measures that integrate temporary migration into wider migration programmes. However, for evidence-based policy, a regular, updated, and synchronized statistical database for monitoring migration flows in all WB countries should be established.

Keywords Temporary migration · Migrants · Migration policy · Western Balkans

J. Predojević Despić (✉) · V. Lukić
Institute of Social Sciences, Kraljice Natalije 45, 11000 Belgrade, Serbia
e-mail: jpredojevic-despic@idn.org.rs

V. Lukić
e-mail: vlukic@idn.org.rs

Temporary migration has gained increasing attention in the recent decade, especially in the context of Europe. The paths of temporary migration are often fragmented, non-linear, with in-between stops, numerous returns and departures (Triandafyllidou, 2022). It is a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon that is shaped by various factors, including economic, political, and social. Temporary migrants have been a very significant source of labour in construction, agriculture, or tourism for a long time. However, in many countries, especially in post-industrial economies, other temporary forms of residency are developing and becoming increasingly prominent. Amongst them, international student visas, working holiday visas, temporary work visas, and asylum claims stand out (ILO, 2022).

Temporary migrants in receiving countries fill important niches both in fast-growing and declining sectors of the economy, and bring key skills and implicit knowledge to the markets of destination countries, in both high- and low-skilled occupations (Buckley et al., 2016). On the other hand, the benefit for the countries of origin is questionable. Although there are suggestions on various positive effects on countries of origin (OECD, 2017), such as remittances, knowledge exchange, or a possible positive effect on home-country political institutions (Lodigiani, 2016), recent research reveals negative impacts of international migration on home-country economic institutions (Gautam, 2021). Possibilities for monitoring temporary migrations, their comparison and study, but also management, are limited regardless of the significant and complex impacts on both the countries of origin and destination. One of the reasons is the absence of a clear conception of temporary migration, both from a research and policy perspective (ILO, 2022, p. 6).

Through the global growth of the internationalization of higher education, the importance of studying abroad becomes a very important aspect of temporary migration. This is especially important from the perspective of the probability of participation in migrations even after completing education. Empirical research on the example of new EU member states has shown that people with previous migration experience are more likely to migrate than the average person without such experience, which confirms the importance of the variable of previous migration experience when it comes to migration (Huber & Nowotny, 2011). The number of international students has been on the rise, reaching 6.1 million tertiary students worldwide who crossed a border to study in 2019 and growing on average by 5.5% per year in the last two decades (OECD, 2021). Also, the number of students from WB countries increased by two and a half times between 2013 and 2018 (OECD, 2022). Research has shown that the vast majority of young people in Europe consider it important to have opportunities for international mobility in order to broaden their horizons, gain valuable experiences, and acquire new skills (EC, 2019), which they want to apply in their countries of origin after their return (OECD, 2022).

The role of national states in the design of schemes or programmes of temporary migration is great, whether it is through unilateral, bilateral, or multilateral agreements. Approaches to temporary labour migration schemes differ between countries, legal concepts usually remain fragmentary and selective, sometimes include contradictions, and are often the result of avoiding accepting the possible demographic and social effects of long-term immigration and the permanent settlement of migrants

and/or their families in destination countries (Triandafyllidou, 2022). The European Migration Network defines temporary migration as the movement of individuals for a specific motivation and/or purpose, with the intention of returning to their country of origin or onward migration (EC, 2011, p. 12). However, the length of time considered to be “temporary” is one of the components that can significantly vary in the definitions of national states. In some countries, they are defined for a period of 3 months up to a year, whilst others consider it to be five years (Carrera et al., 2014; Vankova, 2020). Such large differences in the duration of temporary visas are to a significant extent the result of high heterogeneity of migrant groups that are included in different types of temporary visas (Aksakal & Schmidt-Verkerk, 2015) and which are generally published in international migration statistics within three large categories of reasons for immigration—work, education, and family reunification. Different immigrant groups were later included in the definition of the Organization for American States and the OECD (2015, p. 3): “A temporary migrant is a person of foreign nationality who enters a country with a visa or who receives a permit that is either not renewable or only renewable on a limited basis. Temporary immigrants are seasonal workers, international students, service providers, persons on international exchange, etc.”

Therefore, understanding the complex dynamics of temporary migration as well as the complex relationship between motivation, opportunity, and ability to migrate under specific policy regulations and constraints is crucial for determining the so-called temporariness in migration (Carling & Schewel, 2017; Triandafyllidou, 2022), as well as for the adoption of clearer definitions and better migration governance. Temporary migration is closely related to circular migration, in the sense that after the first temporary stay abroad and returning home (European Migration Network, 2011), each subsequent temporary movement represents an act of circular migration. In this sense, in the context of WB, posted workers sent to EU countries are increasingly important, because during the 2010s, the framework for their work stay in the EU was evidently improved, but there is also insufficient transparency of the way they are engaged through agencies (OECD, 2022). Also, in some countries that have become more and more important for emigrants from the WB in the last decade, such as most countries in the Gulf, it is not even possible to obtain a work residence except for a temporary one, which can be renewed later under certain conditions, which usually imply the existence of employment and a certain level of income (Czaika & Villares Varela, 2012).

In this sense, in the context of mobility between the EU and the countries that signed the Schengen agreement, short-term circularity, which possesses a “quasi-migratory character” is also very significant (Vankova, 2020). The possibility to stay for up to 90 days in a 6-month period on the territory of the EU based on a tourist visa is increasingly being used for circular irregular work (Triandafyllidou & Bartolini, 2020). This particularly applies to jobs performed within the household, such as care, domestic help, or various craft services.

On the other hand, circular migration implies that migrants can spend a lot of time both in the countries of destination and origin, and thus are also seen as being closely connected to transnationalism (Newland & Salant, 2018; Vankova, 2020).

Also, migration cycles can repeat over a very long period of time, and extend even when an individual acquires the conditions for obtaining long-term residence status, or even citizenship in the host country (Vankova, 2020). In the context of WB, temporary and circular migrations are also characteristic of labour migrants in low-skilled occupations (seasonal workers in agriculture, care workers, construction, etc.) and high-skilled occupations (academic and research staff, medical doctors and nurses, intra-corporate transferees, etc.). Also, there is a demand for foreign labour in WB countries, and research shows that there are skill shortages in “routine” jobs on the labour market (OECD, 2022). The Covid-19 pandemic had a significant impact on temporary migration and studying abroad, causing disruptions, cancellations, and changes in travel restrictions. Health, living, and working conditions of migrants were particularly threatened at the time of the outbreak and during the period of border closures (Anderson et al., 2021). Countries of origin were additionally faced with a large influx of their citizens working and/or residing abroad who were forced to return to the country. This led to numerous difficulties, both financial and material, as well as in the functioning of health care, the social protection system, the possibility of reintegrating migrants into the labour market, etc. (Moroz et al., 2020). Additionally, the sudden changes in labour markets caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and the lockdown caused visible disruptions in the functioning of the economy in most countries, both destination and origin. The effects of the pandemic show that the lack of certain categories of workers in the labour market, including precarious workers, who are to a significant extent migrants and short-time workers, can seriously shake the socio-economic foundations of economically developed countries with high immigration (Predojević-Despić, 2021).

Therefore, the need for better regulation of temporary and circular migration is becoming more and more emphasized, both for the countries of destination and origin, but also for the migrants themselves. Namely, enabling more favourable conditions for the immigration and circulation of migrants who possess higher education, knowledge, and skills, as well as investment resources, is one of the most important goals of the immigration policies of economically developed countries (Predojević-Despić, 2021). However, even for those migrants, the opportunities for temporary residence to develop into permanent settlement are diminishing (Clibborn & Wright, 2020; Solano et al., 2023; Yeoh, 2020). Low-skilled citizens of third countries have very limited legal opportunities to obtain even a temporary work residence, despite the great need for their work. Also, most of the legal channels for employment abroad are reserved for male-dominated activities. This further endangers the already difficult position of certain groups of temporary migrants, e.g. low-skilled migrant women, who mostly perform low-paid jobs, such as care and household work (Lukić, 2020; Newland & Riester, 2018).

The Western Balkans (WB) has long faced numerous and diverse challenges of international migration and emphasized labour emigration. However, although this had a significant impact on the development of numerous negative demographic, economic, and social consequences, the decision-makers in the countries of the WB neglected these problems in the long term. Also, they did not systematically consider the possible benefits of the impact of migration on development, nor did they work

dedicatedly to improve the position of their citizens working abroad (Grečić, 1998). On the other hand, although in the last decade there have been signs of the formation of trends of temporary and circular migration, especially towards the new EU members, as well as the increasingly emphasized structural needs for foreign labour in certain segments in all three countries and especially in Serbia, the planning of public policy in this sense is lacking (OECD, 2022). Also, the economic and social disruption caused by the pandemic calls for a greater focus on the relationship between temporary migration and regional development, as well as multilevel governance in migration policymaking (Collins, 2021).

However, for evidence-based policies in migration, reliable and accessible data are needed. Yet, the quality of data on temporary migration in Europe is a concern, as there is often a lack of consistent and reliable data. Especially, there is only little information on emigration and emigrants' destinations (Görlach & Kuske, 2022). This puts WB countries in an unenviable position. The lack of a reliable, regular system to monitor migration flows, the unavailability of data on the characteristics of emigrants from the WB countries, and the consequences of migration, as well as the lack of systematic data on various aspects of the migrants' transnational migration journeys, are the basic challenges that prevent accurate measurement of the scale and nature of temporary migration, limit the ability to compare data across countries, and prevent the analysis of temporary and return migrations based on solid evidence analysis (Görlach & Kuske, 2022).

Although very significant, temporary migration is unexplored in the WB region and a neglected topic amongst researchers. Hence, the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic indicated the size of this migrant population and their needs and problems. In this chapter, authors focus on analysis of key trends of temporary migration in the context of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BH), North Macedonia (NM), and Serbia (RS), the determinants of this phenomenon as well as policy responses. This research aims to complement the research gaps, having in mind temporary migration as a societal challenge of the WB countries. The work proceeds with an initial overview of the patterns of migration from the WB and relations as they existed in past between migration and socio-economic and political factors. After data and methodology are introduced, the study provides quantitative results and evaluates empirically the extent and changes in temporary migration patterns of the three WB countries. It considers the public policy responses to temporary migration in the three observed countries, as well as programmes and initiatives targeting the temporary migrant population. Lastly, it discusses the results obtained from the analysis, summarizes the contributions and study limitations, draws policy implications from the study, and points to the avenues opened for further research.

4.1 The Context and Overview of Migration from the Western Balkans

WB countries have a long tradition of emigration, a specific economic and political emigration context, a large number of their citizens abroad, as well as a differentiated structure of their emigrants. As regards contemporary labour migration, in RS, NM, and BH, countries that belonged to the area of former Yugoslavia, the beginnings are referred to in the middle of the 1960s, after the almost complete liberalization of the emigration policy of Yugoslav authorities at that time. On the other hand, in the countries of Western Europe, the structural need of the labour market in Western Europe for foreign labour was becoming more and more pronounced. Until the outbreak of the so-called oil crisis in the mid-1970s, there was a real expansion of international labour migration, officially called “temporary employment abroad” by the SFRY authorities at that time. Those migrations, characterized by significant government involvement and regulated by bilateral agreements, were exclusively directed towards West European countries (mainly Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and France). They became the so-called traditional destination countries for residents of WB countries. Over time, intensive migrant networks were developed, which during the following decades had an influence on shaping international migration trends and patterns from WB to Western Europe through the complex mutual influence of legislative measures on the patterns of immigrant networking (Bagchi, 2001).

The next intense emigration wave that occurred during the 1990s was caused by the grave political crisis (disintegration of SFRY and wars on its territory, significantly worsened interethnic relations), a very unfavourable economic situation, and a sense of lost perspective for a large part of the population. The destinations of Serbian emigrants from all three observed countries started to expand in the 1990s, and the most important new receiving country was Italy, but also some former socialist countries. Although less intense, overseas flows were continually present, and apart from the USA and Australia, Canada and New Zealand had become more frequent destinations, especially for the highly educated and skilled immigrants from Serbia (Penev & Predojević-Despić, 2019; Predojević-Despić & Penev, 2016).

Progress in the process of EU accession and placement of all three countries on the Schengen “white” list in 2010 can be counted amongst the most important causes, in the formation of a new emigration wave from the WB countries, as well as a clear indication that there have been developing new forms of international migration, such as temporary and circular, as well as transnational migration. This is indicated by the high number of persons residing abroad for less than one year, which also presents a huge difference compared to the previous periods, which is recorded in domestic statistical sources (Efendić, 2021; Petreski, 2021; Predojević-Despić & Penev, 2016). Also, data on migration flows in the statistics of destination countries, especially in the EU, show that migrants from the WB continue to emigrate to traditional destination countries, amongst which Germany is particularly important. However, amongst the new destination countries, new EU members are increasingly represented (Aranđarenko, 2022; Efendić, 2021; Petreski, 2021; Predojević-Despić & Penev, 2016).

On the example of the analysis of the ratio of migration inflow and migration balance during the 2010s, as well as residence permits issued to those who emigrate from Serbia for the first time to a certain EU country according to the reasons for immigration, Arandarenko (2022) suggests that the faster growth of the ratio of migration inflows and migration balance in the new EU members (except Germany) can point to differences in the reasons for migration to old and new EU members (Arandarenko, 2022).

Another wave of the so-called temporary asylum-seeking migrations from WB into the European Union has also been registered. It is estimated that in the period 2007–2017, more than 200,000 requests for asylum were submitted from the countries of the WB (Muller, 2020). These asylum seekers were mainly characterized as “false”, and their claims were rejected. For example, in 2014, only 1.4% of claims from Serbia were accepted, and in many cases for humanitarian reasons. The vast majority of so-called false asylum seekers returned to the countries of origin either on their own or through the readmission programme (Predojević-Despić and Penev, 2016). In addition, until the moment WB countries have been declared safe countries of origin in the process of decision-making on asylum status, a considerable number have repeatedly tried to gain asylum in an EU country, and their motive was not only asylum but the benefits provided during the application process itself (Predojević-Despić and Penev, 2016). The results of the research conducted in all three observed WB countries showed that the asylum seekers were from the poorest strata of society, low qualified or unqualified, who tried to overcome their mainly economic problems and deprivation by obtaining asylum status or by some other model for settling in the country of destination (Kelijašević, 2020).

4.2 Characteristics of Temporary Migrants in and from Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, and Serbia

A quantitative statistical approach has been used for research on temporary migrants¹ in Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, and Serbia as well as for temporary migrants from those three WB countries in the EU-27 countries. For data on foreigners with temporary residence² in BH, NM, and RS, we used administrative sources (i.e. Agency for Statistic of Bosnia & Herzegovina, 2023; IOM, 2022; The

¹ This term in the following text refers to citizens of BH, NM, and RS in the EU-27 with first residence permit obtained for period from 3 to 11 months as well as foreigners with first temporary residence permit in Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, and Serbia.

² The provisions of the law on foreigners in Bosnia and Herzegovina (“Official Gazette of Bosnia and Herzegovina”, No 88/2015 and 34/2021), in North Macedonia (“Official Gazette of North Macedonia”, No 97/2018, 108/2019, and 294/2021), and in Serbia (“Official Gazette of Republic of Serbia”, No 24/2018 and 31/2019) regulate the conditions and procedure for issuing a temporary residence permit and the validity of temporary residence given. The temporary residence permit is issued to a foreign national intending to reside in one of those countries for a period longer than

Government of the Republic of Serbia—GORS, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021). Given the data availability reasons, for those countries as destinations of temporary migrants, the analysis is focused on the 2015–2021 and 2017–2021 time series for BH, and RS on 2015, and 2019 data for North Macedonia, by the state of citizenship. Furthermore, for those countries as the origin of temporary migrants, we used data on first residence permits by reason, defined validity, and citizenship from the Eurostat database, “Table MIGR_RESFIRST” to be able to compare data for BH, NM, and RS. Those data are also based on administrative sources (administrative records of the national authorities) of the EU-27 countries of temporary migrants destinations. The Eurostat data on first residence permits (that are valid for a period ranging between 3 and 11 months as well as first permits with a duration of 12 months or over) have a number of persons as a statistical unit of measure (third-country nationals) annually. Given the data availability reasons, the analysis is focused on the 2014–2021 time series, by the state of citizenship.

4.2.1 Temporary Migrants in Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, and Serbia

Given the fluctuation in the number of temporary migrants at the national level, the total number of temporary migrants in the Western Balkan countries BH, NM, and RS only slightly increases from 2015 to 2019, from 16,500 to 17,900 annually. However, country-by-country data show rising trends in the number of new temporary migrants in Serbia. During the reference period 2015–2021, their number increased 2.5 times (GORS, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021). For Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia, the number of new temporary migrants showed a slight decrease within the 2017–2021 period and 2015 and 2019, respectively. The decrease in the number of temporary migrants is also evident in BH and RS during 2020 when the Covid-19 pandemic came up (Fig. 4.1). Although decreasing since 2015, there has been a significant increase in the number of new temporary migrants in North Macedonia across all grounds if compared to earlier periods such as 2009 (IOM, 2022).

Continuity is observed in the three countries of origin of the largest number of foreigners who have been granted a temporary stay for the first time in one of the three WB countries considered. Namely, between 2017 and 2021, main origin countries of temporary migrants in BH were Turkey, Serbia, and Croatia. The share of temporary migrants from those countries varied between 60 and 49% in a total number of temporary migrants during the 2017–2021 period in BH (Agency for Statistic of Bosnia & Herzegovina, 2023). During the same period, main origin countries of temporary migrants in RS were China, Turkey, and Russia. The share of temporary migrants from China, Turkey, and Russia in Serbia varied between 30 and 47% until 2019, rising to 2/3 of the total during the pandemic 2020 and 2021 years (GORS,

90 days on the grounds of employment, studies, family reunification, etc. The temporary residence can be renewed for a period necessary to achieve the purpose of stay and shall not exceed a year.

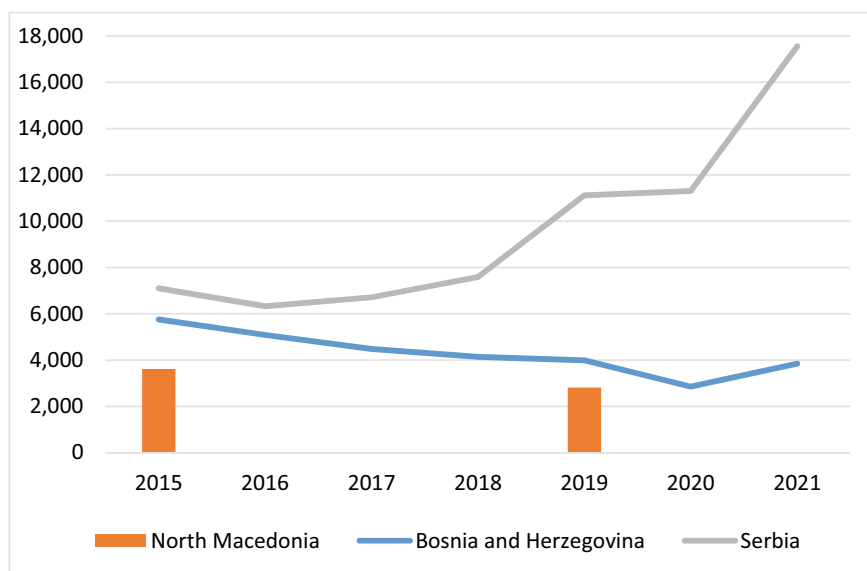


Fig. 4.1 Temporary migration flows to Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, and Serbia

2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021). For NM, in 2015 and 2019, the three countries of origin of the largest number of new temporary migrants were Turkey, Serbia, and Albania, making up between 55 and 60% of the total (IOM, 2022).

For the period 2017–2021, large differences are noticeable between BH and RS on the share of the main grounds for issuing temporary visas for the first time. Namely, for Serbia, employment prevails, whilst for Bosnia and Herzegovina, shares of the three main grounds for issuing first temporary visas (employment, education, and family) have been more equal (Fig. 4.2). About 1500 per year, first permits due to education have been issued in Serbia and about per 1100 per year on the same ground in BH and NM. Since 2017, employment has been the leading reason for the first temporary residence in Serbia, whose share in the total has been continuously increasing year by year, whilst the share of educational and family reasons has been continuously decreasing year by year in the 2017–2021 period. During this period, the most numerous temporary migrants in Serbia on the ground of employment have been nationals of China followed by nationals of Turkey, whilst nationals of Russia and Montenegro have been the most numerous on the ground of family and education reasons, respectively (GORS, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021). For BH year-by-year data show that during 2017 and 2018, the leading reason for temporary migration in Bosnia and Herzegovina was education. However, after 2019, employment from the second place became the leading reason for granting a temporary stay to new foreigners in BH. The share of educational and family reasons for first temporary residence in Bosnia and Herzegovina is continuously decreasing, similar to Serbia. The exception is the pandemic years 2020 and 2021 when the share of family reasons

increased for temporary migrants in BH when compared to the previous years. During the 2017–2021 period, the most numerous temporary migrants in Bosnia and Herzegovina on the ground of employment have been nationals of Serbia and Turkey, on the ground of family reasons have been nationals of Serbia, whilst on the ground of education, the nationals of Turkey have been the most numerous, followed by nationals of Serbia (Agency for Statistic of Bosnia & Herzegovina, 2023). In NM, in 2015, the largest share of new foreigners had temporary residence permits issued for the purpose of education and (academic) specialization and secondly on the ground of employment. More recent data from 2019 show that compared to 2015 employment has become the leading reason for first temporary residence in NM, whose share in the total has increased, whilst the share of educational and family reasons has decreased (IOM, 2022). In North Macedonia, a large number of new immigrants with temporary residence on all grounds come from Turkey. The largest number of temporary migrants in NM based on education or academic specialization continuously come from just one country: Turkey. The largest number of immigrants who came to North Macedonia for employment are from Turkey, Serbia, and Albania. The growing number of investment activities from Turkey in NM coincides with the growing number of immigrants for employment reasons from this country. This trend can be expected to continue in the coming years, with the tendency for temporary residence to transform into something longer and more permanent (IOM, 2022, p. 20). Most family-based temporary immigrants in North Macedonia come from Turkey or neighbouring countries in Western Balkan region. Therefore, “the immigration of foreigners to NM for marriage and other family-related reasons is expected to continue well into the future due to a strong culture of close family ties in the region and the persistent traditional patterns of marriage migration” (IOM, 2022, p. 22).

For Serbia, there is a rising trend in the number of foreigners who had temporary residence permits valid at the end of the year, from 20 thousand in 2017 to 34 thousand in 2021 (GORS, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021). Contrary, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the number of foreigners who had temporary residence permits valid at the end of the year slightly decreased from 10 thousand in 2018 to 8 thousand in 2021 (Agency for Statistic of Bosnia & Herzegovina, 2023). For both BH and RS, continuity is observed in the main countries of origin of temporary migrants as well as countries of origin of foreigners with temporary residence permits valid at the end of the year, namely: Serbia, Turkey, and Croatia for Bosnia and Herzegovina, and China, Turkey, and Russia for Serbia. However, in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia, differences are noticeable in relation to the reasons for temporary residence, when comparing flows and stocks in the sense that there is a greater share of family reasons amongst migrants with temporary residence permits valid at the end of the year.³

³ Data on foreigners with temporary residence permits valid at the end of the year were not available for North Macedonia.

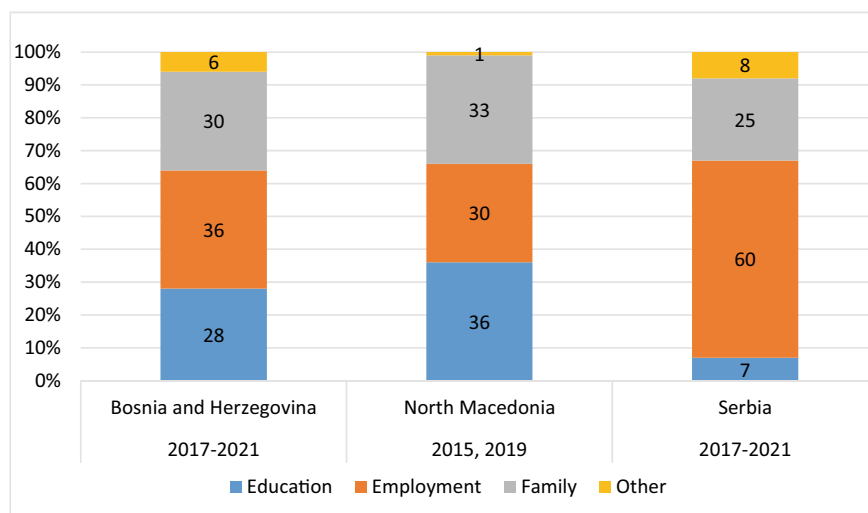


Fig. 4.2 The share of main reasons for a first residence permit of temporary migrants in BH, NM, and RS

4.2.2 *Temporary Migrants from Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, and Serbia*

The total number of temporary migrants from Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, and Serbia in the EU-27 countries was between 22,000 (2015) and 62,000 (2019) annually whilst continuously increasing since 2015. It reached its peaks in 2018, and 2019 but as expected decreased in the first and especially in the second year of the Covid-19 pandemic. It can be noticed that although with a smaller number of inhabitants than Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina is the origin of a larger number of temporary migrants in the EU-27 countries, in 2017, 2018, and 2019 (Fig. 4.3).

According to the Eurostat data (Eurostat, 2023), the number of first permits with a duration of 3–11 months from BH, NM, and RS in the EU-27 countries reached its peaks in 2018, and 2019 similar to the number of migrants with first permits of a duration of 12 months or over. Although there has been a decrease in the first year of the Covid-19 pandemic, in 2021, the numbers of immigrants from three Western Balkan countries in focus with first permits with a duration of 12 months or over have increased in EU-27 countries. By comparing the volumes of those two annual flows, we observe that in 2014–2017 period, the annual flows of migrants with first permits with a duration from 3 to 11 months from those countries are from 20 to 50% smaller than annual flows of migrants with first permits with a duration of 12 months or over (Fig. 4.4).

In the 2014–2021 period, the largest number of temporary migrants from BH, NM, and RS went to Germany (97,348), Croatia (64,235), Slovenia (44,444), Austria (39,443), and Italy (12,276). During this period, three countries (Germany, Croatia,

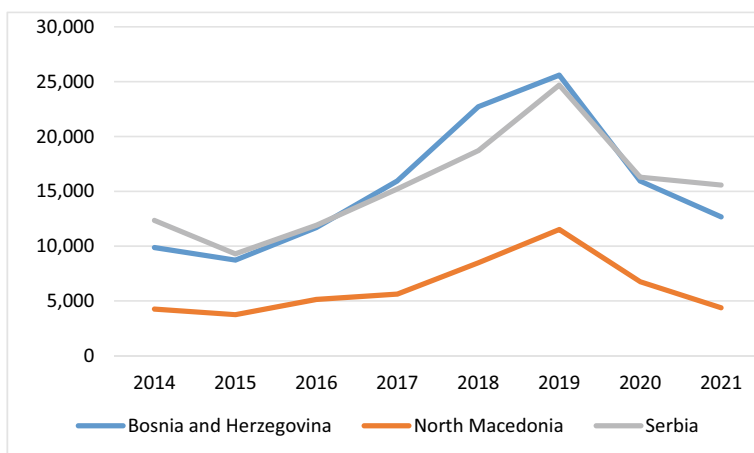


Fig. 4.3 Temporary migration flows from BH, NM, and RS in EU-27, 2014–2021

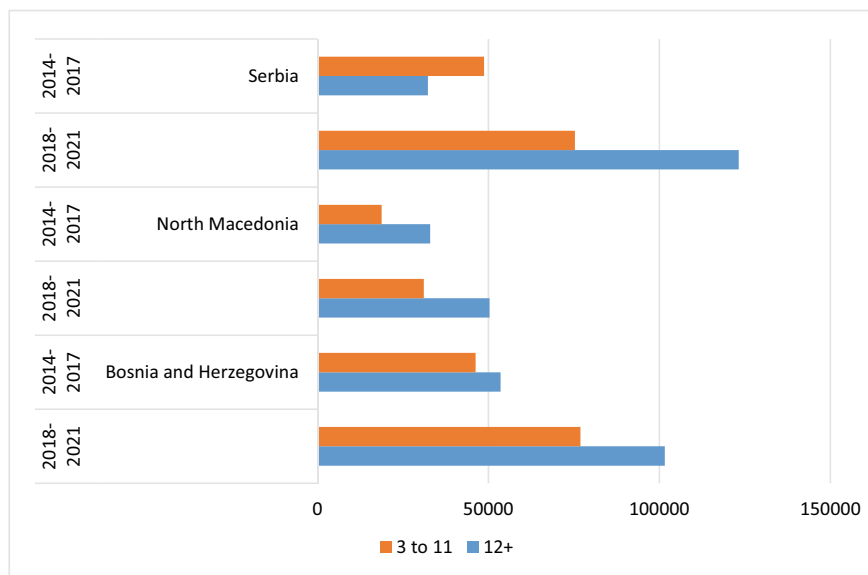


Fig. 4.4 The number of citizens of BH, NM, and RS with first residence permits obtained in the EU-27 by duration, 2014–2017, 2018–2021

and Slovenia) hosted the large majority of nationals of BH, NM, and RS who received their first temporary residence permit with a duration from 3 to 11 months to stay in one of the EU member states. North Macedonians is in fourth place as a country of temporary destination is bordering Bulgaria, similar to Hungary for Serbians, whilst for the residents of Bosnia and Herzegovina Austria is in fourth place (Eurostat,

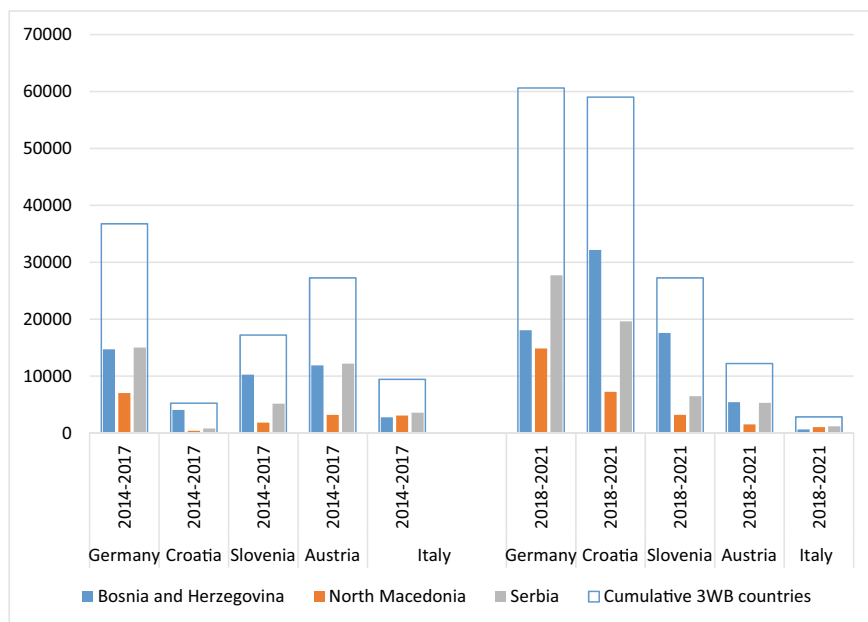


Fig. 4.5 Temporary migration flows from BH, NM, and RS according to the five main destination EU-27 countries, 2014–2017, 2018–2021

2023). Country-by-country analysis shows that for new EU member states Slovenia and Croatia as destinations the numbers of temporary migrants from three Western Balkan countries in focus have been steadily rising since 2017 (Fig. 4.5). Aranđrenko (2021) also points to the emergence of new EU member states as important destination countries for Serbian nationals since 2010, highlighting the temporary nature of those migration flows. According to data from 2020 and 2021 for Serbian nationals who received first temporary residence permits with a duration from 3 to 11 months, the new significant country of destination is Poland. One of the reasons is the restructuring of the economy and sending of the Fiat factory workers from Serbia via short-term work contract in Slovakia and Poland.

If we look at those who received first residence permits with a duration of 12 months or over in the 2014–2021 period, for the nationals of BH, the countries of destination are the same as for temporary migrants—Germany, Croatia, Slovenia, and Austria. The largest number of nationals of NM who received first residence permits with a duration of 12 months or over has been recorded in Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Austria, and Slovenia. Serbian nationals who received the first residence permit with a duration of 12 months or over were the most numerous in Germany and Austria, with a constant increase since 2016 for Slovakia,⁴ new member states, and

⁴ Serbian citizens went to Slovakia through intermediary employment agencies registered in Serbia.

former Yugoslav countries (Slovenia, Croatia) and its bordering country Hungary until the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic (Eurostat, 2023).

During the 2014–2021 period, employment has been the leading ground for the first temporary residence with a duration from 3 to 11 months of nationals of BH, and RS in the EU-27 countries. For North Macedonia nationals, family reasons prevailed until 2017 when employment reasons became the leading ground for first temporary residence with a duration from 3 to 11 months (Fig. 4.6). Within two pre-pandemic years, the first temporary residence permits on the ground of employment made up more than half of all first temporary residence permits of nationals of BH, NM, and RS. This share decreased in the years of the pandemic. Unlike Bosnia and Herzegovina's and Serbia's nationals, in both periods for nationals of North Macedonia, larger share make family reasons for temporary stay in one of the EU member states. Since 2018, for temporary migrants from the observed WB countries, the share of education and family reasons has been decreasing, whilst the share of employment has grown sharply, reaching three times higher values compared to family reasons for Bosnia and Herzegovina (Fig. 4.6).

In the 2014–2021 period for all three WB countries in focus, the number of nationals who received first residence permits (with a duration from 3 to 11 months but also with 12 months or over) on the ground of employment reasons in one of the EU member states is increasing until 2019 and started to decrease in the years of the pandemic. Country-by-country analysis shows that for all three Western Balkans countries analysed destinations of the largest number of temporary migrants on the ground of employment are Germany, Slovenia, and Croatia. The numbers have been growing for Croatia and Slovenia since 2017. Research on temporary guest labour migration between BH and the Central European EU countries points to Slovenia as an important destination for those migrants due to historical–geographical factors

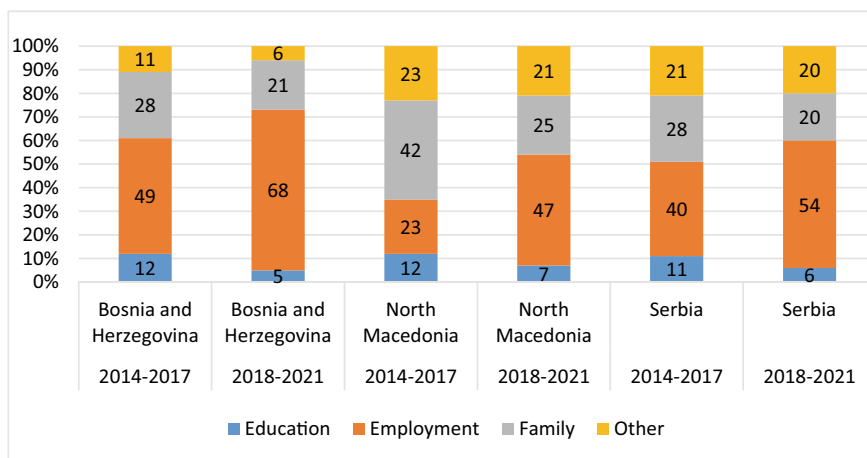


Fig. 4.6 The share of main reasons for a first residence permit of temporary migrants from BH, NM, and RS in the EU-27, 2014–2017; 2018–2021 (%)

(Ćudić et al., 2021). Destinations with a growing number of temporary migrants from Serbia are Poland, Slovakia, and Hungary as well. Other important destinations for employment for North Macedonian and Serbian nationals with residence permits with a duration of 12 months or over are Slovakia and Malta as well but also Czechia for Serbian nationals.

What the citizens of all three Western Balkan countries have in common is that although the share of family reasons has been decreasing since 2018, it has increased in the years of the pandemic. For the temporary migrants from North Macedonia staying in one of the EU countries in 2020 and 2021, the share of family reasons (31%, 33%) almost reached the values for employment reasons (35%, 36%), respectively. However, according to a detailed analysis, it can be noticed that whilst the number of temporary migrants based on family reasons decreased in the 2020–2021 period in the other two WB countries, it sharply increased for Serbia.

The examination of the reasons for issuing first-time residence permits with a duration of 12 months or over in EU-27 during the 2014–2021 period points to the prevalence of family reasons for nationals of NM during the whole period observed. For citizens of Serbia, family reasons also prevail for all years but 2018 and 2019, whilst for citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina family reasons prevail until 2016, when employment reasons start to lead. In the 2014–2021 period, citizens of BH mainly travelled to Germany, Austria, Slovenia, and Croatia, on the ground of family reasons regardless of the length of the duration of first permits. On the same ground temporary migrants from North Macedonia travelled to Germany, Italy, and Switzerland (especially for those with first permits with a duration of 12 months or over), whilst those from Serbia travelled to Germany and Austria.

In the 2014–2021 period, the number of nationals of BH, NM, and RS who received their first temporary residence permits with a duration from 3 to 11 months to stay in one of the EU member states on the ground of education reasons reached its peak in 2016–2018 period, and since 2019 decreases. The number of those who gained residence permits with a duration of 12 months and over to stay in one of the EU member states on the ground of education with some oscillations increases for all Western Balkan countries until the 2020 pandemic year.

The benefit of studying abroad for nationals of the observed three Western Balkans countries is a better starting position in the labour market with an EU diploma. Country-by-country analysis shows that for all three Western Balkans countries, one of the two destinations of the largest number of temporary migrants on the ground of education is the former Yugoslav republic Slovenia, where studies are free for all citizens of former Yugoslavia at state universities. However, Slovenia is an important destination only for citizens of BH, NM, and RS with first permits for education reasons of duration from 3 to 11 months. The second largest destination country for temporary migrants on the ground of education is neighbouring Bulgaria for North Macedonian nationals, Austria for nationals of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Germany for nationals of Serbia.

In almost all European countries, students are allowed to work during their studies and thus supplement their budget. The main restriction that applies to non-EU student visa holders is the number of hours allowed to work. The outbreak of the coronavirus

pandemic affected many students who worked in the hospitality sector and service industries. They were left without work and practically without the income from which they paid school fees, housing, food, and utilities. It seems that other reasons for choosing the country of destination are geographical proximity and historical relations. According to European Commission, Bulgaria has a long-standing policy of facilitating access to higher education in Bulgarian universities for foreign citizens who have Bulgarian origin but live outside Bulgaria. In Bulgaria, citizens from Northern Macedonia benefit from a special ordinance.⁵ A new decree announced in 2022 doubled the number of state-subsidized places in Bulgarian universities available to Northern Macedonian students, increasing their number from 150 to 300 per academic year.⁶ Therefore, Bulgaria is the main destination of temporary migrants from NM with first permits for education reasons. Students from BH have a tradition of studying in Austria. However, the hundred-year contract between Austria and Bosnia and Herzegovina expired, which guaranteed students from Bosnia and Herzegovina free study expired in 2004.

4.3 Government Responses, Programmes, and Actions Targeting Temporary Migrants

In the countries of the WB, a shift has been observed in the last ten years, with increasingly extensive research and the readiness of state institutions to deal more systematically with migration issues. There are positive attitudes focused on the development potential of international migration, as well as raising awareness of the impact of migration on all segments of society. Although it is positive that the complex topic of migration management in the WB region is beginning to be seen through a whole-of-government approach, progress is mainly related to the development of the legal and institutional framework⁷ for the implementation of migration policy, whilst the implementation of measures is far below a satisfactory level. It

⁵ Ordinance No. 228 of 20 May 1997 on the admission of citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia for students to the state higher education institutions of the Republic of Bulgaria.

⁶ State Gazette No. 5.

⁷ In this regard, important strategic documents and policies have been adopted in the observed countries of the WB region. For example, in BH, the Policy on Cooperation with Diaspora was adopted in 2017. A draft Framework Strategy for Cooperation with Emigrants of BH has also been prepared and is currently in the process of adoption. Among the most important strategic documents in NM are the Resolution on Migration Policy for the period 2009–2014 and the Action Plan, the Resolution on Migration Policy for the period 2015–2020, and for the period 2021–2025, as well as the National Strategy for Cooperation with the Diaspora 2019–2023. In RS, the most important strategic documents are the Migration Management Strategy from 2009, as an umbrella document that preceded the drafting of the law of the same name. Then, in 2011, the Strategy for Preserving and Strengthening the Relations between the Homeland and the Diaspora and the Homeland and Serbs in the Region was adopted. A special step in the direction of exploiting the migration potential for the development of the country is the Economic Migration Strategy of the Republic of Serbia for the period 2021–2027 and the Action Plan.

should be emphasized that so far in the entire region, the largest number of measures, programmes, projects, and initiatives in that domain have been implemented mainly with encouragement and cooperation with international organizations and the European Union (Predojević-Despić, 2021). Also, it is of great importance that in the WB, the migration agenda in strategic documents is expanded to include issues that also gain greater attention globally. Amongst them are the encouragement of return, the development of temporary and circular migrations, and the necessity of their better understanding for more efficient management and utilization for the benefit of all participants in the migration process.

Sudden problems caused by the enormous negative impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the society and economies of most countries, as well as on global migration trends and population mobility (Anderson et al., 2021) point to the limits of particular approaches to managing migration. Also, the need for significantly better management of temporary migration is indicated by the fact that before the outbreak of the pandemic, neither decision-makers nor academia considered how migrants can affect the systemic sustainability of basic services in cases of global crisis (Anderson et al., 2021).

On the other hand, the absence of measures to protect the position of temporary migrants significantly worsened the migration challenges and the negative health and socio-economic consequences that they and their families faced after the outbreak of the pandemic. This especially applies to temporary migrants who stayed abroad for a short time, were in circular work schemes, and had an unregulated stay in the destination countries (Moroz et al., 2020). Only some of the problems are caused by the termination of temporary employment contracts, which, in addition to the reduction or unpaid wages, often result in the loss of the possibility of legal status, accommodation, access to social protection, and health services. Special problems have been caused by movement restriction measures and border closures, which have made it even more difficult for migrants to return to their countries of origin. This is evidenced by the data of the Border Police of RS, that only in April 2020, i.e. at the time of the first closure of borders around the world, more than 50,000 citizens of RS who were staying abroad before the outbreak of the pandemic returned to the country, and the same number of foreign citizens were in transit through RS.⁸ Survey research (Vesković Anđelković, 2021) showed that for almost a third of migrants who returned to RS during the first wave of lockdowns, the motive for returning was a threatened financial existence, whether they were left without income, jobless, forced vacation, etc. Also, qualitative research conducted amongst citizens RS and NM who were abroad at the time of the outbreak of the pandemic and had a temporary work status (Lukić et al., 2021) shows that temporary migrants, especially those who often repeat their stay abroad, including undocumented labour migrants, as well as daily migrants, were exposed to the greatest insecurity after the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. Most of them were amongst the first to be dismissed in the countries of destination, before the end of the employment contract. Also, almost everyone was left without social and health protection. One of the reasons for the sudden change

⁸ The data were obtained from the RS Border Police Administration upon request.

in work and social status is that temporary migrants mostly work in sectors that were affected by the crisis immediately after the outbreak of the pandemic (Lukić et al., 2021). The results of the BiH research suggest that the pandemic has mostly affected middle-aged and low-skilled emigrant workers from BiH in EU countries (Ćudić et al., 2021).

Temporary migration initiatives and programmes during the past decades have often been met with strong criticism from the public around the world, which mainly related to numerous examples of exploitation and violations of the rights of migrant workers. At the same time, examples of good practices were rare and/or short-lived. On the other hand, the development of the framework and wider representation of well-designed temporary and circular migration programmes, such as EU migration circulation scheme and mobility partnership, which increases the prospects for safer legal labour migration, are very rare (Newland & Riester, 2018). Therefore, in order to be successful, temporary and circular migration programmes require precise legal regulation and coordinated management, in which return migration and reintegration into the country of origin are encouraged (Hugo, 2013; Vankova, 2020).

1. Improvement of the possibilities for wider representation of temporary and circular migration

The management of labour migration is largely under the jurisdiction of national legislation. For many countries, bilateral agreements are the most common way to regulate relations in this domain, despite the fact that they are not binding (Newland & Riester, 2018).

Certain mechanisms of bilateral cooperation with destination countries aimed at regulating and improving the position of its nationals abroad (in the field of labour, social, pension and disability, health insurance, etc.), development of circular migration programmes, temporary stays and seasonal work engagements, and/or remigration, although to varying degrees, are included in the strategies of all three observed countries. In the area of access to social insurance and pension transfers for the diaspora, in NM, amongst other things, it is stated that the communication between the competent institutions and their efficiency in approving requests for social insurance and timely payment of pensions to citizens in /from the diaspora should be improved. Providing support to emigrants in exercising their rights and interests abroad is of primary importance for the competent state institutions of BH. The need for creating benefits and privileges for return is also emphasized. A special goal of both the Serbian Economic Migration Strategy and the Resolution on Migration Policy of North Macedonia 2021–2025 is to create conditions for monitoring, encouraging, and supporting return, temporary, and circular migration. It is important that the measures for improving the residence policies for foreigners, with the more favourable visa regimes, have been stipulated in both RS and NM. Also, in order to have a better insight into the development potential of temporary and circular migration, the importance of conducting research on these phenomena is emphasized, as well as the development of mechanisms for regular monitoring of return and circular migrations. NM specifies the need for better information systems in terms of opportunities for temporary employment, but also for the purpose of education and training

abroad for their citizens. The RS strategy envisages the establishment and institutionalization of return and circular migration programmes, and their greater social affirmation is foreseen.

Unlike international students and refugees, there is no clear normative and institutional framework for labour migrants that regulates their access to rights. Although there is progress, the respect of the rights of temporary labour migrants in the national legislations of destination countries is far from satisfactory (Crepeau & Atak, 2016). Exploitation, poor working conditions, long working hours, low wages, and high commissions from employment agencies or other, often illegal intermediaries, are just some of the forms of violation of the rights of migrants involved in temporary work programmes.

After the initiation of the German Rule for the WB,⁹ a large increase in the number of employment agencies in the entire region was recorded in a short period of time. In some cases, dubious recruitment strategies were also applied (Bither & Ziebarth, 2018). Therefore, it is necessary to provide clear and accessible information for all participants in the migration process, especially the migrants themselves. Well-planned communication strategies would significantly reduce the risks of misuse. Hence, establishing a system that registers, controls, and monitors the work of employers who want to hire immigrants is very important. This would significantly contribute to the growth of public trust in the system, which is a key determinant of any migration policy (Bither & Ziebarth, 2018).

Also, it is necessary to work on the expansion of legal channels for the international recruitment of workers. In this sense, good cooperation between countries of origin and destination is key, because in this way, many obstacles to the development of temporary and circular migration programmes can be more effectively overcome. Numerous actors involved in facilitating international migration, known as the migration industry, can significantly help in providing better conditions for migrants, as well as more efficient use of migration for development. However, for many of them, migration is just a business that brings profit (Hugo, 2013). Also, an insufficiently defined legal framework and communication strategies are even desirable for them because they enable insufficient transparency in work, as well as provide the “possibility” of great benefits (Shivakoti, 2022).

Possibilities for the expansion of circular migration programmes should also be developed through examples of good practice. Amongst them is the positive experience of cooperation between the National Employment Service (NES) and the German Organization for International Cooperation (GIZ). It is important that in RS and the WB, the potential of advisory centres, where migrants can, among other things, get reliable information and advice on various migration issues, is further developed. Also, the capacities of personnel in the NES should be further strengthened. In order to protect the rights of migrants, examples of good practices in other

⁹ In 2015, Germany enacted a new regulation, allowing nationals from the WB to receive temporary work visas as long as they have a job offer from a German employer. For more information: https://gsp.cgdev.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/CGD-Legal-Pathways-Database_Western-Balkan-Regulation-1.pdf.

countries can be applied. For example, in some countries, only state agencies are engaged to mediate in finding employment abroad (Newland & Riester, 2018).

The development of the policy of temporary and circular migration can be considered successful only if it equally takes into account the interests and development effects of both the countries of destination and the countries of origin of migrants. One of the recommendations for improving the German Rule for the WB (Bither & Ziebarth, 2018) is to prevent potential deficiencies in the labour markets of countries of origin, especially in the supply of skilled workers, as well as the possible underutilization of the capacities of engaged migrants in destination countries. However, examples of visa facilitation, such as in Germany, do not always contribute to the development of the countries of origin. The project Triple Win Nurses—Sustainable recruitment of nurses in the WB¹⁰ between 2013 and 2020 was implemented by GIZ in RS and BH in partnership with national employment services. About 1400 medical workers have been employed and settled in Germany. It is emphasized that the project provides benefits not only for migrants and the destination country, but also for the country of origin, through the possibility of sending remittances, but also by reducing the number of unemployed medical staff. However, not only the unemployed, but also employed candidates had the right to apply, and after the validation of diplomas, it was possible to obtain a permanent residence permit in Germany. Therefore, the certainty of the win effect for countries of origin is called into question. Also, the same question arises when looking at the possible effects of the German Skilled Workers Immigration Act, whose goal is to facilitate the procedures for employing foreign workers in scarce occupations. Since its entry into force in March 2020, the number of issued visas for non-EU citizens has grown very quickly and reached 90,000 by the end of 2021. RS, BH, and Albania are amongst the top origin countries (OECD et al., 2021).

In order to establish flexible visa regimes, it is necessary to enable as little dependence of migrants on the employer as possible. The aim of the Open Balkan initiative, inaugurated in 2021 through an agreement between RS, NM, and Albania, is to create a common regional economic area and improve the conditions for EU membership, as well as regional mobility. Amongst other things, the agreements foresee the introduction of a single work permit for the three economies, as well as a significant simplification for obtaining them (OECD, 2022). RS has started amendments to the Law on Foreigners and the Law on Employment of Foreigners, which enable their faster and easier employment. Instead of going to two addresses for obtaining a temporary residence permit and a work permit, in the future, foreigners will only perform the procedure at the Ministry of the Interior. It should be emphasized that these changes began to be implemented after a large influx of foreigners to RS in 2022 and 2023, mainly Russian and Ukrainian citizens.

Allowing temporary migrants to obtain visas with which they could repeat their temporary stay often proved to be very beneficial, as migrants did not have to be separated from their families for long periods of time. Experience has shown that when

¹⁰ For more information: Triple Win Nurses—Sustainable recruitment of nurses from four countries, <https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/41533.html>.

migrants can circulate freely, they generally behave that way (Newland & Riester, 2018). One of the strategies could be to facilitate visas and long-term work contracts, whilst improving opportunities for acquiring new skills. This particularly applies to situations of sudden crises, such as the—Covid-19 pandemic, when a significantly reduced volume of labour migration was evident. Although such strategies could have negative effects on the functioning of transnational families, they contribute to avoiding the payment of expensive periodic and intermediary fees that migrants separate for each work engagement, and can also contribute to the improvement of migrants' human capital, as well as labour productivity (Görlach & Kuske, 2022; Yeoh, 2020).

Migration policy should also include measures that reduce the costs and negative effects of migration to the lowest possible level. Amongst the most significant are measures that minimize the negative consequences of family separation due to circular migration (Hugo, 2013). It is also important to work on enabling better living conditions abroad, for example, so that migrants have accommodation of an acceptable standard whilst they periodically stay abroad. Amongst the measures that can significantly encourage temporary and circular migration, as well as the return of migrants to their countries of origin, is the development of opportunities for specially designed social protection benefits, portable pensions, health and life insurance, which can be easily adapted to the needs of circular migrants.

2. Return and reintegration require long-term support

Reintegration of migrants after returning to their country of origin is one of the most demanding processes. In the world, only a very small number of migrants have the opportunity to go through reintegration programmes (Ruiz Soto et al., 2019). Also, most programmes focus on the inclusion of returnees in the labour market, whilst the improvement of conditions at the structural level is neglected. Programmes should be gender-responsive and provide a wide range of services (Wickramasekara, 2019). The reintegration process requires long-term support and significant resources, which existing programmes usually cannot fulfil (Newland & Salant, 2018). In this way, the long-term effects of the reintegration programme are called into question. Therefore, GIZ's initiative to establish electronic registration of seasonal workers, domestic and foreign, in agriculture in RS is very important. It is planned to expand the electronic databases to seasonal occupations in other sectors, and to include new occupations, such as domestic work (cleaners, babysitters, etc.). This would significantly improve the position of migrant women and protect the rights of the most vulnerable categories of migrants. It would also enable new types of legal entry into the labour markets of the destination countries, and the establishment of a base in other countries of the WB would also encourage a better circulation of labour within the region.

Cooperation with the private sector can give a very significant stimulus to the development of reintegration programmes (Hooper, 2019). A support programme for seasonal agricultural workers from Colombia in Spain was noted, where they were given after-hours instruction to develop a business plan that the migrants could implement upon their return home (Newland & Salant, 2018). Connecting returnees

with companies from the destination countries that operate in the migrants' countries of origin is also an option that should be developed (Hooper, 2019).

The development of a framework for temporary and circular migration is considered to reduce emigration pressure and to avoid permanent departure, especially of skilled labour and their families. Along with the envisaged measures to improve living and working conditions in the country, mostly all WB countries emphasize in their migration strategies the need to create better conditions for return and reintegration of expatriates, especially those whose professional qualifications are in demand in the countries of origin. The German Information Center for Migration, Training and Career (DIMAK) was established within national employment services, i.e. Migration Service Centers in RS, but also Albania and Kosovo*. The aim was to provide reliable information and advice on the benefits of working in Germany, on training, study and professional development, as well as legal departure to Germany, professional advancement and job opportunities. At DIMAK, returnees from Germany and from third countries are advised on social and economic reintegration in the country of origin.

In order for migration to have a positive impact on countries of origin, it is necessary for returnees to have opportunities to activate and further develop the knowledge and skills acquired abroad. However, there is often a lack of economic opportunities, a mismatch between their skills and the required qualifications on the labour market, as well as problems with the recognition of diplomas obtained abroad. In addition, there is often distrust of emigrants and returnees in state institutions, as well as problems to reactivate social and professional networks, which is important for a sense of belonging to society (Ruiz Soto et al., 2019).

To minimize the unfavourable drivers and structural factors that force people to leave their country of origin permanently is a specific goal of NM migration policy. The goal of the RS economic migration strategy is the improvement of living and working conditions in the economic and social sector. This is planned to be achieved through structural reforms and raising the capacity and efficiency of the public sector, and by strengthening institutional capacities. The emphasis is placed on the creation of incentives to attract direct investment, starting own businesses and the development of an economy based on knowledge and innovation, as well as the strengthening of the fight for the rule of law, against corruption and nepotism.

One of the biggest challenges for decision-makers is how to design programmes and strategies that will support not only returnees, but also the local communities to which they return. The development of effective programmes and other services needed for reintegration is amongst the most important steps in this direction. That is why efforts to timely identify socio-demographic characteristics of returnees as well as their migration process are crucial. This would make it possible to devise measures adapted to the needs of migrants as quickly and better as possible (Hugo, 2013).

The experiences of Mexico and Latin American countries (Ruiz Soto et al., 2019) show that for the development of centres for the reception and reintegration of returnees, it is crucial that they can provide different types of services, both those related to all returnees, and services that are adapted to each user individually. Also,

compliance in the coordination of a large number of actors involved in their work is very important. The experiences of the YOUMIG Project aimed at formulating a one-stop approach for young migrants and returnees in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, including RS, both in immigration and emigration environments (Soltész, 2019) can be a good basis for the further development of this approach in the WB area. In order to empower young migrants by providing relevant information about their rights, obligations, and opportunities, as well as administrative procedures to be undertaken at the local level, transnational cooperation of a large number of national, regional, and local institutions has been ensured to enable various migration services (Soltész, 2019).

Measures aimed at improving the international circulation of students and attracting foreign students, and more often foreign workers whose occupations are in demand, are also represented in the migration strategic documents of most WB countries. The Serbian Economic Migration Strategy also foresees measures for the development of programmes for attracting and including foreigners of various educational profiles in the labour market of RS. The mobility of students and researchers should be encouraged through the harmonization of the education system with the needs of the labour market, with an emphasis on monitoring innovations. It is emphasized that the capacities of higher education institutions for attracting foreign students and researchers should be strengthened. In NM, the need for the creation of a policy for the reduction of intellectual emigration and the return of highly educated persons from abroad is emphasized. Diaspora mapping and the creation of a database for distinct categories of migrants is also planned. Both, RS and NM emphasize the need to develop programmes to retain human capacity from the category of deficit occupations, as well as to create a supportive environment for attracting highly qualified professionals, returnees and immigrants, such as to facilitate faster mutual recognition of skills and qualifications. Although not specifically meant for temporary migration, the special goal is to improve the cooperation between the diaspora and the home country, to encourage a wide variety of investment options for transnational entrepreneurship, through favourable business conditions. Measures are planned to strengthen the cooperation of professionals of various profiles in the country and abroad and to facilitate return after acquiring new knowledge and skills, including the development of investment projects and analyses of potential investors, in the implementation of public–private partnership projects as well as mediation in investment and other activities. It is pointed out that it is necessary to create a proactive attitude of local self-governments towards the diaspora.

To boost intra-regional mobility, the Common Regional Market 2021–24 Action Plan was endorsed by WB6 leaders in 2020. It foresees to implement freedom of movement for students, researchers, and professors, and for individuals based on identity documents, and remove work permits for intercompany transfers and service providers. It is also envisaged to reduce obstacles for fast and quality recognition of academic qualifications in the WB, as well as to establish portability of social rights and removal of working permits (OECD, 2022).

In this sense, the initiatives of EU programmes that support academic and youth mobility and cooperation should also be highlighted. Amongst the most important

ones in which WB countries are included are Tempus, Erasmus + , the Central European Exchange Program for University Studies, the European Regional Master's Programme, etc. RS and NM, as third countries, are associated with the Erasmus/Erasmus + programme, and together with EU member states can participate in all parts of the program, whilst BH is still not a full member, and can only participate in some parts of the programme (OECD, 2022).

The role of science and technology parks in attracting elite workforce structures and their investments is very important. They can be a shortcut to connect international entrepreneurs with the growth of jobs in the private sector and can facilitate the establishment of business activities in the science and technology sector (Hooper, 2019). Research in the Netherlands (Eckardt, 2017) showed that science parks should be understood as multidimensional networks that significantly attract highly skilled migrants and boost regional economic development. It is also stated that stimulating the international atmosphere and building local–global interaction, as well as wide cooperation networks, are amongst the most important factors for attracting foreign experts to science parks. Therefore, the role of the state in their further strategic development should be strengthened. In this sense, cities and regions should also play a significant role (Eckardt, 2017). In the countries of the WB region, since the mid-2010s, the number of business-technical incubators and science technology parks are on the fast rise. However, it turned out that support for infrastructural innovations was not enough, whilst long-term and sustainable financing was also missing (Jach et al., 2020), which was also stipulated in the RS smart specialization strategy 2020–2027.

3. Proactive attitude of the state for flexibility and sustainability of migration measures

Accomplishing good results of migration policies is not easily achievable even in the case where there is a clearly defined and coherent management system. In order to ensure sustainability, migration measures must be consistent with other development strategies. In order to achieve results, it is necessary to develop effective communication and coordination strategies between countries of origin and destination, which in the field of migration is currently more the exception than the rule (Newland & Salant, 2018).

The most important condition for achieving effective migration management is strengthening institutional capacities and institutional coordination. The importance of new models of migration governance is highlighted, such as the management at various levels of government and the development of partnerships with civil society organizations. The policy of BH emphasizes that it is essential to strengthen the capacities of local self-government units for cooperation with emigrants, since it is the level of government that effectively and directly realizes cooperation with emigrants that results in mutual benefits. Therefore, it is emphasized that the activities of the civil sector abroad and in BH should be supported, which contribute to strengthening the ties of emigrants with the country of origin. The Strategy for Cooperation with the Diaspora and Resolution on Migration Policy of NM states that the success of the implementation of economic cooperation measures with the

diaspora and returnees depends on the implementation at the local level and on the commitment of the local authorities to utilize this potential for development. Strategic objective of the migration strategy is strengthening the capacities and the coordination role of the intra-governmental body for development and implementation of the migration policy. RS Economic Migration Strategy emphasizes the importance of strengthening the capacities of institutions responsible for monitoring migration trends and establishing a greater degree of coordination to support the inclusion of the concept of temporary migration and mobility in development policies. The role of local actors stands out as key to the sustainability and implementation of the concept of migration and development. Therefore, it is stated that better coordination should be achieved at the local level, as well as the strategic and operational connection of local migration councils¹¹ with youth offices and local employment councils. The role of the Coordination Body for Monitoring Economic Migration Flows¹² is thus emphasized, with the competence of reviewing all issues of economic migration and directing the work of state administration bodies in that area.

Between the very large number of institutions involved in the implementation of the measures, there must be strong intersectoral cooperation and a clear plan of cooperation and responsibility (Ruiz Soto et al., 2019). However, in many countries of the WB, it has been shown that cooperation between state and non-state institutions, as well as institutions at different levels of administration, needs to be significantly improved. This particularly refers to cooperation with certain ministries, such as The Ministry of Internal Affairs, or public institutions that function both at the national and local level of administration, such as National Employment Service (Predojević-Despić & Lukić, 2021; Soltész, 2019). A significantly larger number of personnel who have the knowledge and experience to understand and successfully manage demanding migration systems is needed (Hugo, 2013). Therefore, in the domain of migration, it is important to develop functional strategies and policies that encourage cooperation between numerous and different institutions and levels of administration, as well as effective coordination between national and local administrations, often transnational levels, the civil society sector and other relevant actors.

One of the basic problems in building an efficient migration management system is the absence and/or insufficient availability of relevant and internationally comparable data on migration and (re)integration. Although this is a problem in all countries of

¹¹ Since 2012, a local migration council has been formed in almost all local self-government units as the main local body dealing with migration management: local administration, police administration, employment service, school administration, local trustee, health centre, centre for social work, Red Cross, and civil society organizations. In 2012, all local migration councils were trained in the basics of migration management organized by KIRS and IOM.

<https://serbia.iom.int/sites/default/files/publications/documents/Prirucnik%20o%20migracijama%20i%20lokalnom%20razvoju.pdf>

¹² In order to overcome the possible problem of stronger emigration of skills and talents after EU accession, in 2019, the Government of Serbia formed the Coordination Body for Monitoring Economic Migration Flows in Serbia, which included professionals from various fields: competent ministers, members of the academic community, representatives of state statistics, employers and successful businessmen, as well as representatives of large trade unions. The result of this cooperation is the Economic Migration Strategy for the period 2021–2027.

the WB, the complex shortcomings of migration statistics are a global problem. Thus, as one of the main areas of intervention, most countries state the improvement of monitoring systems and data quality, as well as the exchange of migration and other relevant data (UNECE, 2016). This challenge has been recognized in all WB countries, including the three observed countries, so one of the main areas of the envisaged intervention is to improve the monitoring system and data quality, as well as the exchange of data in the field of migration and its impact on the labour market and other spheres of society. For example, NM has proposed a set of measures and activities for consistent application of the legal obligation of reporting departures/arrivals of the North Macedonian citizens upon leaving/returning to the country (Janeska, 2013). The migration policy stipulates the importance of the provision of relevant statistics and accurate and desegregated data on external migration. In BH, improvements in quantitative migration statistics are planned, the establishment of a system for collecting data on emigration at the local level, as well as the support for academic research and programmes that study the phenomenon of migration in an interdisciplinary manner. Albania plans to identify gaps in the administrative data collection on migration and elaborate a new standard model for its collection. In RS, one of the strategic goals is to improve the monitoring and quality of data on economic migration, by establishing a regular, updated, and synchronized statistical database for monitoring migration flows. The need for measures to strengthen appropriate technical and human capacities is emphasized in order to improve the collection of data on return and circular migration.

4.4 Discussion and Conclusion

Our results show that there has been an increase in the number of new temporary migrants in BH, NM, and especially in RS. For RS, there is also a rising trend in the number of foreigners who have temporary residence permits at the end of the year. Between leading countries of origin of new temporary migrants, Turkey stands out as the common country for all three WB countries in focus. Other countries of origin of a larger number of temporary migrants point to the importance of geographical proximity, i.e. Serbia for Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia, Croatia for Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Albania for North Macedonia. In all three WB countries analysed, the share of education and family as the leading ground for first temporary residence is decreasing over time, whilst the share of employment as the basis for the first temporary visa is increasing, pointing to the labour force demand.

Analysis of temporary migration flows from the point of Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, and Serbia as origin countries of temporary migrants in the EU-27 countries point to a continuous increase from 2015 until 2020 (the Covid-19 pandemic year). It is especially expressed for Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the ex-Yugoslav republics and the new EU member states Slovenia and Croatia, the numbers of temporary migrants from BH, NM, and RS have been steadily rising since 2017. This is partly a consequence of the increase in labour demand in Croatia, given the

increasing emigration of its citizens to other EU countries after joining the EU. For Serbian nationals who received their first temporary residence permits with a duration from 3 to 11 months, the new significant country of destination is Poland. One of the reasons is the restructuring of the economy and sending of the Fiat factory workers from Serbia via short-term work contracts in Slovakia and Poland. Within two pre-pandemic years, the first temporary residence permits on the ground of employment reasons made up more than half of all first temporary residence permits of nationals of BH, NM, and RS. This share decreased in the years of the pandemic. What the temporary migrants from all three WB countries have in common is that although the share of family reasons has been decreasing since 2018, it has increased in the years of the pandemic. The countries of destinations for the temporary migrants on the ground of family reasons are border countries as well as traditional destination countries for BH, NM, and RS citizens. As Arandarenko (2021) emphasizes related to the growth of the share of family reasons for issuing first-time residence permits to Serbian citizens, they do not completely preclude migrants from working and also offer a possible track towards naturalization. Country-by-country analysis shows that for all three WB countries, one of the two destinations with the largest number of temporary migrants on the ground of education is the former Yugoslav republic Slovenia, where studies are free for all citizens of former Yugoslavia at state universities.

During the last ten years, the governments of the three observed countries are beginning to work more dedicatedly to find a systemic response to the long-term problems of emigration, as well as to the complex challenges posed by international migration flows. It is also of great importance that there are positive attitudes in strategic documents that migration can positively affect the development and unfavourable demographic, social, and economic circumstances, present throughout the region. The first step in tackling a number of challenges and addressing migration more comprehensively is the adoption of important national strategic documents and policies on migration and on possible ways of exploiting its development potential. One of the important topics in this regard is the development of a framework for wider application of temporary and circular migration, student mobility, as well as the creation of better conditions for return and reintegration, especially of skilled emigrants for whose requirements there is an immediate need. It should be emphasized that in RS and NM, there is continuity in improving the creation of policy design. However, in BH, the country with very pronounced and complex migration problems, most of the strategic documents have been in the process of adoption for a long time, and many measures, especially those related to temporary and circular migration, have not been closely considered. Also, in order for the envisaged measures not to remain promising only on paper, it is necessary to overcome the significant challenges that stand between policy formulation and decision-making and implementation in all three observed countries.

Also, as temporary migration continues to grow in importance, it is essential that countries in the WB continue to develop and promote good practice in managing this phenomenon. Improvement in building legislation, developed interinstitutional cooperation and raised capacities of both national and local stakeholders, which

is significantly achieved through cooperation with research institutions, international organizations, and the civil sector, contributes to the view that the fragmented migration policy response must be focused on building the whole-of-government approach. In this sense, it is necessary to introduce more models of migration governance in the implementation of which a significantly larger number of actors will be involved. Therefore, it is crucial to develop innovative approaches to effectively manage temporary migration. It is necessary to establish strong cross-sector collaboration, shared responsibility, as well as a clear division of competencies not only between different ministries and public bodies at the national level, but also at other levels of government (regional and local). Research indicates that it is necessary to improve communication and cooperation with certain ministries and public institutions relevant to migration and related issues. This primarily refers to the Ministry of Interior and the National Employment Service, but also others. Therefore, it is essential to continuously work on strengthening institutional capacities and actors new to migration-related issues.

For the WB countries, as emigration areas, it is important to develop temporary migration programmes in cooperation with destination countries, which will also provide stimulation for wider representation of temporary and circular migration that for now have only a strong potential to provide development benefits for countries of origin and migrants. In this regard, it is important to further develop initiatives with countries that have the largest number of emigrants from the observed countries. In this sense, as the analysis confirmed, Germany has a special place. Examples of good practice, such as DIMAK, should be developed in order to promote regional migration and labour mobility in the WB. Also, our analysis clearly indicates the growing importance of new EU members as countries of destination for temporary labour migrants from all three WB countries. Therefore, interstate cooperation with them should be continuously improved through the establishment of better visa regimes. The policy should also include measures that efficiently reduce the costs and negative effects of migration, as well as the development of opportunities for portable social welfare benefits, pensions, health insurance, etc.

Great efforts are also needed to protecting the rights of migrant workers and their families and improving the working and living conditions whilst abroad. To combat fraud throughout the recruitment process and protect migrant workers from abuse and dependence on the will of agencies or employers needs further push. In this sense, providing clear and accessible information to participants in the migration process, especially migrants themselves, is important.

In the new migration strategies of the RS and NM, the lack of domestic labour in certain segments is pointed out, and measures are foreseen to encourage temporary labour and student migration, by enabling more favourable visa regimes, as well as better cooperation on improving mobility in the WB region. Therefore, already started activities should be encouraged in building opportunities for flexible visa regimes that will simplify administrative procedures and shorten the time needed to obtain visas, especially for work needs. In this way, an additional significant impulse would be given to temporary and circular migrations in the WB region. Although the visa regimes for medium and highly educated workforce are relatively

favourable, a step forward should be made in this sense by significantly improving the cooperation between the countries of origin and RS, NM, and BH as destination countries. Expanding the agenda to programmes of more favourable temporary visa regimes for workers who perform occupations that during the Covid-19 pandemic proved to be essential, but also deficient. In that process, the interests of both migrants and countries of origin and destination must be taken into account, which would significantly improve the functioning of the labour market in the region.

To make the most of development benefits, policy development should be directed towards measures that integrate temporary and circular migration into wider development programmes. Moreover, the success of policies should not only be measured by the volume of return, but must also take into account the impact of return migration on the welfare of migrants and their families (Schoch et al., 2020). Such a development strategy would also contribute to a more significant stimulation of return migration. Therefore, it is very important to design useful programmes and strategies that support not only returnees, but also the local communities to which they return. However, this is one of the biggest challenges for policymakers. It is necessary to develop innovative solutions to complex policy problems and work dedicatedly on their implementation. In this sense, the development of technology incubators and science parks in all three observed countries, but also in the entire WB region, should be developed through the inclusion of local communities and plans for their development should be integrated into other public policies.

Also, it is important that RS's migration strategies state that it is necessary to develop measures amongst the local population that highlight the importance of migrants for society and promote their (re)integration. In this sense, it should be emphasized that the transfer of skills and knowledge by returnees, as well as immigrants, represents a significant gain for the country of origin (Cassarino, 2014). In this sense, pilot programmes that affirm the importance of educational mobility, as well as scientific and cultural-artistic projects with emigrants, immigrants, and returnees, should be further developed.

Effective policies to encourage temporary migration, but also return and reintegration should cover the entire migration process, contain flexible measures that can be easily adapted to the needs of migrants, and be gender-sensitive and gender-responsive. It is necessary to implement measures aimed at a favourable environment for social and economic prosperity, the rule of law, high-quality public services and the highest standards of education and health care, along with the prevention of systemic corruption and the practice of nepotism and clientelism, etc. As the first step in achieving the goal, it is important that migration strategic documents emphasize the need for systemic reforms. The mismatch between their skills and labour market needs and distrust in government institutions, as well as the problems with the recognition of diplomas obtained abroad, are just some of the challenges that need to be further worked on devotedly in all WB countries.

Research shows that temporary and circular migrations cannot solve all the shortcomings in the labour market, that is, they can be one of the work strategies that should be developed, both in the countries of destination and in the countries of

origin (Venturini, 2008). Therefore, the development of policies in receiving countries, including WB countries, should go towards building a model with a harmonized relationship between circular migration options and opportunities for permanent settlement. It would also have a positive effect on encouraging international labour mobility.

Designing, establishing, and implementing effective and sustainable migration measures consisting of a well-designed mix of permanent, temporary/seasonal, circular and return migration is a huge challenge for any country. Therefore, it takes a lot of innovation, a clear vision, great commitment, good communication, cooperation, and compromise. The proactive attitude of the government and all state institutions is especially important in order to achieve high flexibility of measures, which will be easily adapted to the individual needs of migrants, as well as to changes in the labour market (Newland & Riester, 2018). That is why it is necessary to provide conditions for regular and dedicated implementation of migration and (re)integration programme evaluations. However, in the vast majority of countries, both of origin and destination, this is not the case. Amongst the most important reasons are limited financial resources, the selection of insufficiently reliable, that is, available indicators.

One of the main challenges is the lack of reliable and accessible data on international migration, and most countries refer to the improvement of the monitoring system and data quality, as well as the exchange of migration and migration-related data, as one of the main areas of intervention. A particular problem is the lack of data on the size of emigration and the characteristics of emigrants, temporary or long-term.

Therefore, in order to solve this problem, it is important to strengthen and expand cooperation between national statistical institutes of countries of origin and countries of destination of migrants, as well as international organizations. It is also essential to establish a regular, updated, and synchronized statistical database for monitoring migration flows in all WB countries (Predojević-Despić & Penev, 2016). The migration data of the destination countries and the data of international organisations are also important. However, the data are much less accessible, less comprehensive in content and above all adapted to the needs of the destination countries users. Also, it should be emphasized that migration statistics in the vast majority of countries are defined according to the principles of permanent residence in destination countries, so a system that can continuously and reliably monitor international migration, especially temporary and short-term work stays abroad, should be established globally (UNECE, 2016). In this sense, new research in both economies of origin and destination are needed (OECD, 2022).

Bearing in mind the mentioned limitations, the statistical data used in the chapter cannot encompass all the complexity of the temporary migration phenomenon in the context of the researched WB countries. Furthermore, the quality of data and different series of data limit the analysis. Future research on this subject, by using qualitative and mixed method findings, can shed light on neglected types of temporary migration in national strategies such as international student mobility, given that an internationally educated labour force is a huge potential for WB countries.

Also, overcoming of both statistical and research gap of international mobility of students in WB, both the group of foreign students in observed countries, and citizens of observed countries studying abroad, would be useful for the development of new directions in evidence-based policy towards international students as future (high) skilled workers. In this way, regional mobility could be significantly improved in the future, and better availability of quality labour force could be ensured throughout the WB.

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