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BALKANS

The Balkans and the EU facing the issue of migrations

The flow of migrants along the Balkan route in the summer experienced an unprecedented outbreak. More than 100.000 migrants and refugees passed through the Serbian borders in the last weeks, but the number is constantly increasing. The asylum-seekers mostly come from war areas in the Middle East (Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq) and Africa. The dimensions of the phenomenon are enlarging every day: Melissa Fleming, spokesman for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), affirmed that they expect that everyday up to 3.000 persons will pass through the border between Greece and Macedonia.

In fact the Balkan route is articulated in a itinerary that, starting from Turkey, includes Greece, Macedonia, Serbia, and Hungary. The final destination is the European Union, so the Balkan states are transition countries for nearly the totality of the migrants. Nevertheless, the problem of the flows of migrants along the Balkan route became the main issue at the moment for the region.

After the decision of the Macedonian government to open the boundaries that blocked the mass of migrants in Greece, the emergency shifted to Serbia. Among the governments of the region is clearly prevailing a kind of beggar-the-neighbour policy. Macedonia allowed the migrants proceed toward Serbian borders, without arranging the necessary support and assistance for the refugees. Bulgaria, afraid to be a

possible alternative route, decided to military control its Macedonian border. Hungary decided to accelerate the construction of a 175 Meters wall that will protect its southern boundary. Until the completion of the wall, expected for the end of august, Budapest embittered its regulation against illegal migrants.

In this dramatic circumstances, Serbia distinguished itself for a different approach. In fact Belgrade decided to prepare, as possible, a system of reception of the migrants that tries to guarantee a minimum level of assistance. In Serbia were arranged four assistance centres: in Preševo and in Miratovac in the south, in Kanidjia and in Subotica in the north. Furthermore Serbian government is according to the migrants a 72-hours residence permit and is trying to facilitate their passage. Nevertheless the situation in Serbia is at a collapse, humanitarian condition are alarming and the development of the phenomenon remains unpredictable, as the UNHCR delegate in Serbia admitted.

The situation described imposed that the issue of Balkan route of migrants was included at the firsts places of the agenda of the second Western Balkans Summit, held on the 27th August in Vienna. But this is not the only signal of attention from the European Union countries, the German decision to suspend the Dublin Agreement letting the Syrian migrants apply to the refugee status in Germany is a relevant message of attention.

But this approach still appears too hesitant, the issue of migrants requests urgent attention from the European Union. The European plan for the assignment of 40.000 migrants in two years signed last June is already outdated. In the last days President Hollande and Chancellor Merkel publicly proposed a European unified asylum system in order to face the “exceptional situation”. This is the most logic and fair way that has to be undertake, but without the participation of the Balkan countries at this process, this path may bring to an absolute dead end.