



## Situation Room – Horizon Series

### **\*\* BALKAN MIGRATION HORIZON: ALBANIA \*\***

**Period under review:** from January 2021 to 26 April 2021.

[This report is based on publicly available sources to describe a changing situation. Information subject to change.]

#### **Situation analysis recap:**

- In Albania, there are 129 refugees, 17 asylum-seekers, 1031 stateless people and 2078 persons of concern (PoCs). Top three countries of origin for refugees are Kosovo with 65 people, Syria with 14 and China with 12 people. As for asylum-seekers, 6 persons are from Syria, another 6 are from Palestine and two are from Morocco. Among PoCs the largest groups come from Syria (797 people), Afghanistan (337 people), and Iraq (327 people).
- Over the past three years, Albania witnessed a stark increase in the number of refugees and migrants arriving as part of mixed movements, putting a strain on asylum and border management systems. The country is a transit state that is becoming a popular migrant path to the EU since other countries along the Balkan migrant route have increased the surveillance at their borders.
- Albania adopted a new law on asylum in February 2021 that reinforces the framework for integration of refugees and further aligning the asylum system with international and EU standards.
- Refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants are not included in the national vaccination plan for COVID-19.
- Migrants try to reach Italy from Albania by sailing across the Adriatic Sea. Bad weather causes rough waves that can prevent inflatable dinghies from landing, thus trapping them at sea for hours. In January, Albanian police had to rescue 55 migrants, who were stuck for more than three hours in rough seas on the Adriatic Sea separating Albania from the eastern Italian coast.
- The European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) and the Albanian authorities have signed a mutual agreement to reinforce the cooperation of the two regarding border management and fight internationally organised crime.
- Ylva Johansson, EU Commissioner for Home Affairs, visited Albania in February, where she met with Albanian President of the Republic, Prime Minister, Minister of Interior and with the leader of the opposition. The group discussed cooperation with the EU and migration management systems.
- Greece and Albania signed a bilateral agreement that will create a customs and police collaboration facility at the Kakavia border crossing in the south of Albania. It aims to strengthen existing cooperation by finding solutions for managing and combating modern-day challenges and security threats, such as organized crime. Their mandate will be to exchange information and intelligence and coordinate on matters pertaining to illegal migration, human trafficking, extremism, travel document fraud, smuggling of narcotics, weapons and ammunition and other customs violations.
- Albania faces numerous allegations such as leaving migrants hungry (where they turn to begging to get by), intimidation of migrants by state officials, and push backs at the border.

#### **Sources/Further Reading:**

*Albanian Police Arrest Three Persons for Migrant Trafficking.* (17. January 2021). *Exit.* Available at <https://exit.al/en/2021/01/17/albanian-police-arrest-three-persons-for-migrant-trafficking/>

*Frontex Strengthens Its Partnership With Albania by Signing a Joint Border Control Agreement.* (19. March 2021). *Schengenvisainfo.* Available at <https://www.schengenvisainfo.com/news/frontex-strengthens-its-partnership-with-albania-by-signing-a-joint-border-control-agreement/>

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## EVRO-ATLANTSKI SVET SLOVENIJE EURO-ATLANTIC COUNCIL OF SLOVENIA

Greece, Albania establish cross-border crime prevention center. (18. January 2021). Ekathimerini. Available at <https://www.ekathimerini.com/news/261359/greece-albania-establish-cross-border-crime-prevention-center/>

Migration: Commissioner Johansson in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania. (16. February 2021). European Commission. Available at [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/news\\_corner/news/migration-commissioner-johansson-bosnia-and-herzegovina-and-albania\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/news_corner/news/migration-commissioner-johansson-bosnia-and-herzegovina-and-albania_en)

Taylor, A. (19. January 2021). Greece and Albania Sign Agreement for Police and Customs Collaboration Facility. Exit. Available at <https://exit.al/en/2021/01/19/greece-and-albania-sign-agreement-for-police-and-customs-collaboration-facility/>

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Wallis, E. (11. January 2021). Syrian migrants rescued off Albanian coast. InfoMigrants. Available at <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/29556/syrian-migrants-rescued-off-albanian-coast>

Wallis, E. (21. May 2020). Migrants in Albania: Begging for food, hiding from violence. InfoMigrants. Available at <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/24801/migrants-in-albania-begging-for-food-hiding-from-violence>

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