

Chachipe Press Review : EU Commission asks Serbia and Macedonia to tighten border controls 21.10.10

Asylum rise puts Balkan visa-free scheme in danger

SVETLANA JOVANOVSKA, SVETLANA ANTIC-JOVCEVSKA, MARTINA HERZOG AND ZELJKO PANTELIC

Today @ 10:20 CET

There has been a sharp increase in asylum applications from Serbia and Macedonia, which is causing concern in Belgium and Germany and could endanger the EU visa liberalisation scheme introduced last year.

EU home affairs commissioner Cecilia Malmstrom has written to Serbian and Macedonian ministers responsible for interior affairs – Ivica Dacic and Gordana Jankolovska – to say their countries could lose permission for citizens to travel in the EU without a visa.



A rise in asylum applications could risk visa privileges for some Balkan states (Photo: johnnyalive)

She said the EU Commission, together with the Belgian EU Presidency, is considering organising a high-level mission later this month to confirm the situation on the ground.

"Almost 10 months have passed since the visa obligation for entering EU Schengen countries was lifted for citizens of your country," wrote Ms Malmstrom. "Some member states are once again experiencing an alarming increase of persons coming from your country and seeking asylum. This trend is extremely worrying and might seriously jeopardise the entire process of visa liberalisation in the Western Balkans."

Ms Malmstrom's letters – seen by WAZ.EUobserver, and which are largely identical – are a double warning. The situation could lead to a renewed visa regime for Serbian and Macedonian citizens, but it could also delay an EU decision to lift the visa regime for Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Albania.

"As you know, a post-visa liberalisation monitoring process has been put in place by the commission service since January 2010. Consideration is now being given to further step up this process, so as to enable the EU to take appropriate action if difficulties persist," wrote Ms Malmstrom.

Germany and Belgium are the most concerned EU member states. Joachim Herrmann, interior minister of the southern German regional state of Bavaria, signalled willingness to lobby for a withdrawal of the visa waiver agreements with Macedonia and Serbia.

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"If this development continues, the European Union must act and reintroduce compulsory visas for these countries," he said in a statement issued on Tuesday (19 October).

Mr Herrmann presented figures showing a marked increase in asylum applications in Bavaria. Serbian applications have risen from 59 in 2009 to 130 in 2010, while Macedonian ones have shot up from just one to 260. Last month, most asylum seekers in Germany came from Serbia, followed by Afghanistan and Macedonia.

The Bavarian minister described the situation as "an obvious abuse of our asylum legislation."

Chances to get an application granted for legal right to remain in the country are extremely low for both Balkan groups in Germany, with an approval rate of only 0.3 percent among Macedonians and 1.2 percent among Serbs in 2010.

Belgium is also alarmed. The country's immigration minister Melchior Wathelet travelled to Macedonia and Serbia for the second time this year for meetings with local authorities and the government. In July and August, 210 Macedonians, 387 Serbs and 736 Kosovars requested asylum in Belgium and the numbers continue to rise. "It is important to act before the number explodes," said the ministry's spokesman.

The numbers first rose in January and February 2010, a few weeks after visa liberalisation agreements came into force. At the time, Belgian prime minister Yves Leterme visited Belgrade and Skopje to nudge his counterparts into action. Some successful efforts were made to stop the flow of applicants at the beginning of the year but, according to diplomats, the measures were not continued.

On Thursday, Mr Wathelet will be visiting the Kumanovo region in northern Macedonia where most of the country's predominantly Roma and Albanian asylum seekers come from. The message he intends to deliver is that EU countries are not willing to grant asylum to those who flee their country for economic reasons.

But Zekir Kazimovski, from the NGO United Roma Community, said he could understand the migrants' motives.

"The situation in the region and in the country pushes Roma to leave their homes and search better life elsewhere. The country does not answer the needs of this poor group of the population. They have enormous difficulties when winter advances, not only with heating but also with food or clothes," said Mr Kazimovski, adding that a hundred Roma families have already left the town.

Source: EU Observer

<http://waz.euobserver.com/887/31092>

Europe hit by scores of Western Balkan asylum seekers

Published: 21 October 2010

Officials are considering removing visa-free travel for Western Balkan citizens as growing numbers of asylum-seekers from these countries hit the borders of Sweden, Belgium and Germany.

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Background

The EU decided that from 19 December 2009, the citizens of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia who hold biometric passports should be able to travel to the Schengen area without visas. They are allowed to travel to the Schengen area for up to 90 days per six-month period.

For the time being, visa requirements remains in place for citizens from Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina. [The European Commission and the Parliament have given a favourable opinion](#) and if the member countries decide to give their green light, their citizens could travel without visas to the Schengen area before Christmas.

Kosovo is not covered by the Commission's initiative either. The former Serbian province is a 'sui generis' case, as it is not recognised by five EU countries (Greece, Spain, Cyprus, Romania and Slovakia).

Today, the [Schengen border-free area](#) consists of 25 member states: 22 EU countries (all except Bulgaria, Romania, Ireland, the UK and Cyprus) as well as three associated countries: Norway, Iceland and Switzerland. Denmark has signed the Schengen agreement, but has kept its freedom not to apply certain measures. The UK and Ireland decided to stay outside the Schengen area.

Last March, Belgium and Sweden received waves of ethnic Albanian and Roma [asylum seekers from Macedonia and Serbia](#). They were returned by bus to their countries of origin.

Almost a year ago, the EU removed visa requirement for the citizens of Serbia, Macedonia and Montenegro, but now some Western officials say the decision should be reversed.

In the German state of Bavaria, the number of asylum seekers coming from these countries has risen drastically over the past year, said Bavarian Interior Minister Joachim Hermann, quoted by the Serbian press agency Tanjug.

If the numbers continue to grow, the EU could consider reversing visa liberalisation schemes introduced at the beginning of 2010, Hermann said on Tuesday (19 October).

So far this year, there has been 130 Serbian and 260 Macedonians asking for asylum in Bavaria compared to 59 in total last year, Hermann said.

In Sweden, the National Migration Board ([Migrationsverket](#)) was forced to rent camps and other temporary accommodation to deal with an acute housing shortage, the Swedish press reported.

About 4,000 Serbian citizens have asked for asylum in Sweden this year, compared with only 421 in same period last year.

In September alone, 1,410 Serbian citizens arrived in Sweden, putting a strain on the local authorities to provide services such as health care.

The spike in the number of asylum seekers from the Western Balkans stems from the granting of visa-free access to the EU's Schengen area to citizens of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia, the Swedish press notes.

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Serbia appears to have taken the message that visa liberalisation, which was seen as a major achievement of the pro-European government, could backfire.

According to Belgrade daily Blic, Serbia will introduce special measures of control at border crossings in order to prevent abuse of the 'no visa' regime. Interior Minister Ivica Dacic is quoted as saying that there was no threat of visa regimes being re-introduced at the moment.

The asylum seekers are mainly of Roma and Albanian ethnicity and their asylum requests are based on economic considerations, Blic writes. However, since their country of origin, Serbia, is seen as politically safe, they will all be returned there on the basis of the readmission agreement between Serbia and the EU.

But the measures to contain asylum-seekers do not seem to work smoothly.

According to reports, the Serbian police recently sent back to Macedonia a bus carrying passengers who intended to request asylum in Germany. The rejected Macedonian travellers went to protest in front of the Serbian Embassy in Skopje, claiming that Serbia had violated their rights.

Dacic said the greatest number of asylum seekers were Roma from Vojvodina and Albanians from southern Serbia and Sandzak. He stressed that it is very important that these people are informed in advance that they stand no chance of getting asylum in any EU country.

He noted that false asylum seekers can create the impression that the population from this region wants to emigrate for political reasons, while in fact their only motivation is economic.

According to other reports, some of the asylum seekers are in fact perfectly aware that they will not be granted asylum but they take advantage of the assessment period for their applications, during which they are provided with free accommodation and some pocket money.

Positions

Home Affairs Commissioner Cecilia Malmström sent a letter yesterday (20 October) to the authorities of Serbia and of FYR Macedonia, her **spokesperson Michele Cercone** told the press on Thursday.

In her letter, the commissioner calls on those authorities to take measures to prevent their citizens asking for asylum in the EU. The motivation of the majority of the asylum seekers is economic, Cercone said, and therefore their demands could not be heeded.

Cercone said that the wave of asylum seekers was a repetition of a previous one at the beginning of this year and several EU countries had registered a substantial increase of demands from nationals of Serbia and Macedonia.

In addition, a high-level expert mission, led by Belgium and including Commission officials, visited Skopje on 20 October and is in Belgrade today (21 October), with the task of contributing to finding a "quick solution to the problem".

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Cercone hinted that re-introducing the visa requirement was not seen as appropriate, as a majority of citizens would be "penalised" as a result of "localised" and "specific" problems, which in his words could be solved.

Asked by EurActiv whether some of the asylum seekers were not simply taking advantage of the asylum procedure to spend the winter in well-heated accommodation centres in the West, Cercone said that indeed, the member countries could benefit from putting together systems whereby asylum demands were processed in an accurate and speedy way.

"Indeed, in the countries that succeed in putting in place efficient asylum procedures with quick procedures, we witness a decrease of the attempts to abuse or profit from the asylum procedure," he said.

Links

Governments

- ISRIA: [False asylum seekers to be returned to Serbia](#)

Press articles

- Blic, Serbia: [Control to be intensified due to new wave of asylum seekers from Serbia](#)
- The Local, Sweden: [Swedish towns strained by asylum seeker spike](#)
- EMPortal, Serbia: [Hermann: Visa liberalization in danger](#)

<http://www.euractiv.com/en/print/enlargement/europe-hit-scores-western-balkan-asylum-seekers-news-498992>

EU faces 'alarming' rise in Serbia, Macedonia asylum seekers

20 October 2010, 19:55 CET

— filed under: [Serbia](#), [immigration](#), [Macedonia](#)

(BRUSSELS) - The European Commission warned Serbia and Macedonia on Wednesday they could lose visa-free travel privileges if they fail to stop a wave of citizens from their countries seeking asylum in the EU.

European home affairs commissioner Cecilia Malmstroem wrote a letter to the interior ministers of Serbia and Macedonia, which aspire to join the European Union, telling them to take steps to address the situation "without delay."

"Some (EU) member states are once again experiencing an alarming increase of persons coming from your country and seeking asylum," Malmstroem wrote to Serbia's Ivica Dacic and Macedonia's Gordana Jankuloska.

"This trend is extremely worrying and it might seriously jeopardize the entire process of visa liberalisation in the Western Balkans," she wrote, warning that the EU could take "appropriate action if difficulties persist."

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In December 2009, the EU granted citizens of the former Yugoslav republics of Serbia, Macedonia and Montenegro the right to travel without a visa to the 25 European countries that are part of the visa-free Schengen travel zone.

Negotiations are under way to extend the privilege to citizens of Albania and Bosnia.

The commission and the Belgian presidency of the EU are considering a mission to Serbia and Macedonia later this month to verify that steps have been taken by the countries to fix the situation.

Nearly 390 Serbs, 210 Macedonians and 736 Kosovans asked for asylum in Belgium alone between July and August, and another 500 requests from the region are expected this month, Belgian officials said.

Sweden and Norway have also struggled with an influx of people from the Balkans, forcing the countries to expel asylum seekers whose applications were rejected.

<http://www.eubusiness.com/news-eu/immigration-serbia.6mh>

Dacic to meet with Bavarian State Minister for Federal, European Affairs and Belgian State Secretary for Finance, Migration, Asylum

21. October 2010. | 06:07 ▶06:13

Source: Emg.rs

First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior Ivica Dacic will speak with Bavarian State Minister for Federal and European Affairs Emilia Muller at the Palace of Serbia today.

First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior Ivica Dacic will speak with Bavarian State Minister for Federal and European Affairs Emilia Muller at 9.30 on 21 October at the Palace of Serbia, Bulevar Mihajla Pupina 2, western wing, the minister's cabinet.

First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior Ivica Dacic will meet also with Belgian State Secretary for Finance, Migration and Asylum Michel Wathelet at Bulevar Mihajla Pupina 2 at 18.00 on 21 October.

The meeting will be attended by representatives of the embassies of Belgium, Sweden and Germany.

A press release will be issued following the meetings.

<http://www.emg.rs/en/news/serbia/136143.html>

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Serbia - False asylum seekers to be returned to Serbia

First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior Ivica Dacic said today that one of the topics of the 10th regional ministerial conference on illegal migration, organised crime, corruption and terrorism held at Brdo pri Kranju in Slovenia was the monitoring of the implementation of agreements regarding visa liberalisation and the problem of false asylum seekers.

Dacic and Director of the European Commission Stefano Manservigi spoke about how to prevent the problem of false asylum seekers.

Dacic asserted that the greatest number of asylum seekers are Roma from Vojvodina and Albanians from southern Serbia and Sandzak. He stressed that it is very important that these people know that they will not get asylum in any EU countries.

He noted that false asylum seekers can create a false picture in the EU that a large number of citizens from this region want to leave due to political reasons, while the reality is that they come because of economic reasons.

The Minister maintained that false asylum seekers are outlaying unnecessary costs because all of them will be returned to Serbia using summary procedure since Serbia has signed readmission agreements with these countries.

Dacic emphasised that the conference once again pointed to the need for all those in charge of the interior to continue with the process of meeting all requirements for visa liberalisation for all countries in the region.

We need to continue with the harmonisation of our legislation and implementation of all laws that are important in the field of interior in order to demonstrate that we as a society and a state have achieved such standards that allow us free travel to the EU, expounded Dacic.

There are general goals that connect all the countries in this region – that the region is a zone of security with preserved and stable public peace and order and with a joint fight against organised crime, corruption and terrorism, he illustrated.

The First Deputy Prime Minister remarked that cooperation between the Ministry of the Interior and the police with Europol gives a positive contribution to Serbia's European integration.

Dacic underlined that the Serbian Ministry of the Interior signed an Agreement on strategic cooperation with Europol and that an Agreement on operational cooperation should also be signed soon.

Dacic explained that the agreement will be applied until the moment Serbia becomes a full EU member when it will become a part of the European Police Office.

The Minister specified that a so-called road map has been agreed this year and that a security communication link for

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data exchange with Europol has been established.

An expert mission from Europol is expected to arrive in Serbia, after which the above-mentioned Agreement on operational cooperation should be signed. However, the Minister clarified that Serbia is already cooperating with the police of EU member states even without this agreement.

Europol Director Robert Wainwright expressed his satisfaction with the meeting with Dacic and underscored that Serbia has achieved great success in the fight against organised crime.

Wainwright agreed with Dacic that the Agreement on operational cooperation should be agreed as soon as possible so that forms of cooperation could be better defined.

In addition to police ministers from Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro and Macedonia, the conference was also attended by representatives of Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Romania, Turkey, Belgium and the EU.

[view original source](#)

http://www.isria.com/pages/21_October_2010_68.php

Serbia under pressure to tighten border controls

Oct 21, 2010, 10:27 GMT

Belgrade - Belgium's state secretary for immigration is expected to arrive in Serbia on Thursday to press for tighter controls of people travelling to Europe to seek political asylum.

Melchior Wathelet is to meet Interior Minister Ivica Dacic to hear what Belgrade plans to do to curb the outflow of asylum seekers.

In December, visa requirements for Serbia and Macedonia for the passport-free Schengen area, encompassing most of the European Union, plus Switzerland, Norway and Iceland.

But a tide of people groundlessly seeking political shelter followed the move. Most travelled to Sweden, Germany and Belgium hoping to escape poverty or just collect welfare, sometimes also money for 'voluntary' repatriation.

Some 4,000 to 5,000 people from the Balkans sought asylum in Sweden this year. In Germany in September alone, 800 arrived, following 225 in August and 129 in July.

The daily Danas on Thursday reported that Sweden is still paying each returnee 500 euros (700 dollars).

Dacic has been promising European officials that Serbian border police will begin more thorough controls of suspect travellers and tours organized from areas producing most asylum seekers.

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'They will have to say where they are going and what for and prove they have money to support themselves,' he told the daily Press.

Most of the asylum seekers travelled from the pauperized southern Serbia. The majority are ethnic Albanians and Roma, but Serbs have joined in the race, as well.

They all are spurred by unemployment, which runs at 50 per cent in the most economically backward areas. Even in the better-off parts, wages averaging 350 euros are often below the survival minimum.

Prime Minister Mirko Cvetkovic this week dismissed concerns that asylum seekers could jeopardize Serbia's visa-free status.

But there is growing irritation in Germany and Belgium with the arrival of asylum seekers from Serbia and Macedonia which may lead to action to revoke the visa waiver.

'If this development continues, the EU must act and reintroduce compulsory visas for these countries,' the interior minister of the German state of Bavaria, Joachim Hermann, said Tuesday.

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http://www.monstersandcritics.com/news/europe/news/article_1593040.php/Serbia-under-pressure-to-tighten-border-controls

False asylum seekers issue discussed

21 October 2010 | 15:05 | Source: B92, Tanjug

BELGRADE -- Serbian IM Ivica Dačić and Bavarian State Minister for Federal and European Affairs Emilia Muller say abuse of visa liberalization must be prevented.

Dačić will also speak with Belgian State Secretary for Finance, Migration and Asylum Melchior Wathelet about the issue of false asylum seekers that threatens Serbia's "white Schengen" visa regime.

The Serbian minister and Muller have announced stricter control at Serbian and German border crossings due to false asylum seekers.

It is necessary for authorities of the states which are the most popular destinations for the asylum seekers, such as Sweden, Belgium and Germany, to make clear that asylum will not be granted based on political situation and that everybody will be returned to Serbia in a summary procedure, Dačić explained.

He also points out that Roma and ethnic Albanians are most often those who seek asylum, while some come from the Sandžak region of Serbia.

"It should be clear to everybody that visa liberalization does not mean the right to work, live and political asylum," Dačić said and added that the talks would continue in the future so visa liberalization would not be threatened.

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The Bavarian state minister said that Germany only grants asylum to those who were politically persecuted in their countries and that none of the asylum seekers will be granted asylum since Serbia is not persecuting its citizens.

According to her, Germany received 150 asylum applications from Serbia and 260 from Macedonia since January and until October 15 which is a "dramatic" rise comparing to the entire 2009 when 150 citizens from Serbia and only one from Macedonia applied for asylum.

The Serbian IM warned the citizens not to waste their money trying to seek political asylum in Germany and pointed out that several buses from Macedonia had been denied access to Germany.

"Serbia to do its best to solve issue"

Dačić will also speak with Belgian State Secretary for Finance, Migration and Asylum Melchior Wathelet about the issue of false asylum seekers so visa liberalization would not be jeopardized.

Belgrade officials promised to do everything to keep potential asylum seekers in Serbia, so that other citizens would still be able to travel to countries of the Schengen area freely.

Visa liberalization was granted to Serbian citizens almost a year ago.

However, some Serbian citizens took the opportunity to seek asylum in the most economically developed countries of the Western Europe.

According to Belgian media, 387 citizens of Serbia sought asylum in Belgium in July and August alone.

EU officials are wondering whether Serbia as a country really poses a migration danger and threat to the EU in the sense that there is some sort of abuse of visa liberalization, thinks Vladimir Petronijević of Group 484 NGO which provides assistance to migrants.

Serbian PM Mirko Cvetković says that the government will do everything to solve the issue the same way it was solving it before the visa liberalization came into effect and when many citizens left the country.

"Most of them are actually those from Kosovo who did not manage to integrate themselves. Practically they don't have a political or any other reason to seek asylum except maybe economic one and we must work on that. I don't think at all that it will question the 'white Schengen'," he said.

Deputy PM Božidar Đelić admitted to B92 that an increased number of asylum seekers could become a political problem which could jeopardize visa liberalization which came into effect in December 2009.

"It is our responsibility to cut those channels in the very beginning, to punish those who organize them and take advantage of poverty and problem of certain categories of our citizens and that way avoid the problem that some countries, such as Romania, have with some other EU member states," he explained.

"It's up to us to do our part of the job so our 'white Schengen' would not be in jeopardy at any point," the deputy PM stressed.

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Dačić's advisor Zorana Vlatković repeats that political asylum is a protection from a state and that it is clear that Serbian citizens only have economic motives.

"We believe that for now this absolutely is not jeopardizing our visa liberalization which we won with hard work and in any case, we will coordinate activities in cooperation with the EU institutions, primarily with European Commission and individually with member states, in this case with Belgium which has a concrete problem, in order to reduce the damage," she said.

Wathelet visited Bujanovac and said that about 150 citizens of Serbia applied for asylum in his country in September only.

He is scheduled to meet Dačić and Roma representatives in Belgrade today.

http://www.b92.net/eng/news/politics-article.php?yyyy=2010&mm=10&dd=21&nav_id=70432

Hermann: Visa liberalization in danger

21. October 2010. | 06:17

Source: Tanjug

The number of asylum requests from Serbia, FYRMacedonia and Montenegro sent to the authorities of the German state of Bavaria has risen drastically, which could endanger visa liberalization in those Balkan countries, said Bavarian Interior Minister Joachim Hermann.

The number of asylum requests from Serbia, FYRMacedonia and Montenegro sent to the authorities of the German state of Bavaria has risen drastically, which could endanger visa liberalization in those Balkan countries, said Bavarian Interior Minister Joachim Hermann.

If the number of asylum seekers continued to grow, the EU could decide to reconsider reversing visa liberalization, which was introduced at the beginning of 2010, stated Hermann on Tuesday. Compared to merely 59 Serbian and Macedonian citizens who sought asylum in Bavaria last year, according to data Hermann produced, there were 130 Serbian and 260 Macedonian asylum seekers until October 15, 2010.

He noted that this could be the consequence of the misinformation that those who accept voluntary deportation could receive money assistance provided they had sought asylum previously. Hermann underscored that it is a false information, since asylum seekers from Serbia and FYRMacedonia do not receive money assistance for return from Bavaria.

Meanwhile, Germany entirely abated paying once-off assistance to Serbian and Macedonian returnees. Bavarian Minister of European Affairs Emilia Mueller will discuss this issue with Serbian authorities during her visit to Serbia on Wednesday, announced Munich.

<http://www.emg.rs/en/news/region/136147.html>

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Control to be intensified due to new wave of asylum seekers from Serbia

Ž. Jevtić | 19. 10. 2010. - 00:02h | Foto: AFP | [Komentara: 0](#)

Serbia shall introduce special measures of control at border crossings in order to prevent abuse of no visa regime, as Police Minister Ivica Dacic told 'Blic'. According to his words at the moment there is no threat for visa regime to be re-introduced for the citizens of Serbia.



In recent time the number of asylum seekers from Serbia has been increased especially in Sweden, Belgium and Germany. They are mainly of the Roma and Albanian nationality and their requests are mainly for economic reasons. However, since asylum is a political category, they all shall be returned to Serbia based on the agreement of readmission.

The largest number of false asylum seekers is in Sweden. Since beginning of the year about 4,000 requests have been submitted. During September the number of requests in Belgium and Germany has doubled.

As 'Blic' learns, Serbian police, following information from German police returned from border crossing passengers from Macedonia intending to request asylum in Germany.

The fight against abuse of no visa regime is not easy at all. After having been returned from the border, Macedonian passengers protested in front of the Serbian Embassy in Skopje claiming that Serbia violated their rights.

'We had similar problem successfully solved with people seeking asylum in Belgium some time ago. It is very difficult to deal with that problem but we shall not give up', Minister Dacic said.

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<http://english.blic.rs/In-Focus/6999/Control-to-be-intensified-due-to-new-wave-of-asylum-seekers-from-Serbia>

"Special border controls" announced

19 October 2010 | 13:57 | Source: Blic, Tanjug

BELGRADE -- Serbia will introduce special border controls in order to prevent possible abuses of the no-visa regime it has with EU's Schengen area countries.

This was announced on Tuesday by Serbian Interior Minister Ivica Dačić, who pointed out that, "as things stand, the White Schengen is not endangered".

"Lately, there has been an increase in the number of Serbian citizens seeking asylum mainly for economic reasons, especially in Sweden, Belgium and Germany. The most frequent asylum seekers are Roma nationals and ethnic Albanians who will all be deported back to Serbia due to the readmission agreement, since asylum represents a political category," reported Belgrade daily Blic.

Similar occurrences accompanied all the countries that either joined the EU or obtained visa liberalization. The no-visa regime would be endangered only if the current trend of applying for asylum continued, Dačić told Blic.

According to him, the increase in the number of asylum seekers could make the EU decide to abolish the White Schengen, but at this moment there is no such danger.

"We will not sit idly by, but rather start a serious campaign in order to explain what visa liberalization is, what are its possibilities and what abuse of no-visa regime means," said Dačić.

http://www.b92.net/eng/news/politics-article.php?yyyy=2010&mm=10&dd=19&nav_id=70383

Djelic: Stricter control of Serbian travellers to EU

20. October 2010. | 06:27 ▶06:34

Source: Emg.rs

Deputy Prime Minister for European Integration and Minister of Science and Technological Development Bozidar Djelic stated today that control at border crossings will be stricter in future due to the increased number of Serbian nationals travelling to the EU to seek asylum.

Deputy Prime Minister for European Integration and Minister of Science and Technological Development Bozidar Djelic stated today that control at border crossings will be stricter in future due to the increased number of Serbian nationals travelling to the EU to seek asylum.

Djelic told the press in Novi Sad that Serbia will tighten up passenger control to avoid the situation in which Romania finds itself now, whose asylum seekers are being repatriated by France and Italy.

He declared that according to latest announcements, special control measures will be enforced when it comes to people

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leaving Serbia to ascertain whether they really intend to remain in EU countries for no more than 90 days and whether they have sufficient funds to finance their stay there.

<http://www.emg.rs/en/news/serbia/136020.html>

Swedish towns strained by asylum seeker spike

Published: 6 Oct 10 16:30 CET |

The Swedish National Migration Board ([Migrationsverket](#)) has been forced to rent camps and other temporary accommodations to deal with the acute housing shortage.

Many small municipalities which have been forced to take in large numbers of applicants applicants on short notice are critical of the agency's actions.

So far this year, 22,045 applicants have sought asylum in Sweden. About 4,000 of them have declared Serbian citizenship, compared with only 421 in same period last year.

In September alone, 1,410 Serbian citizens arrived in the country. Local authorities are currently arranging acute services such as health care.

[Tjörn](#) municipality on the west coast north of Gothenburg set up temporary accommodation for 200 asylum seekers overnight last week at tourist area Tjörnbrö Park. The day after the first call from the agency, 100 to 150 asylum seekers arrived.

"They called at 4.30pm in the afternoon on Tuesday and the next day, on Wednesday, the first of them arrived," municipal executive board chairman Martin Johansen told news agency TT.

He is very critical of how the small municipality of 15,000 residents did not know anything before then from the agency.

"They must have known earlier when the agreement and negotiation were under way. We understand that they must have accommodation, but they put us in a very difficult situation. I think it is a matter of decency to get in touch so that the municipality gets a reasonable chance to prepare itself," said Johansen.

The spike in the number of asylum seekers from the western Balkans stems from the granting of [visa-free](#) access to the EU/[Schengen Area](#) to citizens of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia.

With biometric passports, travellers from those countries can visit and stay in all EU countries for up to 90 days within a six-month period.

"It has resulted in an influx in 2010. You are not an asylum seeker until you apply for asylum," said Caroline Henjered, head of the division for asylum reception at the agency.

In addition, a similar flood from the western Balkans arrived in Sweden before becoming emergency asylum seekers.

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<http://www.thelocal.se/29460/20101006/>

Belgium faces asylum problem after EU visa move

ANDREW RETTMAN

03.03.2010 @ 09:25 CET

EUOBSERVER / BRUSSELS - The EU's new visa-free travel regime with three Balkan countries has led to a sudden increase in asylum seekers in Belgium, with the European Commission urging restraint.

The number of Macedonian asylum applications to Belgium went up from 200 in all of 2009 to 401 in January and February, following the lifting of visa requirements for Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro at the turn of the year.



The vast majority of the asylum seekers are of ethnic Albanian origin and come by bus (Photo: EUobserver.com)

Print

Comment article

**Book Launch
& reception**

INVITATION

Tuesday 26th October 2010



*"Building a Liberal Europe
- The ALDE project"*

by Graham Watson
Former Leader of the Liberal and Democrat group
in the European Parliament

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The number of Serbian applications also jumped up from 514 in 2009 to 347 in the past two months.

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"Some people in these countries make it seem as if it's very easy to get asylum in Belgium. People are saying: 'Go to Belgium. You get a house. You get whatever you want'," Dominique Dehaene, a spokesman for Belgian Prime Minister Yves Leterme, told EUobserver.

Only recognised asylum seekers are allowed to stay in Belgium and claim a living allowance. Failed applicants are sent back home.

Mr Dehaene said Belgium continues to support visa liberalisation, amid EU plans to extend the new freedoms to Albania, Bosnia and, potentially, Kosovo, in the coming years.

"Visa liberalisation is a good thing. But it has to be used in the right way," he said.

Mr Leterme will on Friday (5 March) meet with Serbian leader Mirko Cvetcovic in Brussels to raise the issue. Serbia on Tuesday promised to launch a media campaign to deter bogus would-be applicants and to look into possible criminal elements in the trend.

Mr Leterme will early next week also visit Macedonia and Kosovo. His spokesman explained the trip had already been planned as part of preparations for Belgium's EU presidency later this year. But the asylum problem "might have speeded things up."

The European Commission on Tuesday for its part urged visa-free countries to set the facts straight with their citizens.

"The vast majority of these applications are out of economic interests and have little chance of success," commission spokesman Michele Cercone said. "This freedom comes with a responsibility."

Several former Soviet countries, including Ukraine, Georgia and Russia itself, are also hoping to get onto the EU visa-free list in the near future. But the Belgian experience may damage popular support in the union for further relaxing controls.

<http://euobserver.com/9/29597>

Rush to asylum puts visa-free travel at risk in Serbia, Macedonia

30/03/2010

Those seeking asylum in wealthier EU nations are putting their Balkan home countries at risk of losing their visa-free regime status.

By Igor Jovanovic and Marina Stojanovska for Southeast European Times in Belgrade and Skopje – 30/03/10

Chachipe Press Review : EU Commission asks Serbia and Macedonia to tighten border controls 21.10.10



"It is important to us that Europe is not afraid of the Western Balkans, as the case was before," said Serbian Interior Minister Ivica Dacic. [Getty Images]

Hundreds of people from southern Serbia and northern Macedonia have sought asylum in EU countries, especially Belgium and Sweden, since the beginning of the year. The wave of asylum seekers -- motivated by economic hardship -- now threatens the visa-free status of Serbia and Macedonia.

Fearing derailment of visa liberalisation, Serbian and Macedonian authorities have promised the EU they will solve the problem. Particular punishment will be handed out to criminal groups -- often pretending to be travel agents -- who exploit people with false promises of asylum.

So far, most of those sent back home from EU nations are ethnic Albanians trying to leave poor regions of southern Serbia and northern Macedonia. Organised tours have typically taken the desperate travellers to Brussels, where their applications for asylum are rejected.

Brussels recently called on Serbia and Macedonia to halt the influx. The first bus carrying Macedonians and Serbians seeking asylum in Belgium arrived home on March 11th, after they were extradited for violating EU visa-free travel rules.

Belgian Prime Minister Yves Leterme visited Skopje on March 8th to stress to his Macedonian counterpart Nikola Gruevski -- and the nation at large -- that asylum would not be granted for economic reasons. When the petitioners come from democratic countries, pleas for political asylum lack credibility, he stressed.

"My country doesn't give political asylum to economic refugees, so there is no sense in travelling to Belgium from Macedonia for the purpose of seeking political refugee status," said Leterme. "The chances of people getting asylum based on economic reasons absolutely do not exist."

In a letter to EU Home Affairs Commissioner Cecilia Malstrom, Leterme warned of "the damaging consequences of the annulment of EU visas for the citizens of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro".

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Belgium takes over the rotating EU presidency from Spain on July 1st.



For asylum seekers, the journey typically begins in Macedonia. [Nikola Barbutov/SETimes]

After being cautioned by the EU, Serbian and Macedonian authorities announced on March 11th -- the same day their citizens returned home -- a co-ordinated police operation to address the problem.

"It is important to us that Europe is not afraid of the Western Balkans, as the case was before," said Serbian Interior Minister Ivica Dacic. "[We will] demonstrate that the suspicion is unjustified and that the whole region remains on the path of European integration."

In concert with one another, Serbian and Macedonian police have started investigating travel agencies that have organised trips to Belgium and Sweden. For asylum seekers, the journey typically begins in Macedonia, while citizens from southern Serbia board buses along the way.

Macedonian Interior Minister Gordana Jankulovska said the countries "want to send a clear message that the two states are co-operating in that field and are working on preventing the appearance of false asylum seekers".

Several travel agencies in Macedonia have been shut down for operating without a license. An ongoing investigation seeks to determine whether other agencies have been deceiving customers deliberately or if those who bought tickets knew what they were doing.

Those who were returned to southern Serbia on March 11th hid their faces from cameras and refused to speak to reporters. So did travel agents who had arranged the trip to Belgium.

Shaip Kamberi, the mayor of the southern Serbian town of Bujanovac, said the asylum seekers were duped by unscrupulous business people.

"All those people are victims of manipulation by various agencies, which talked about the possibility of getting economic and political asylum," Kamberi told SETimes. "They are also victims of the economic underdevelopment of and discrimination against this region for many decades."

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Citizens from southern Serbia board buses to travel to the EU countries. [Nikola Barbutov/SETimes]

Serbian and Macedonian authorities have announced that, apart from punishing the organisers, they will take a number of long-term measures, including efforts to improve living standards in southern Serbia and northern Macedonia.

The majority of Macedonian asylum seekers are from the Lipkovo region, where the Labour and Social Policy Ministry opened a social centre earlier this month. The office will attempt to educate those looking to immigrate about exactly how and under what conditions EU member states grant asylum.

"I think that visa liberalisation was misunderstood and that is why we are trying to explain to our people the procedure for getting asylum in a foreign state," said Macedonian Labour and Social Policy Minister Xhelal Bajrami.

The visa-free relationships with participating EU members state clearly that a stay of up to three months is allowed in the so-called Schengen area for tourism. Citizens travelling to the EU from Western Balkan countries cannot expect to get a working or residence permit in the EU.

Visas became unnecessary for citizens of Serbia, Macedonia and Montenegro in December 2009. Citizens of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo still have to apply for visas in order to travel.

Source: SETimes.com

http://www.setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/en_GB/features/setimes/features/2010/03/30/feature-02

Mar 23 2010

Sweden returns Macedonian asylum seekers

An increased number of asylum seekers from Macedonia have arrived in Sweden during the first months of this year. Their applications are now being processed and the first asylum seekers have been returned to Macedonia on Tuesday 23 March.

The reasons presented by the majority of the Macedonian asylum seekers to the Swedish authorities are socioeconomic. These are not ground for asylum in Sweden.

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The Swedish Migration Board is taking prompt action in handling these cases in order to demonstrate that persons applying for asylum in Sweden quoting these reasons will have to leave immediately.

The return process to Macedonia will continue.

The Embassy of Sweden notes with appreciation that Macedonian authorities for their part are also taking this matter seriously. The visa-free regime is not to be misused for asylum purposes.

Source: Swedish Embassy in Skopje

http://www.swedenabroad.com/News____49065.aspx?slaveid=104454

Serbia, Macedonia vow to prevent asylum-seekers exodus to EU

12 March 2010, 18:37 CET

— filed under: [Macedonia](#), [Serbia](#), [Belgium](#), [immigration](#)

(*SKOPJE*) - Macedonia and Serbia will step up their cooperation to prevent an exodus of would-be asylum-seekers to European Union countries, officials said Friday.

"We will investigate together whether there are traces leading to organized crime in this process," Serbian Interior Minister Ivica Dacic said here after the talks with his Macedonian counterpart Gordana Jankuloska.

The first 44 failed asylum-seekers, ethnic Albanians from southern Serbia and northern Macedonia, were returned from Belgium on Thursday to their homelands.

Since the European Union lifted visa restrictions for Serbia and neighbouring Macedonia in December, Belgium, as well as Sweden, have seen a sharp rise in political asylum requests from ethnic Albanians from Serbia and Macedonia.

About 409 people from Macedonia and another 400 from Serbia have so far requested political asylum in Belgium, but their requests have been rejected as it turned out they were economic immigrants, the ministers said.

Another 500 or so, mostly Roma and ethnic Albanians, have so far sought asylum in Sweden, Dacic said, adding that the number has decreased in the past weeks after "intensive actions to prevent" such moves.

"We have to give our best to show that Europe should not be afraid of the Western Balkans," Jankuloska said, adding that her ministry would pursue informing the citizens of the consequences they could face if rejected their asylum requests.

The ministers said both countries would investigate whether the tourist agencies selling tickets to would-be immigrants had falsely informed them on possible asylum in Belgium.

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Jankuloska promised the agencies which had abused their position would be shut down.

<http://www.eubusiness.com/news-eu/macedonia-serbia.3l3>