

The Balkan Partition: Return, Resettlement and Reintegration Policies for Displaced Persons in Croatia

By

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Introduction

The dissolution of former Yugoslavia, amidst violence, insurgencies and ethno-national conflicts, in the beginning of the 1990s had caused exile and displacement of a large number of people in what is now Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Warlike activities and insecurity in FYROM (Republic of Macedonia) and Kosovo (from February 2008 partially recognised by 86 UN member-states as an independent republic) have also created a large refugee population during the last 15 years. Nowadays, return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees to their homeland represents an important socio-political issue to all countries from the West Balkan region, one that is intrinsically related to their negotiations over becoming full members of the European Union (EU).

After the recent conclusion of these negotiations for joining the EU (proposed date: July 2013), the Republic of Croatia (RoC) is investing additional financial resources in order to find purposeful “durable solutions”¹ for the remaining refugees and displaced persons (DPs) still mired in unsatisfying conditions of living. Nonetheless, other Balkan countries are improving legal and political conditions and putting together coordinated efforts to ensure the return of displaced persons to their homes.² Furthermore, from 2003, RoC has been simultaneously developing institutions of asylum as legal obligation and a system of integration as a socio-economic frame of dealing with persons who are in need for protection and who today are mostly coming from Asian and African countries.

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In this paper firstly we present facts and numbers relating to the displaced population in Croatia, contextualising and accompanying it with brief additional data and reflections on the situation concerning displaced persons in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia. Furthermore, we outline the legal framework and describe the most important incidences of return, resettlement and reintegration policies for DPs, emphasising possible impediments and gaps in these policies. By providing examples from field research among IDPs and refugees in a DP settlement we look upon and depict (mis)implementation of these policies.³

Conflicts in the Balkans, The Croatian IDP in the form of Refugee

War and warlike activities based on ethnic/national conflict(s) were the most important cause of severe displacement in the Balkans. This kind of “manmade disasters”, rather than “development-induced disasters”, or “natural disaster” (Dissanayke, 2007:2) were the main cause of displacement resulting in three million people leaving their homes in the 1990s in this region. Phyro and Bose (1998:3) point out “there is a close link between state formation and forced population movement“, and the same applies to the consequences of these conflicts. Through the period of the dissolution of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) and national separations of its republics, forced migrants were often understood by politicians as collateral victims, “payoffs”, for the higher purpose of establishing independent states and/or for the aggressive military plans of expanding state borders, no matter what the costs were. Thus, state and international “management” of DPs during the war was a marginal problem, intertwined with a process of a nation-building and state-formation/expansion.

After the war in Croatia (1991-1995) it was necessary to enable the return of DPs to their homes and this still remains as one of the government’s objectives monitored and supported by EU and international organisations, namely UNHCR and Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) missions. One of the problems of assessing the exact number of displaced people relates to disputable political agenda of all state parties involved in conflicts in which the overestimation of numbers has served as a ground for further political or diplomatic controversies, once the conflict itself has terminated or has been temporarily deferred, like in Kosovo.

The war in Croatia has consequently created more than 700,000 war-induced DPs, of whom 550,000 are IDPs and 150,000 refugees, who fled mostly to Central and Western European countries (Perković i Puljiz, 2001). In 1992, the same year when the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina broke out RoC received and recognised “prima facie” and “*en masse*” around 403,000 of Bosnian refugees (mostly Muslim/Bosniaks, and Bosnian Croats).⁴ By having almost a million of exiles on its territory with a

domestic population of 4.5 million (census of 1991), and having a third of its territory occupied by rebel Serb forces, the state has had to withstand the burden of providing shelter and protection to its own citizens and neighbours from other republics. By the end of the war two combat operations were conducted for the purpose of freeing occupied territory. Those war actions retrieved and reintegrate parts of Croatian territory forcibly, but caused mixed flows of voluntary and forced migration of around 200,000 Croatian Serbs towards Serbia⁵ and 50,000 towards Bosnia and Herzegovina, mainly to a Serbian entity called “Republika Srpska”.

Some of Serbs fleeing from the western hinterland of Croatian territory actually had not crossed the border, moving instead to still occupied part called East Croatia (the Donau region) which borders the Republic of Serbia. That part was eventually in 1998 peacefully reintegrated with Croatia, after the formation of the UN Transitional Authority in Eastern Slavonia, i.e. UNTAES mission (Živić, 1997; Živić, 2003). In that very same year, Croatia started to receive exiles from Kosovo and in 1999 there were almost 7,000 Kosovar Albanians in Croatia. Moreover, during the 1990s a few thousands of 14th century old diaspora of Kosovar Croats were collectively persuaded by Croatian government representatives for a plan of so-called “human resettlement/repatriation” in the “old homeland”, although one could consider this as a clear example of “ethnic engineering” (Antonijević, 2003). A negative socio-political climate in the Republic of Serbia towards the Croatian minority who lived there caused 30,000–35,000 ethnic Croats to leave the Republic of Serbia more or less involuntarily. Almost all of them found their “new homes” in Croatia, very often exchanging their properties with Croatian Serbs fleeing to Serbia (Žigmanov, 2006).

Obviously conflicts in the Balkans during the last two decades have caused a variety of displaced, forcibly migrated, exiled populations diverse in linguistic, ethnic, religious, cultural and livelihood backgrounds. Fortunately, a period of 16 years of relative peace in the region has raised a new hope that through political consent and mutual agreement of governments involved in previous conflicts, situations of protracted refuge could be positively resolved. Unlike one-time agreed peace treaties a process of peace-building, reconciliation and socio-economic reintegration of post-conflict local communities has to take longer period of time in order to become sustainable and successful.⁶

Return and Reintegration Policies for Refugees and IDPs

Return of IDPs and refugees in RoC has been on the national and regional agenda prescribed by specific legal measures and political acts. By adopting relevant international human rights and humanitarian laws, RoC has introduced several legislative measures for prescribing and implementing policies on return, resettlement and reintegration, in accordance with the 1951 Convention and UN Guiding Principles on internal displacement

(1998). Among many of bilateral agreements and protocols signed with Serbian and Bosnian governments, the most important piece of national legislation is the “Law on the Status of IDPs and Refugees” of 1993 (amended in 1995 and 1999), “Law on Areas of Special State Concern” (first enacted in 1996 with several changes), “Regulation on Rights of Returnees”, 1997, and “National program of Return and Rehabilitation for IDPs, Refugees and Other Displaced Persons”, 1998.

Repatriation of Serb refugees (Croatian citizens who fled to Serbia) and their voluntary, spontaneous and governmentally and/or UNHCR-assisted return has been found as one desirable solution. A material prerequisite for any collective large-scale refugee return is a ‘(r)eturn or restitution of property, namely the reconstruction of destroyed and damaged houses and the issue of the tenancy rights of former socially owned apartments’ assert Mesić and Bagić (2007:51). To that end, the Croatian government’s Office for the Areas of Special State Concern (ASSC), which is in charge for the implementation of return and resettlement housing policies, delineates return housing policies on the geographical criterion of where a possible returnee opts to return/resettle. The politics of returning, therefore, differs between return through ASSC⁷ and secondly, return to other areas - the rest of Croatian territory.

A right for housing is on offer for potentially returning refugees and IDPs who are former holders of tenancy rights in state-owned apartments and who wish to return and/or live permanently in the RoC, regardless of whether they are temporarily living inside or outside the RoC. According to the “Law on ASSC” and the “National Program of Return and Rehabilitation for IDPs, Refugees and Other Displaced Persons” there are practically just a few strategies of how to resolve the sustainable housing problem for IDP and refugee returnees on the ASSC. The common one refers to the “rental policy” of providing an option for “renting a state property, a flat or a house” for an extended period of time. Other policies relate to “donation of state land“, “donation of construction tools and materials for repair of damaged properties”, and “donation of state land and construction tools and materials“ for the purpose of building a family house. As for the housing policies on non-ASSC only the “rental option” for a returnee is possible.

At the same time, RoC has carried out extensive works on reconstruction of damaged and destroyed houses. According to UNHCR and to the Board for Reconstruction in the Ministry of Regional Development, the state has so far restored 145,921 houses, out of which two-thirds are owned by Croats. Furthermore, temporarily occupied properties, mainly houses and flats owned by Croatian Serbs but occupied by Bosnian Croats, have almost entirely been returned to or re-appropriated by their owners. These kind of policies resulted at the end of 2010 in 132,872 registered Serbs returnees reclaiming their pre-war homes. Of that number, 93,898 were from Serbia and Montenegro, 15,743 from Bosnia and

Herzegovina and 23,231 Serb IDPs who moved mainly from East to West Slavonia and to the Dalmatian Hinterland (UNHCR, 2010, appendix 2).

Unfortunately, the research of Mesić and Bagić acknowledges how “(a) relative majority of registered returnees (54 per cent) were not found to be living at the address where they were registered. The considerable majority of those (65 per cent, or 35 per cent of the total sample) live permanently outside Croatia and only 7 per cent (or 4 per cent) live in another settlement inside Croatia” (Mesić and Bagić, 2007:31). More than a half of registered Serb returnees do not permanently reside in Croatia, but instead live in Serbia, making short or extended visits to their pre-war houses in Croatia. Those who return for good to stay in Croatia are mostly elderly people, 54 per cent of them women, according to the above mentioned research.

One might ask whether there is any other state or communitarian assistance that returnees can count on. All returnees, without reference to ethnicity or formal returnee status, have additional rights, prescribed by the “Regulation on the rights of returnees (1997)”, which include: 1. financial assistance of monthly amount determined by the Office for Displaced Persons and Refugees, to returnees with no other income; 2. humanitarian assistance and help; 3. help in social adaptation and psychological care; 4. education of children; 5. full health care; 6. help for other extra living costs (transportation costs, funeral expenses, etc.). The situation of durable political and democratic stability point to “safe” return socio-political environment within which DPs should get back to their homes. An assistance of few NGO and iNGO stakeholders who are helping returnees with different aspects and problems in return-process provide strong belief how setting for return is relatively favourable. Then, where to look for an explanation of the phenomenon that more than a half of registered Serbs returnees actually do not stay/reside permanently in their places of return?⁸

One of possible answers lies in the fact that many of refugees already have integrated into the host society of Republic of Serbia with whom they share the same linguistic, ethnic, religious and cultural patterns with. A majority of them have regulated their legal status, obtaining citizenship and other civil and political rights. Many of them, mostly youth, have finished their education there, found jobs, having established family and friend networks, being integrated properly into Serbian society. Their interest in definite repatriation/return to RoC is reasonably lower than among the elderly population. The same applies for the wish to return of ethnic Croats who fled from Bosnia and Republika Srpska, now currently living and being reintegrated in Croatian society (Mesić and Bagić, 2010).

The above discussed (re)settlement housing policies, accompanied with issues of tenancy rights and return of properties does not exhaust the problematic of prerequisites for *normative reintegration* of Serb returnees. Nonetheless, questions of repossessing Croatian citizenship and coalescence of previous work experience and pensions, as well as questions of personal security and political representation are important issues which have to be

resolved and guaranteed to a potential returnee. On the other hand, a range of specific “minority rights” deduced from Croatian “Constitutional Law on national minorities’ rights (2002)” have to be secured, including rights to representation of minorities in media, measures against discrimination of minorities, rights to (self-)employment quotas for minority members, implementation of which consequently lead to *functional (re)integration* of returnees as part of minority population.

Unfortunately, lack of governmental political will and local communities’ support in order to assure implementation of laws with no delay, as well as some xenophobic violent incidents aimed at Serb returnees, have caused more than half of Serb returnees to think they are second-rate citizens in Croatia without sufficient political and social rights (Mesić and Bagić, 2007:102), and perceive physical insecurity, as well.⁹ These results points to further problematisation on different levels of desired and preferred forms of sustainable return.¹⁰ Serb returnees in RoC today are guaranteed all additional minority rights, but their implementation is often sloppy and hindered. Therefore, personal reasons on a decision whether return or not are intertwined with notions of socio-economic and political incentives and obstacles.

Protracted Displacement of Refugees and the IDPs

The number of IDPs in Croatia had peak at the beginning of war in 1991 at 550,000 but it has been gradually decreasing since then, and by the end of 2010 the number is 2,128 IDPs (app1). Out of that number, around 1,600 refers to Serb IDPs from Dalmatian hinterland and West Slavonia who left their homes in 1995 and then resettled and reintegrated within RoC, in East Slavonia. For a small number of them, who might want to return a real challenge lies in re-appropriation of properties. It is unlikely that this problem will be resolved in the near future since Bosnian refugees, mostly Croats by ethnicity, moved into their houses (Babić, 2008). For that matter, the Croatian state is working on a project of building new housing settlements for Bosnian Croats, as well as for those Croat IDPs who will probably not return voluntary to their places of origin.

According to the “Law on status of IDPs and refugees”, accommodation of IDPs and refugees can also be organised by arranging special habitual settlement, a receiving centre, a shelter, an assembly centre, or accommodation in resorts such as hotels and other tourist facilities temporarily taken over for the state’s disposal. Today, when the number of IDPs has decreased significantly, three settlements are still serving as accommodation facilities for about 450 DPs. Persons in these IDP/refugee settlements live in prefabricated houses. All electricity, communal and heating costs, as well as food expenses are covered by the state. Additionally, the very same set of six aforementioned rights guaranteed to returnees applies for those living in these settlements.

In the biggest settlement of “Mala Gorica”, there are 316 DPs, among them Bosnian refugees, either Croats who obtained Croatian citizenship in no time or Muslims/Bosniaks with refugee status waiting to be eligible to apply for status of permanent residence, and then later if they renounce their Bosnian citizenship, they become eligible to apply for Croatian one. During our three field visits to this settlement in August to October 2011, only one person out of dozens we have talked to confirmed that s/he is “*dreaming of getting back to Bosnia, to my forefathers’ land*”, and huge majority claimed return to place of exile is not an option for them, even if they have to stay here for the rest of their lives, in a situation of protracted displacement.

There is also a small group of Croat IDPs living there, those who do not want to return to their pre-war homes but instead want to be resettled and reintegrated somewhere else in RoC. In our conversations, they provided reasons of not wanting to return which mostly correspond to their war sufferings and personal tragedies, resulting in loss of confidence in coexistence with their pre-war neighbours of Serbian nationality. To some extent this attitude is applicable to many Bosnian refugees, especially Croats and Muslims who fled from “Republika Srpska”. As one of the respondents (Bosnian Muslim) stresses:

Me personally I cannot get back, I don’t want to! My house is completely destroyed; my village is abandoned and almost empty. Neighbour villages are Serbian villages. I don’t want to go back there. I remember all they did to us... As for the others let me tell you, I think all those who wanted to return, they already have done that. We who stayed we will stay for good. The only thing is – we do prefer not to stay in this settlement anymore. I am here for 12 years as a refugee, but rather I would like to be granted with a state accommodation in a proper flat or houses like those that the state is building for Kosovar Croats.

What does this last line refer to? Besides 595 Bosnian refugees, and 239 from Kosovo (ethnic Albanians) in RoC in 2010 (app2), accommodation is being built also for a people with the special status of “human resettled persons“, i.e. for Kosovar Croats¹¹. Through “human resettlement project” in 1998-99 around 1,700 of them were literally assisted to move/leave their homes in Kosovo and “invited” to RoC. This “project“ was accomplished with mutual agreement of the Croatian government and local Kosovar Croat “informal representatives“, of whom their local priests played an important role. For 1,500 of them, the government has built new housing settlements on ASSC. Today, in Mala Gorica settlement 206 Kosovar Croats are still waiting for proper accommodation in new state-owned houses that are to be built in 2012-13. One Kosovar Croat (from Letnice village) did not hide bitterness and dissatisfaction over their situation of living in Croatia and Gorica settlement:

I know it is hard to understand but we are not refugees, yet we live in this refuge settlement in refuge-like conditions. We left our homes in Kosovo 12 years ago because Croatia promised us that here we will get all that is necessary to start again, and that we belong here. But, look on these

conditions – I dare you to drink this tapped water! We are waiting for the houses that government promised to build, but it takes too long. Me and my sons we all are unemployed, what to do here? I often think that it would be better if we stayed in Kosovo, no matter what danger was there...

Other respondents also stressed that they are rather dissatisfied with the several aspects of living conditions in Mala Gorica. The main infrastructural insufficiency seems to be a very poor quality of water which is practically undrinkable and unhealthy even if it is boiled; instead they have to buy bottled water. Monthly financial assistance is not enough to cover all living costs and humanitarian assistance and help of NGOs and humanitarian organisations is mostly reduced to provision of clothes and footwear, twice a year. Respondents pointed they have satisfying health care, but the nearest medical service is 8 km away which is a real problem for the elderly in the absence of everyday transportation assistance. Respondents have mentioned they do not remember systematic psychological help or psycho-social programmes that might have been offered, apart from merely prescription of medicine for the post-traumatic stress disorder many of them are suffering from.

Educational facilities for children are satisfactory – transportation is well organised, a school bus picks up children and returns them after school. In Mala Gorica there are 41 children of elementary and 44 of secondary school age. In one common house a pre-school adaptation programme for youngsters is conducted. Two parents, Kosovar Croats, are working in one school as assistants and intercultural mediators helping local teachers with specificities of pupils' reintegration into the new educational system. In the settlement, they have a room for religious practices, which serves well for Catholics and for Muslims, and there is something called a "social gathering room", as well.

A majority of the inhabitants in the settlement are unemployed, facing severe deprivation and impoverishment. Alcoholism and domestic violence are not rare, and the perception of it points to a tendency of minimalising significance of it and approving violent patriarchal code of obedience. As one of my respondents says, interethnic and inter-religious conflicts within the settlement, though rarer than domestic violence, are of greater importance for communal life there:

If someone beats or quarrels with his wife – well, don't get me wrong, but that's a private matter. I don't want to intervene in that, maybe only if he is drunk and he's beating his children... otherwise, we usually don't have violent or criminal activities here. There are from time to time arguments and provocation on national or religious basis among us in the camp. Some get drunk then they start a fight, but I think it is nothing that big... A few times police have had to intervene, but it wasn't violent, luckily. People live here under lots of stress, you have to understand that.

While discussing the potential of IDPs and refugees for (re)integration we are aware of unequal relations of power for subjects who are dependent/restrained by their legal status. Socio-political contexts, different backgrounds, access to resources, can all make interaction between

DPs and a host society/community quite uneven and asymmetrical. We do stress the role DPs themselves have to assume in the (re)integration and rehabilitation process. But in a situation of protracted displacement that lasts for more than 20 years for many of them, it is clear that DPs perceive themselves as less valuable and lose their self-confidence, being re-victimized by system which failed to provide them durable, sustainable and satisfying solutions or at least prerequisites to accomplish that solution on their own. Dissanayake (2007:4) explains that:

Most of the time, the IDPs are not getting enough opportunities to proceed with their typical employments when they live in a welfare centre, or place at friends and relatives. This may cause to develop a dependent mentality of those people. Specially, since government provides dry ration and some other relief packages to the people those who got victimized due to any kind of disaster, they also getting used to it and avoiding the opportunities.

The same thing was said by a manager of Mala Gorica settlement.

He noted:

Many of DPs develop some kind of dependent mentality, acting as social-care cases. Some of them even ask for help even if changing of a bubble is needed. They are - so to say – inclined to feel deprived.

Commenting on living conditions he stated that they should be improved (for water, before all), but other conditions are reasonably 'basic' since they were planned for only temporary residence of DPs. He acknowledged lack of psychosocial care and humanitarian assistance but he points out that the responsibility for resolving this problem lies not only in political will of how to implement rehabilitation policies properly but also in the socio-cultural setting. Hence, he continues to criticise whole Croatian society which shows not enough solidarity and interest for DPs' problems.

Concluding Remarks

In the aftermath of war conflicts, the Croatian state had to deal with severe repercussions of war. Helping different displaced population, RoC has created and implemented resettlement and reintegration policies and measures for DPs. Voluntary return, either spontaneous or state- and UNHCR-assisted, has been a prominent way of finding a durable solution for DPs. This solution has been valid mostly for Serb IDPs and Croat IDPs. Repatriation and return of Bosnian refugees (specifically Croats and Muslims from Republika Srpska) as well as those from Kosovo, has not happened to a great extent. Instead of resettlement to third countries the possibility of reintegration within RoC has been shown as more suitable and "less damaged" option, more successful for Bosnian Croats and less for Kosovo Croats and Albanians.

Resettlement and rehabilitation policies have yielded success for IDP populations first and foremost. At the same time, a process of return, i.e. repatriation of Serbian refugees currently living in Serbia and in Bosnia has revealed some lacks and insufficiencies of these policies. Therefore, in

that setting, existence of *formal, quasi-returnees* “those who return not to stay” (Mesić and Bagić, 2010) is possible for more than a half of the returnee population. Socio-demographic characteristics of returnees reveal a presence of old(er), aged population which has no procreation and labour potential for revitalisation of the post-war areas. Why is that important? It is plausible to assume that the policies and measures discussed above aim to achieve not only the most transparent goal – return and reintegration of DPs, but also tend to influence a more balanced development of diverse war-affected Croatian areas, encouraging demographic revitalisation and economic progress, through completion of the reconstruction programme, the return of pre-war population and through permanent housing and (self)-employment. In this sense, repatriation, resettlement and reintegration policies for returnees serve also as an incentive for local community development and revitalisation.

As far state policies and strategies for “durable solutions” conducted through specific implementation measures are concerned, one might criticise ambiguities of the whole process, on the basis of insight into real-life situation and chances for sustainable return or (re)integration of those living in settlements/camps, like in Mala Gorica. Thus, protracted exile experience of DPs in Gorica reveals lack of state political will and societal support for finding immediate durable solutions for the rest of DPs. Nevertheless, one must not underestimate the role and incentive of the government in the project of housing-building for Kosovar Croats.

These “humanly resettled” DPs will enjoy protectiveness and care from the state, but the real question remains – when does genuine (re)integration start and when does it end, if ever? Out of respondents’ responses it unfolds that they still do not have real opportunities and means for (re)integration, which is indispensable. Altogether with structural prerequisites for return (or for staying) personal incentives or constraints, such as psychosocial traumas, posit a strong discouraging reason of choosing protracted displacement instead of repatriation and/or the return option. In this context, resettlement of DPs has to come along with individual and group rehabilitation practices that would lessen war casualties and destructions, and give a new hope and reliance to the rest of displaced population in RoC and in the region, that sustainable and durable solutions are possible.

Notes

¹ By the mandate of UNHCR “durable solutions” include threefold policies either of voluntary return/repatriation of IDPs/refugee to a place of origin, or resettlement (by meaning resettlement of the refugee in the third country beside the country of origin or receiving country, but also could include intraregional resettlement of IDPs), and thirdly - (re)integration in the place of refuge that include permanent stay (UNHCR, 2003).

² The most recent endeavour represents the agreement made by Ministers of Foreign Affairs of four countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Monte Negro

and Serbia who agreed upon finding definite durable solutions for DPs in the region in order to ensure “good-neighbourly relation and stability”, on the way of joining EU. Guidelines and obligations are prescribed in a document called “Joint Declaration on ending displacement and ensuring durable solutions for vulnerable refugees and internally displaced persons”, signed by abovementioned ministers in November 2011.

³ In this paper we will not be dealing with refugees who are asylum grantees. We might pose a question if they are perceived in Croatian society as a distinct category of “newcomers/new refugees“, comparing to “traditional DPs” from wars in the Balkan region during the last two decades. Situation of latter we discuss in this paper. However, here is worthy to emphasize that since the Law on Asylum entered into force in 2004 more than 1500 applicants have sought for shelter in RoC. First five countries of applicants’ origin are Afghanistan, Serbia (including Kosovo), Pakistan, Palestine and Iran. Until June of 2011, out of all applications 22 persons were recognized as refugees (asylum grantees) and 20 persons were under subsidiary protection. An analysis of Croatian asylum system we leave for some further work.

⁴ The war in Bosnia lasted between April 1992 and December 1995. The war involved several sides (Bosnian Serbs, Croats and Muslims) combating each other with the involvement of the armies from Republic of Serbia (so called „Yugoslav national army“), and from Republic of Croatia. The war is known for severe brutal war operations which consequently led to death and suffer of civil population. One of the most visible war-crimes was genocide/ethnic cleansing of in Srebrenica in July of 1995, when in nine days around 8400 mostly civilian Bosnian Muslims were executed, by units of the “Army of Republika Srpska” and paramilitary units from Serbia. During the war in Bosnia, around 2,2 million of people were displaced which is almost 50% of all pre-war population. Out of that number 1,2 million were registered as refugees and 1 million as IDPs. Up to 2010 there has been 600 000 registered repatriates from abroad, and 400 000 IDP returnees, but the ratio of real”, sustainable and durable return is lacking (Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees, 2011). According to the Dayton agreement signed in December 1995 the complete State of Bosnia and Herzegovina was set as of the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina (majorly populated with Bosnian Muslims and Croats) and of the Republika Srpska (populated with Bosnian Serbs), with provision that no entity could ever be separated from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

⁵ Technically speaking, in August 1995 Serbia, together with Monte Negro was a dual state named “Federation Republic Yugoslavia”. Besides, receiving refugees from Croatia, Serbia received refugees from Bosnia and from Kosovo as well. Number of refugees in Serbia has decreased from 520,000 in 1995 to 74,000 in 2010. Out of latter number 52,000 refers to Serbian refugees from Croatia and 22,000 from Bosnia (UNHCR, 2010). Many of those that represent ‘dropped number’ actually have not repatriated/returned to their homes, but instead as ethnic Serbs obtained citizenship and (re)integrate into Serbian society, representing a new demographic inflow and counting for refugee status no more (Stevanović, 1995).

⁶ Today RoC is ethnically quite homogenous society; by the census in 2011 has population of 4,290,612, out of which almost 90% are declared as Croats. RoC recognizes 22 national minorities on its territory, with significant change of constitutional status of Serbs from “constitutive ethnicity” up to 1991 to “national minority” onwards. Number of Serbs, has dropped down from 581,663 (12.16%) by the census in 1991, to 201,631 (4.5%) in 2001. Such a huge decrease is explained primarily with an exile from the country in 1995, but also to less extent with a ethno

mimicry tendencies, as well as natural negative movement of population - higher rates of mortality and lower birth-rates (Babić, 2008). One curiosity represents a census category that had ceased to exist with Croatian independence: 106,041 of citizens declared themselves to be “Yugoslavs” (2,2% of Croatian population, by national census in 1991), soon yet to become symbolically stateless persons, but in reality they continue to be Croatian citizens in case if they stay in RoC, and not leave the country. “Yugoslav” option was the most popular self-declaration out of ideological reason for unitaristic supernational identity during Tito’s era, especially among those who lived in inter-ethnically mixed marriages, applicable to their descendants as well. With an overturn of regime many of these “Yugoslavs” had to choose for new/old nationality/ethnicity, i.e. majority or minority option. Needless to say, these nationality options were rarely (but still!) ascribed to them involuntarily regarding their names and family backgrounds.

⁷ ASCC refers first and foremost to 1/3 of Croatian territory which was occupied by Serb rebellion forces and directly affected by war-activities; that were regions of Dalmatian hinterland and East and West Slavonia. Besides set of measures for sustainable return and housing policies other measures for revitalization of ASCC includes financial help from the government, special tax reliefs for investments, local community provisions, etc.

⁸ Mesić and Bagić distinct persons returned as “real” or “formal” returnees. Moreover, they write about five different categories of returnees not in legal but in sociological sense, concerning their willingness to stay or to move/reemigrate: “a) *unconditional returnees* - those willing to return and stay permanently in their homes ...for the rest of their lives... if an opportunity for a safe return and basic living requirements have been established; b) *conditionally permanent returnees* - people who wanted to return and who do try to stay. However, if they are unsuccessful in resolving existential issues and if a better migratory option comes along, they will accept it., c) *semi-returnees* and on the other as trans-border or trans-national returnees, who directly connect their two “homes”; d) *non-formal actual returnees* – those who were not formally registered; e) *formal, quasi returnees* - they return not to stay, but to repossess their property and then sell or rent it, and obtain documents necessary for returnee benefits and other rights.” Mesić and Bagić (2010:156-158, abridged).

⁹ Somewhat similarly “Manual for sustainable return” (UNMIK, 2003) discuss about “*Material obstacles*, such as lack of or poor infrastructure, housing reconstruction or rehabilitation needs, unresolved property issues, unemployment and poor opportunities for economic livelihood and *Situational challenges*, such as security, freedom of movement and/or possible lack of access to agricultural land, need for confidence building both for the receiving and returning communities, lack of access to public services due to a discriminating environment, among others.”

¹⁰ As Black et al. (2004:25) emphasize“(r)eturn might also be considered unsustainable for individuals if there are inadequate jobs or incomes or irretrievable loss of assets or livelihood (socioeconomic sustainability), or wholly inadequate access to services or security (political sustainability) or indeed a perception that this is the case amongst returnees (subjective socio-economic or political sustainability)”.

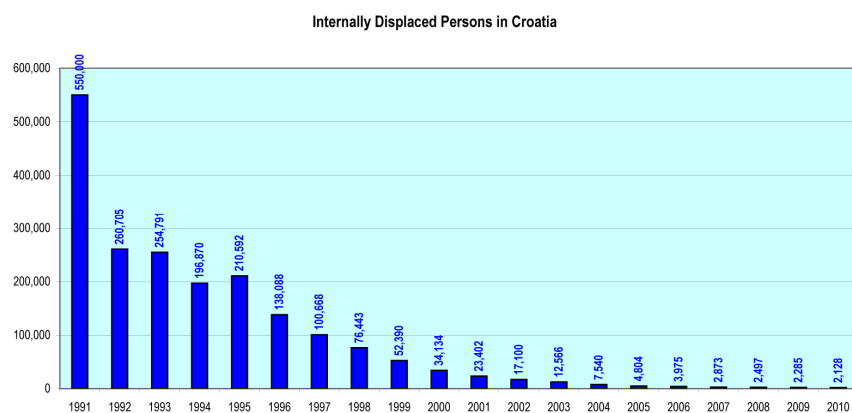
¹¹ Although Kosovar Croats are special category of DPs, UNHCR sees them among the category of “Other persons of concern”. Uniqueness of their status lies in a fact that they are not legal refugees, though perceived as exiles. Since they were granted with citizenship upon arrival, it was presupposed by the government that they, as being ethnic Croats and compatriots, would easily (re)integrate into Croatian society.

Unlikely, Kosovar Croats are dissimilar with the rest of the national matrix by their language (mix of archaic Croatian and Albanian), by their customs, by demographics (living in big, extended families, strong patriarchy, many children), and their socio-economic status and means for sustainable livelihood. As so far they have been the least integrated population, on the line with Roma people.

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Appendix 1 (source: UNHCR Zagreb, 2011)**Appendix 2 (source: UNHCR Zagreb, 2011)****Population of concern as of 31st December 2010**

Refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina	595
Refugees from Kosovo	239
Recognized refugees and persons under subsidiary protection	33
Asylum seekers (new applications during 2010)	290
Internally displaced persons	2,128
Stateless (estimated)*	249
Other persons of concern**	20,383
Total	23,917

* Includes 17 de jure stateless persons and 60 persons registered as "unknown citizenship" as reported by the Government and 172 persons, minority returnees, non-Croatian citizens, who are at risk of statelessness. In addition, it is estimated that approx. 1,500 Roma are at risk of statelessness.

** Returnees, potential beneficiaries of Housing Care, Reconstruction and other legal or technical return assistance programmes who have not yet received final decision.