

7TH INTERNATIONAL
BALKAN SUMMER SCHOOL
Contemporary Challenges in the Balkans:
EU and Migration Issues
Proceedings

Edited by

Hanife Etem

A Summer School Held in Skopje,
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FOREWORD

The relationship between the European Union and the Western Balkans remains one of the most complex and consequential aspects of the European integration process. The region's journey toward EU membership continues to reveal both the transformative potential and the structural limitations of the European project. Migration, integration, and enlargement are at the heart of this dynamic, shaping not only political and economic developments but also the ways in which identities, institutions, and communities evolve. In this context, *Contemporary Challenges in the Balkans: EU and Migration Issues* represents an important academic contribution to understanding these multidimensional processes from regional and comparative perspectives.

This volume was developed within the framework of the International Balkan Summer School on Migration and European Integration, an initiative dedicated to fostering academic dialogue, critical reflection, and cross-border collaboration among scholars, practitioners, and young researchers. The book embodies the interdisciplinary and inclusive approach, encouraging a deeper understanding of the region's place in Europe and its role in the region. By bringing together diverse viewpoints, it offers a platform for re-examining the interplay between local realities and supranational ambitions, as well as between historical legacies and contemporary policy challenges.

At a time when Europe is grappling with renewed debates over borders, mobility, and belonging, Balkans provide a distinctive vantage point from which to analyze these issues. The region simultaneously reflects the aspirations of European integration and the tensions that accompany it. Migration flows, socio-economic disparities, and the geopolitics of influence illustrate the ongoing struggle to reconcile national interests with collective European goals. The discussions presented in this book highlight how migration and integration are not merely policy questions but deeply social and cultural processes that shape perceptions of identity, citizenship, and solidarity across Europe.

The academic value of this work lies in its ability to connect empirical observation with conceptual analysis. It demonstrates that the study of migration and EU enlargement requires both a grounded understanding of local contexts and a critical engagement with broader theoretical frameworks. By situating the Balkans within these overlapping perspectives, the volume contributes to a more nuanced appreciation of how integration operates as both a political mechanism and a lived experience.

Ultimately, this collection stands as a testament to intellectual cooperation and academic curiosity. It reflects the shared commitment of emerging scholars to explore the challenges and opportunities that define the European future. Through rigorous analysis and constructive dialogue, the volume seeks to inspire further research and debate on migration, governance, and identity within and beyond the Balkans.

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