

## University Talks with KAICIID Migration in the Western Balkans: interreligious and intercultural dialogue for an inclusive region

30 October 2024, 14:00 – 18:30

University of Belgrade, Faculty of Geography  
Studentski trg 3/3, Library Room 11000 Belgrade

Current demographic trends in the Western Balkans paired with urbanization and emigration, suggest those migrants can play a relevant role in revitalizing local economies. Although sudden and unregulated migration flows can test the resilience of hosting local communities, promoting effective labour market inclusion of migrants can contribute alleviating the consequences of declining population while expanding prospects for sustainable growth. Cities and local governments are uniquely placed to harness the contribution of migrants for socio-economic development. It is at local level where the economic potential of newcomers can be leveraged to foster socio-economic opportunities for both hosting communities and migrants. To do so, suitable migration and labour and employment policies need to be supported by a 'welcome culture', which provides the necessary emotional infrastructure that serves as the foundational 'glue' for successful integration. The importance of religion and faith lies in its capacity to build bridges between the host community and newcomers, transcending differences and stirring attitudes from fear to mutual understanding and acceptance.

Drawing together a unique mix of academics, practioners and policy makers, the International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID) and the Faculty of Geography, University of Belgrade intend to call for a collaborative approach across religious and secular institutions to foster a shift in understanding migration in the Western Balkans, from challenge to opportunity, from burden to resource. The intention is to encourage religious leaders and local authorities to step up on the respective roles and shape a common agenda for migrant inclusion.

The event builds on the reflections contained in the policy brief [Cities fostering belonging](#) developed in the framework of the 2023 edition of the European Policy Dialogue Forum (EPDF).

### The University Talks with KAICIID

The "University Talks with KAICIID" intend to offer an opportunity to contribute towards bridging the gap between academic research, policymaking and policy implementation, pooling the critical contribution of religious and faith leaders and actors. By engaging universities' professors and students in key thematic areas related to enhancing social cohesion, this initiative aims at exploing how an interreligious and intercultural approach can favour the identification of common grounds, nurturing an inclusive social pact that can resonate across religious values and secular policies, to ground European societies where everyone feels belonging.

### The organizers

Thanks to its distinct constituency and dual governance structure - gathering states and religious leaders - the **International Dialogue Centre** (KAICIID) is uniquely placed to provide an inclusive platform to convene religious leaders, policymakers and experts. The organisation aims to end the abuse of religion to justify oppression,

violence and conflict, while fostering interreligious and intercultural dialogue as an effective tool to promote social justice, peace and reconciliation.

**The Faculty of Geography of the University of Belgrade** is one of the oldest higher education institutions in Serbia and the only educational and scientific institution of its kind in this part of Europe with a tradition of over 120 years. It has a leading position in Serbia and the Balkan region for the study and teaching of geography, tourism, spatial planning, demography, environmental sciences and GIS. The study of migration is carried out in the Departments of Human Geography and Demography. The Faculty maintains close relations with universities, CSOs, international organisations (EUA, OSCE, GIZ, IOM, SDC, UNDP etc) and policy makers in Serbia (Commissariat for Refugees and Migration, Ministries) the Western Balkans region and worldwide dealing with population issues. Faculty members have been involved in the preparation of numerous strategic documents at national (Economic Migration Strategy of the Republic of Serbia for the period 2021-2027 and the Action Plan for the period 2021-2023, etc.) and local level (Handbook for the preparation of local migration profiles).

### Agenda

## Migration in the Western Balkans: interreligious and intercultural dialogue for an inclusive region 30 October 2024, 14:00 – 18:30 University of Belgrade, Faculty of Geography, Library Room

#### h. 14:00–15:00 Opening remarks

##### Words of welcome:

**Prof. dr. Danica Šantić**, Full Professor at the University of Belgrade and Executive Board Member of the Western Balkans Migration Network

**Dr. Aleksandra Djurić Milovanović**, Network for Dialogue Coordinator, International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID) and Principal Research Fellow, Institute for Balkan Studies SASA

##### Opening remarks:

**Ms. Leyla Kayacik**, Independent Expert and Former Special Representative on Migration and Refugees, Council of Europe

**Ms. Brankica Janković**, Commissioner for the Protection of Equality of the Republic of Serbia

**Prof. dr. Merita Zulfu Alili**, Dean of Contemporary Social Sciences Faculty, South-Eastern European University, Tetovo

**Prof. dr. Natalija Perišić**, Full Professor, Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Belgrade

**Prof. dr. Theodoros Fouskas**, Assistant Professor, University of West Attica and EPLO Summer School on Migration

**Moderator: Ms. Teresa Albano**, Senior Programme Manager, International Dialogue Centre KAICIID

#### **h. 15:00-16:15 – The of local and regional authorities in creating inclusive spaces for refugees and migrants in the Western Balkans**

**Mr. Nermin Oruč**, Coordinator of the Western Balkans Migration Network

**Dr. Ankica Tomić**, Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina to Migration Asylum Refugee Regional Initiative Regional Centre (MARRI RC)

**Mr. Vladimir Petronijević**, Migration Expert

**Ms. Jelena Ilić**, Asylum and Migration Programme Coordinator, Belgrade Centre for Human Rights

**Ms. Ivana Stanković**, Advisor, Social participation of people on the move and local population in host regions of the Western Balkans GIZ

#### **Q&A session**

**Moderator: Ms. Ruzica Banda**, independent expert and former National Human Rights Officer at OSCE Mission in Serbia

#### **h. 16:15-17:30 – Roundtable session: sharing experiences of migrant inclusion through interreligious dialogue**

**Dr. Andrej Jeftić**, Director of Commission on Faith and Order, World Council of Churches

**Pastor Samuil Petrovski**, Pastor and Director Evangelical Student Association

**Ms. Nejra Kadić Meškić**, Executive Director of the Centre for Cultural Dialogue/Islamic community, member of the Network for Dialogue (N4D), Zagreb

**Mr. Igor Mitrović**, Director of ADRA Serbia and Network for Dialogue member

#### **Q&A session**

**Moderator: Ms. Emina Frljak**, Deputy Coordinator of the International Youth Committee of Religions for Peace

#### **h. 17:30-18:00- Conclusions and main take aways**

Closing keynote remarks: Representative of the Commissariat for Refugees of the Republic of Serbia (TBC)

**Prof. dr. Danica Šantić**, Full Professor at the University of Belgrade and Executive Board Member of the Western Balkans Migration Network

**Ms. Teresa Albano**, Senior Programme Manager, International Dialogue Centre KAICIID

**On KAICIID e-learning programmes: Mr. Armen Rostomyan**, Programme Officer E-learning, International Dialogue Centre KAICIID

**Moderator: Dr. Goran Svilanović**, Expert on Human Rights and Economy and Former Secretary General of the Regional Cooperation Council

#### **h. 18:00-18:30 - Refreshments and Networking**

## Biographies of speaker and moderators



**Ms. Leyla Kayacik** has over 30 years of international experience in the field of human rights and the rule of law. Ms Kayacik is a longstanding member of the Secretariat of the Council of Europe. Throughout her extensive career, she has held various key positions, including roles within the former European Commission of Human Rights (European Court of Human Rights), the Secretariat of the European Social Charter, in the field in Ankara programme office, as Director of the Private Office of the Secretary General and Deputy Secretary General and as Deputy to the Secretary of the Committee of Ministers. From 1 January 2022 to 1 February 2024, Ms Kayacik served as the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe on migration and refugees. After completing her service at the Council of Europe, Ms Kayacik continues to actively engage as human rights expert, with a special focus on matters related to migrants and refugees. Ms Kayacik holds a master's degree in law from the University of Strasbourg and a master's degree in English language and literature from the University of Nice. She is fluent in Turkish, French and English. She has knowledge of German and Arabic.

**Ms. Brankica Janković**, master lawyer, was elected Commissioner for the Protection of Equality of the Republic of Serbia for the first time in May 2015 and for the second time in November 2020 by the National Assembly. Prior to the election, she held the position of the State Secretary in the Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Policy from 2012-2014 and was the Director of the Gerontology Center Belgrade from 2006-2012. She graduated at the Faculty of Law of the University of Belgrade, completed her master studies at the Faculty of Law of the University of Novi Sad and is a doctoral student at the Faculty of Security in Belgrade. She speaks English and Russian. Her academic contributions extend to teaching master studies on Multicultural Social Work – Anti-Discrimination Policies and Practices at the Faculty of Political Sciences in Belgrade, as well as at the Higher Security Studies of the School of National Defense of the Army of the Republic of Serbia, as a guest lecturer. Recognised for her outstanding contributions, she has received numerous awards, including the OSCE "2017 Person of the Year," the "Petar Manojlović" award for contribution to the improvement of the position of the elderly, and the "Golden Wheel" award for her efforts in the protection of human rights of the members of the Roma national minority, awarded by the National Council of Roma in Serbia.



**Prof. Dr. Merita Zulfiu Alili** is an Associate Professor of Labour Economics at the Faculty of Contemporary Social Sciences, South East European University, Tetovo, North Macedonia. She is a member of the University Senate and member of Women in Science Network. Merita completed her MSc and PhD studies in Economics at Staffordshire University, United Kingdom. From 2015-2023 she joined CERGE-EI Career Integration Fellows, Prague. Merita's scientific interests are: labour migration, foreign direct investment, labour market inequality, gender equality, transition economies. She was engaged as a researcher and expert in several projects. She has published several articles and books in her field of interest: [Merita Zulfiu | South East European University \(seeu.edu.mk\)](https://www.seeu.edu.mk).

**Prof. dr Natalija Perišić** is a Full Professor of Social Policy at the University of Belgrade – Faculty of Political Science, Department of Social Policy and Social Work where she lectures on the national and European social policy, ageing and migration at the undergraduate, master and PhD studies. She is a Visiting Professor at the University of Tuzla – Faculty of Philosophy, B&H and the University of Eastern Sarajevo – Faculty of Philosophy, B&H. Her scientific and research interests in the migration field are within the nexus between migration and welfare state, services for migrants provided by the public and civil sectors, migrants’ integration policies and forced displacement, with a particular interest in the mechanisms for social inclusion of migrants. Natalija has been very active in making connections among the academia, civil sector organizations and public services, regarding the support to migrants. She has published about 50 papers in national and international journals.



**Prof. dr Danica Šantić** is a full professor at the University of Belgrade - Faculty of Geography. Her research fields are migration, demography and population issues in connection with SDGs. She has authored more than 70 scientific papers, participated in more than 20 projects (MIGREC, Horizon 2020; Intentions and attitudes of people in Serbia towards migration with a focus on developing policy recommendations, Ministry for demography and population policy, etc.). She is one of the founders of the Network for Migration, Interconnectivity and Regional Development (MICArd), member of the Board of the Western Balkans Migration Network (WB - MIGNET), ICMPD expert for the WB (Prague Process), research fellow at the Canadian Research Chair on Global Migration Processes, member of the European Migration Network (EMN) Serbia, World Social Science Fellow (WSSF), ect. She has worked as an expert for the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (CRM), EUAA, OSCE, GIZ, IOM, SDC, UNDP, etc.

**Dr. Andrej Jeftić** serves as the Director of the World Council of Churches’ Faith and Order Commission and is an adjunct professor at the Bossey Ecumenical Institute. An Eastern Orthodox theologian, Dr. Jeftić was born and raised in Bosnia and Herzegovina. He earned his Ph.D. in theology from the Faculty of Orthodox Theology at the University of Belgrade, where he also taught as a teaching assistant and later as an assistant professor. Additionally, he has held a research fellowship at the Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory at the same university and has worked as a consultant for the Churches’ Commission on Migrants in Europe. Dr. Jeftić’s scholarly interests span ecumenical theology, patristics, systematic theology, contemporary Orthodox theology, and the relationship between science and theology



**Ms. Ivana Stanković** is a lawyer specializing in human rights, with extensive experience working on projects that address migration and displacement, while promoting social cohesion and supporting vulnerable groups. With a legal background, Ivana has held several key roles, including project management and legal advisory positions, particularly focusing on vulnerable groups and the Western Balkans region. Currently, her work is centered on promoting the social participation of people on the move and the local population in the Western Balkans. The focus is on fostering local-level social cohesion by improving coordination and supporting regional dialogue on access to the labour market for asylum seekers. Her work aligns closely with the need to foster sustainable socio-economic integration. Through her role, Ivana advocates for inclusive labor policies and

intercultural dialogue, recognizing the importance of building welcome cultures that bridge communities and create shared growth opportunities for all.

**Dr. Theodoros Fouskas** is an Assistant Professor in the field of “Sociology with an emphasis on Migration and Public Health” at the Department of Public Health Policy, School of Public Health, University of West Attica (Greece). His research and teaching interests combine the sociological study of migration, migrant/refugee health and access to health care, health inequalities and racial and ethnic disparities, precarious employment, and low-status/low-paid work, domestic work and caregiving, migrant community associations, solidarity and pro/anti-migrant mobilizations, social integration and exclusion of third-country nationals and migration and health policies. He has authored monographs and edited collective volumes and journal special issues. He has conducted many presentations at international and national conferences and workshops and has organized scientific events and summer courses on migration. Since 2005, he has participated in European and national research projects on migrants and other vulnerable social groups.



**Ms. Jelena Ilić** has almost a decade of experience in strengthening and promoting human rights, worked with international, national organization and private law practice on a wide range of issues including human rights, refugee rights, with particular focus on economic and social rights. She is an expert on refugee integration and has been strongly engaged in advocacy and improvement legal frameworks with a particular focus on economic and social rights and to promote labor inclusion for marginalized groups, including foreigners and refugees. Jelena is the co-author of several reports, analysis and papers in these areas. She considers her highest achievement as being the opportunity to make a positive difference in the lives of marginalized people in Serbian society. Jelena holds a Bachelor of

Laws degree and a Master’s Degree in International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law. Currently holds the position of Asylum and Migration Program Coordinator at Belgrade Centre for Human Rights.

**Dr. Ankica Tomić** has worked at the Migration Asylum Refugee Regional Initiative Regional Centre (MARRI RC) based in Skopje, North Macedonia since October 2020 as the Representative of Bosnia and Hercegovina. She also performs the tasks of a Special Advisor for Gender and Equality within MARRI RC. Prior her appointment at that position, she had been working within the Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Hercegovina as Head of the Department for International Cooperation for more than 16 years. She holds a PhD in Defense and Security Studies. Her expertise, among others, is in the areas of Gender and Security, Human Security, International Relations, Women's Peace and Security Agenda, Gender Aspects of Security Threats, Gender Mainstreaming Concepts in Security Sector Institutions, Security Sector Reform and Gender, Gender Aspects of Migration, etc. She has published several scientific and professional articles on the above-mentioned topics.





**Dr. Nermin Oruc** holds a PhD degree in Economics from Staffordshire University. He is founder and Director at the Centre for Development Evaluation and Social Science Research. He is also Coordinator of the Western Balkans Migration Network (WB-MIGNET). Nermin taught Econometrics, Economic Development and Labour Economics at the SSST University and International University of Sarajevo. He participated in more than 50 national and regional research projects in migration. His research is focuses on the intersections between migration and skills development. Nermin co-authored three books and published a number of papers in the international peer-reviewed journals. He was visiting teaching fellow at the CERGE-EI, Prague and visiting research fellow at ISER/University of Essex, and International Inequalities Institute, LSE, London.

**Ms. Nejra Kadić Meškić** is the CEO at the Center for Cultural Dialogue which builds intercultural societies and fights growing mistrust and polarization. She is an associate at the Islamic Community in Croatia and at the international organization Minority Rights Group as a Liaison Officer for Croatia and Slovenia. She graduated from the School of Business and Economics at the University of Sarajevo. She has thirteen years of experience as a program leader in the fields of human rights, migration and integration, culture of dialogue, minority rights, gender equality and youth policies. She is a trainer on team work and leadership. Kadić Meškić holds an Award from the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina for contribution to the promotion of gender equality. She is the author and co-author of different strategic documents related to the improvement of human rights implementation and she is member of committees for improving integration processes on local and national level in Croatia. Kadić Meškić is a KAICIID Fellow from 2019 and Network for Dialogue member.



**Rev. Samuil Petrovski** is national director of EUS (IFES Serbia) protestant ministry working with university students in Serbia which main goal is education. EUS is part of fellowship of 152 national protestant student ministries with office in Oxford, UK. Samuil was born and grew up in Belgrade in communist family, his father was senior diplomat in former Yugoslavia. All of his life Samul lived in Belgrade (only lived 4years in Tripoli/Lybia when his father served as diplomat). Samuil studied at Belgrade University and got master at Singidunum University. Samull studied Peace building at Summer Peace Building Institute at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg,VA. He is working with EUS last 27 years and like director 22 years. Samuil and his team are organizing many events for students, buisness people and creative events in 6 University cities across Serbia. He is serving as Protestant pastor/priest in Belgrade and also as the president of Protestant Evangelical Alliance of Serbia. Samuil has passion for building dialog and bridges among different

religious.

**Ms. Ruzica Banda** is a human rights lawyer with more than 20 years of experience in working on human rights issues in conflict and post-conflict setting. Educated at the Grammar School in Vinkovci and the University J.J. Strossmayer Osijek, Faculty of Law. Specialized in human rights in 2000, through the specialization programme for UN Human Rights Officers, led by the UN OHCHR and supported by the Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs/Human Rights Division. Possess extensive knowledge and experience in mediation and negotiation, including in peace negotiations. In 1992 joined the United Nations Peacekeeping Mission in Croatia, providing support to different components including Civil and Political Affairs component. From 1997 to 2000 worked for the OSCE Mission to Croatia to monitor and report on the human rights situation with a focus on monitoring the return and integration of refugees and war crime trials. From 2001 to 2023 worked as the National Human Rights Programme Officer for the OSCE Mission in Serbia.



**Dr. Goran Svilanović** (PhD in Law) is advising international organisations and private investors on government relations in the Western Balkans. He is a member of High-Level Group for EU Neighborhood Interdependences, formed during Swedish EU Presidency (2023). He served as Secretary General of the Regional Cooperation Council (2013-2018). Between 2008 and 2012 he was Co-ordinator of the OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities (2008-2012), and the Chairman of Working Table I (democratization and human rights) of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe (2004-2007). From 2000 to 2004, Mr. Svilanović was Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia/State Union of Serbia and Montenegro. Between 2000 and 2007, he was a Member of Parliament.

**Ms. Emina Frljak** is a Project Coordinator within Youth for Peace (Bosnia and Herzegovina). She is a Deputy Coordinator of the International Youth Committee of Religions for Peace. Her academic background is in educational sciences, interreligious studies, and peacebuilding. Her areas of work and interest are peace education, interfaith dialogue, and religious literacy. Lately, her interest has also been focused on using social media for educational and campaigning purposes, particularly on countering hate speech. Emina has been a Board member of Religions for Peace Europe since January 2020. She is also a fellow with the KAICIID International Fellows Program, which is focused on equipping religious leaders, civil society actors, and academics in the field of interreligious and intercultural dialogue.



**Mr. Igor Mitrović** is Director of ADRA Serbia. Igor earned his Bachelor of Theology at the Belgrade Theological Seminary, and his Master in Biblical Studies at Newbold College, UK. He served as a pastor with the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Čačak and Belgrade from 1999 until 2011 when he joined ADRA. With ADRA and all its partners, Igor is involved in developmental and relief work. He also lectures in undergraduate studies at the Belgrade Theological Seminary (of the Adventist Church) and preaches and works with local Adventist churches in Serbia. His interests are in theology and spirituality, culture and community building and their potential to synergistically contribute to community transformation.



**Dr. Aleksandra Djurić Milovanović**, Network for Dialogue Coordinator, International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID) and Principal Research Fellow, Institute for Balkan Studies. Dr. Djurić Milovanović earned her PhD in ethnology and anthropology from the University of Belgrade in 2012 and has since focused on issues related to minority religious communities, nationalism, and migration in Eastern Europe. Her research has been published widely, including several monographs such as *The Untold Journey of the Nazarene Emigration from Yugoslavia to North America*, *Double Minorities in Serbia* and *Orthodox Christian Renewal Movements in Eastern Europe*. Additionally, she was a guest lecturer in many universities including University College Cork and the University of Cambridge. Dr. Djurić Milovanović actively promotes social inclusion, human rights, and interreligious dialogue throughout

Europe. She has published four monographs, over 80 academic articles and book chapters and one manual for Interreligious Dialogue.



**Ms. Teresa Albano**, Senior Programme Manager, Europe Region Programme, International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID): extensive experience gained in the Balkan and Mediterranean regions, Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, at the service of international and regional organizations, such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the International Organization for Migration, Ms. Albano is an expert in humanitarian aid, migration governance and anti-trafficking. A lecturer at the Vienna Diplomatic Academy, at Sapienza and Tor Vergata Universities and other think tanks on migration governance and trafficking-related topics, she is the author of various publications, including articles and academic papers.

**Mr. Armen Rostomyan** is the Programme Officer for the KAICIID E-Learning Unit as well as the KAICIID Online Courses Coordinator. He is responsible for development, management, and implementation of the E-Learning Unit portfolio of E-learning and training programmes. He has over 20 years of experience working as a programme manager, lead-trainer and online courses content moderator/coordinator in various UN Agencies and international organizations regional offices and secretariats such as: *United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR)*, *United Nations Development Program (UNDP)*, *World Bank (WB)*, *UNFCCC Green Climate Fund (GCF)*; *Habitat for Humanity International (HFHI)*, and *Amnesty International (AI) Secretariat in UK*, being responsible for development, management and implementation of various humanitarian and sustainable development programmes in 26 countries of Europe, Asia, and Africa regions.

