

## 20. Century European Wars

Wars are an inevitable part of European history; the largest and most important in the last hundred years were the First World War and II, and for our region the Balkan wars that followed the break-up of Yugoslavia in 1991.

- Has there ever been a war in your country?

The Balkan War, which took place in 1991 with the break-up of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, interrupted a 46-year period of relative peace on European soil. The war began with the secession of the Republic of Slovenia from the common state and spread across the former Yugoslav republics. The fighting ended most quickly and with almost no casualties in Slovenia, but the war hit Bosnia and Herzegovina hardest, where both Serbia and Croatia had territorial aspirations. The war ended in 1995 with the Dayton Agreement, which defined the territorial relations and the relationship between the three republics, which now formed independent states. Armed conflict in Macedonia and Albania continued on a smaller scale until 2001.

- Was anyone in your family history involved in a war or do you have a family memory of refugee experiences? What did these experiences look like? Do you have photos, letters, documents? Tell the stories in class.

The number of people displaced by the war in the Balkans between 1991 and 1995 is estimated at about two and a half million. Slovenia was one of the main destination countries for Balkan refugees: in 1993 alone, an estimated 70 000 refugees from the former Yugoslavia arrived here, of whom just over 10 000 were housed in collective accommodation, while the rest stayed with relatives in Slovenia. As Mirjana Markotić writes in her dissertation, Slovenia responded to the arrival of the refugees in accordance with international law: “The government of the Republic of Slovenia dealt with the refugee problem in accordance with the guidelines of the High Commissioner for Refugees and international humanitarian law. The principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality were the cornerstones of this policy. Refugees were provided with the most basic care, including: free accommodation and food in the Republic’s transit centres, emergency medical care and maternity assistance, and social welfare and care.” (Markotić: 12)

# The Main War Zones Today

After the attack on the Twin Towers in New York on 11 September 2001, the Western world entered the so-called 'war on terror', which did not involve armed confrontations between different military forces on European and American soil, but nevertheless ended more than half a century of peace in the Western world. The wars in the Middle East and North Africa have been a constant topic of news and conversation for several years, mainly because of the refugees coming to Europe from these areas, and the daily statements of the world's most important leaders have also contributed much to the sense of threat. In addition to the Middle East and North Africa, new zones of war have emerged and intensified over the last decade in Ukraine, Asia and on the African continent.

## Terminology

**Migration or migration** is a complex global phenomenon faced by all countries of the world. The term migration is divided into emigration and immigration; such movements can be internal or international.

A **migrant** is a person who changes his or her habitual residence either permanently or temporarily.

An **asylum seeker or international protection seeker** is a person who claims to be a refugee and applies for international protection in a country other than their home country and is awaiting a decision. In the meantime, the person cannot be forced to return to their own country. Persons who are found not to be a refugee and not in need of protection during the procedure are returned to their country of origin by the competent authorities.

A **refugee** is a person who leaves his or her country of origin for fear of racial, religious or other persecution on account of his or her nationality or membership of a particular social group or political opinion. The decision on recognition of refugee status is also valid as a permanent residence permit in the Republic of Slovenia from the date of its notification.

An **economic migrant** is a person who travels to other countries or territories in order to improve their material or social situation and create new opportunities for themselves and their family.

# EU Agreement on Relocation and Resettlement

In September 2015, EU leaders decided to resettle a total of 180,000 people (160,000 under resettlement and 20,000 under permanent resettlement) in need of international protection to the EU.

Relocation is a solidarity mechanism within the EU and means the transfer of a person in need of international protection from one Member State to another. This measure aims to relocate a large number of people from Italy and Greece on the basis of so-called burden-sharing between EU Member States.

Resettlement means the transfer of a person in need of international protection from a third country to an EU Member State, where he or she is granted the right of residence and other rights in accordance with the law.

- Can you imagine what Mina's real name is? How would you describe her? What does she like? What does she not like? Which country do you think she comes from? Find this country on a map and draw the route she would have to take to get to Slovenia.

## Child Refugees

According to PIC there are 10 unaccompanied minor asylum seekers in Slovenia (PIC does not have data on the number of minor refugees accompanied by parents or legal representatives).

Statistics for 2015 show that among asylum seekers accompanied by parents or legal representatives up to the age of 17, there were 85 juveniles, 73 of them boys and 12 girls, most of them aged 0 to 13. In the same year, 44 unaccompanied minors were considered for international protection, most of whom were Afghan nationals, namely 23, representing 52% of the total number of unaccompanied minors. Nine unaccompanied minors were from Kosovo and Syria and one each from Bangladesh, Iraq and Pakistan.

As a result of the refugee and migrant crisis in Europe, an estimated 23,700 refugee and migrant children - including young children - are stranded in Greece and the Balkans. In addition, according to estimates from UNICEF, hundreds of children have already died this year on the migration route from North Africa across the central Mediterranean. The actual number of child victims on this route is difficult to determine. Many children are unaccompanied, which could mean that their deaths have not been reported or recorded.

## Activities of Child Refugees in Slovenia

Unaccompanied minors (both asylum seekers and persons granted international protection) have been placed in two boarding schools in Nova Gorica and Postojna since September 2016 as part of a pilot project of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia. The younger children attend primary school, while the older children participate in a Slovenian language and culture programme run by contractors selected through the call for proposals (after completion of the programme, further education is planned together with the child and his/her legal representative). They also participate in other recreational activities that take place at the boarding school or in the local community. Many activities (including psychosocial support) are provided by NGOs.

Children who have applied for international protection and are accompanied by their parents or legal representatives in Slovenia are accommodated in the asylum centre and attend primary school (or a course in Slovenian language and culture in the case of older children). They also participate in a number of activities that take place at the asylum centre (e.g. many of these activities are run by non-governmental organisations, including Slovenian and English courses, sports activities, creative workshops for children and adults, excursions and visits to places of interest in Slovenia, computer courses, photography courses). After receiving international protection status, they are placed in an integration house or at a private address, continue their education and receive additional support from humanitarian organisations if they are socially vulnerable.

# Organisations Working with Refugees

A number of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Slovenia are involved in supporting refugees. Some NGOs support refugees by implementing projects to ensure the realisation of their rights (PIC - providing information and legal advice; Institute of African Studies - assisting in the accommodation and care of applicants for international protection in an asylum centre, as well as support and protection for victims of trafficking; Odnos Association - running an integration programme; Slovene Philanthropy - running a three-month orientation programme for persons resettled in Slovenia under the EU scheme; etc.). Specifically for migrant children, programmes funded by UNICEF are run by Slovenian Philanthropy and PIC, and the Mozaik Association is also active in Asylum House. Besides Slovenian Philanthropy, other humanitarian organisations also support refugees, e.g. Slovenian Red Cross, Slovenian Karitas, ADRA Slovenia, UP Association. A number of non-governmental organisations advocate for refugees and raise awareness (e.g. Peace Institute, Amnesty International Slovenia, SLOGA Platform).