



Strategy 2014 – 2016

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1 SUMMARY

Migration, Asylum and Refugees Regional Initiative (MARRI) was established in 2003 under the auspices of the Stability Pact for SEE. On its ten year jubilee, MARRI has the opportunity to analyze the overall activities, evaluate achievements and define the new Strategy for the period 2014-2016.

MARRI MS express full confidence to the Regional Initiative, recognizing MARRI as a competent Initiative to develop the migration management.

The regional cooperation and exchange of information represent a fundament in MARRI's work, implementing EU standards of migration management. Achievements and further development in the area of migration in all MARRI Member States require a more comprehensive approach to identification of strategic priorities and project activities.

Significant changes have taken place in the recent years in the MARRI countries within the EU accession process. In 2013 the Republic of Croatia became a full member. EU Candidate status has been granted to Montenegro and Serbia and the pre-negotiations process already started. All MARRI Member States were granted visa free travel to the EU and visa requirements were also removed among MARRI MS.

It is a common interest of MARRI Member States that Republic of Croatia as an EU member and the other MARRI Member States which are on their way towards EU membership, assist the rest of the MARRI Members States in bringing them closer to membership and reaching EU standards in the line of MARRI activities.

Europe Strategy 2020 is considered as a very important document for the MARRI Region. In this regard, RCC Project SEE 2020 defines the frame for regional cooperation, especially in the field of migration.

2 INTRODUCTION

During the past ten years, great progress has been made in the area of migration management in the MARRI Member States. The objectives of the regional cooperation and regional ownership have been noticeably achieved. The challenge remains how to further facilitate and intensify the regional cooperation and how to improve and utilize the regional ownership for regional cooperation activities. The new Strategy 2014-2016 aims to ensure the continuity and further improvement of the regional cooperation, stronger cooperation among MARRI Member States, as well as bringing the regional cooperation closer to EU.

The goal of MARRI and its Regional Centre is to deal with the issue of population movements in the South Eastern Europe (SEE) by promoting closer regional cooperation and a comprehensive, integrated and coherent approach to the issues of asylum, migration, border management, visa policies, refugee return and settlement as a part of the EU integration. The MARRI Regional Centre in Skopje was opened in September 2004 as a Secretariat to the MARRI Regional Forum to accomplish MARRI political commitments.

The Initiative thanks to the Republic of Macedonia for providing in kind facilities, running and maintenance costs for the Regional Centre.

The guiding principles of MARRI are: strengthening regional ownership, enhancing regional cooperation and supporting EU integration. The regional cooperation and the regional ownership contribute to the movement ahead towards the EU integration. Whereas the dynamics lies in the hands of the Countries of the Region, MARRI has consolidated its role as a platform towards the European integration of the MARRI Member States, as well as its purpose of becoming the voice of the region. An important aspect is the cooperation and networking with the other European countries (EU accession process). MARRI relies on experience and expertise of these countries to optimise the benefit of regional capacity building and the implementation of EU standards.

The MARRI Regional Centre serves as an executive tool to accomplish the political commitments set by the MARRI Member States in the Regional Forum and is acting as a hub for consultations, dialogue, training, capacity building and information exchange, bringing countries together to have joint discussions, form regional working groups and/or realize joint projects with regional impact facilitating an improvement on a national level. The countries' individual approach and levels of capacities for reforms differ and the MARRI assistance through a regional approach will also benefit national priorities. Such structure allows for an inside evaluation of the MARRI Member States priorities thus contributing that MARRI activities become tailor made for the best results on a national and regional level. Establishing of the networks under this programme is at the forefront of the MARRI methodology.

3 LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Based on fundamental EU documents from the beginning of MARRI, within the Stabilization and Association Process and the Thessaloniki Agenda, the MARRI Strategy 2011-2013 leaned on base principles which are set out in Stockholm Programme - priorities for the area of justice, freedom and security for the period 2010-14.

Legal framework for MARRI Strategy 2014-2016 is set out by MARRI Core Documents (Statute, Guidelines and Rules of Procedures), Europe 2020 and SEE 2020 Strategic documents, as well as by the EU Migration Policy defined by the guidelines titled "Global Approach to Migration and Mobility" (GAMM).

3.1 MARRI Core Documents

The MARRI general objective is defined by its **Statute, Guidelines and Rules of Procedures** and other documents adopted by MARRI Forum, as well as already signed MoUs. MARRI operates in line with its mandate, guided by the principles of regional cooperation and regional ownership. This document is also a contribution in creating a new dynamic in MARRI work and to further promoting the culture of cooperation in the region.

In the streamline with MARRI core documents, strategic approach is set in the framework of the four main areas:

1. Policy harmonisation on a regional level;
2. Legislation reform;
3. State administration capacity building and
4. Awareness raising.

3.2 EUROPE 2020 Strategy

The Europe 2020 strategy has to be a guide to the reforms in the EU candidate countries at the national level and in the regional cooperation.

The relevance of the strategy Europe 2020 and specially the Strategy SEE 2020 for MARRI countries can be envisaged in the following directions:

- Strengthen the strategic thinking on national and regional levels;
- Identifying their own priorities, targets in certain areas and instruments for implementation;

- Adoption of good practices in other countries: policy documents, proposals of policies, action plans and implementation; improving the system of collecting and monitoring qualitative and quantitative indicators, harmonized with structural indicators of EU (EUROSTAT).
- Building administrative and other capacities for the use of programs and funds of the European Union.
- Improving the practice of participation in the implementation mechanisms (OMC).

3.3 SEE 2020 Strategy

In Sarajevo, November 2013, SEE 2020 Strategy was approved. The scope of this Strategy is to build a common vision and to undertake common actions for the development of the region in line with the objectives of the EU.

Although, the level of development of countries is different in the region, problems and goals in the areas of economic and social development, education and science are similar. MARRI with its activities will support the Strategy SEE 2020, especially in the area of Governance for growth in order to improve the efficiency of public services and reduce corruption.

3.4 Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (GAMM) – guidelines for EU Migration Policy 2020

GAMM is EU external policy framework on migration. It is compatible with the EU foreign policy and development cooperation policy respectively.

In the context of GAMM, dialogue and cooperation with the countries, which are not members of the EU, are based on identification of shared interests and challenges, as well as on focusing on the following four main pillars of the EU migration policy:

- Organizing and facilitating legal migration and mobility;
- Preventing and reducing irregular migration and trafficking in human beings in an effective and humane way;
- Strengthening synergy between migration and development;
- Promoting international protection and enhancing the external dimension of asylum.

4 MARRI STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES

4.1 Goals and objectives

The main goal of the strategy paper is to define priorities in order to reflect the progress made in MARRI's scope of work, to maintain continuity of previous work and to ensure full political commitment by the countries of the region and continued involvement of EU countries and relevant international organizations.

During the past 10 years important results have been achieved in all MARRI areas of work: various expert meetings, working group meetings, round tables and conferences. Different MARRI projects were successfully implemented, or are in the process of implementation. It is worth mentioning successful implementation of the BORDAIRPOL Project "Support of cooperation among border police on airports in Southeast Europe". MARRI has established a mechanism for regular gathering and exchange of information in the format of migration questionnaires and overviews on different topics.

The Member States have constantly expressed political commitment and support to MARRI. The commitment of the Member States to further strengthen the regional ownership has to continue not only by taking full responsibility in decision-making, but also by fulfilling the financial obligations through financial contributions for the running costs, as well as for the concrete projects and activities implemented by the MARRI Regional Centre. In order to provide support for the future activities, contacts with EU countries and international organizations will be intensified.

MARRI will put efforts to increase its visibility in front of the EU institutions and to raise their interest towards MARRI activities. The practice of convening MARRI diplomatic briefings, friends/donor meetings aimed at acquainting the diplomatic corps and donor community with the MARRI activities should be continued. Better cooperation with the EU and its agencies EUROPOL, FRONTEX and European Asylum Support Office (EASO) is of particular importance.

The cooperation with FRONTEX will be further strengthened and intensified through the existing working arrangement between FRONTEX and MARRI and future strategic cooperation with EASO (working arrangement or MOU) will be priority for the next period.

Efficient use of all available EU programs of support for the region, in particular IPA Multi-beneficiary programmes and TAIEX are of utmost importance.

Further strengthening and developing of cooperation and partnership with relevant international organizations and institutions, such as UNHCR, OSCE, IOM, ICMPD, DCAF is of particular importance for MARRI and its Regional Centre.

Political support of the South East Europe Cooperation Process (SEEC) to MARRI is crucial. MARRI will continue the cooperation with the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), especially in the announced strategic project SEE 2020.

MARRI will continue strengthening its capacity to address migration related issues and information gathering and sharing with regional organizations such as PCC SEE, SEPCA, SELEC, RACVIAC and others.

Cooperation with all relevant national institutions of MARRI Member States will be improved through maintaining permanent contacts and data exchange. Also, the cooperation with educational institutions, academic community - Universities and NGOs will be enhanced.

MARRI Regional Centre will continue to work on increasing the visibility of MARRI through MARRI website, journals and publications, as well as through other channels of communication. It will contribute to make MARRI activity more visible on regional and international level.

MARRI will continue to be an important factor and to play active part in facilitating exchange of information and experience, supporting regional responsibility and ownership.

4.2 Networks for Cooperation

Considering the networking as an important mean for increasing the efficiency and substance of the regional cooperation, MARRI Regional Centre has developed a model for improvement of cooperation. This will reflect on the national strategic priorities and contribute towards coordination with the activities of other international stakeholders in the migration field. It is based on systematic and methodological approach in identifying MARRI strategic priorities and project activities which are common to all member states. This model is expected to enhance cooperation on national level, among MARRI Member States' institutions responsible for migration management as well as regional and international cooperation. It will also contribute to improve communication between MARRI Member States' national institutions responsible for migration management and MARRI Regional Centre in Skopje. The approach will be based on active participation and input from networks for cooperation consisting of national experts from all areas of work of MARRI (migration – irregular, regular; asylum and refugees; visa and consular cooperation; border management).

Networks for cooperation of MARRI Member States' national institutions, managing areas of migration, will be used as a source of strategic and project ideas, as well as a tool for communication, exchange of information and experiences.

Main outputs of the improved model of cooperation are:

- Networks for cooperation for each MARRI area of work (migration, asylum and refugees, visa and consular cooperation and border management);

- Roster of experts from MARRI Member States' national institutions managing migration.

4.3 MARRI Priorities for 2014-2016

MARRI priorities for the future work are in line with national and EU 2020 priorities. The following areas are considered as MARRI priorities for 2014-2016:

- Migration management (regular and irregular),
- Asylum and refugees,
- Combating trafficking in human beings and smuggling of migrants,
- Implementation of readmission agreements,
- Document security,
- Border management,
- Consular cooperation
- Labour migration.

4.3.1 Migration

Regular

Migration as a growing phenomenon necessitates capacity building in order to be better managed. The well-managed regular migration is considered to benefit the countries of origin, the countries of destination and the migrants themselves. Hence, it is useful to endorse the regular migration and place special emphasis on enhancing the circular labour migration. MARRI will place efforts to focus on regular migration, addressing demographic, economic and political aspects.

Irregular

Cooperation in suppression of the irregular migration will be further strengthened. The irregular migration is considered one of the main threats in the region and the combating of organized irregular migration should be addressed as a priority crime area together with trafficking in human beings.

4.3.2 Asylum and Refugees

An integrated regional approach is considered the best way of tackling the Asylum and Refugee issues. The creation of common rules in the asylum procedures based on the respect of human rights in accordance with international laws is important. Exchange of information as well as implementation of best practices will be further enhanced.

MARRI will continue contributing towards capacity building of the national institutions responsible for asylum and refugees of its Member States in assessing circumstances in countries and regions of origin for potential asylum seekers and refugees. Furthermore

MARRI will place efforts on awareness-raising/preventive information campaigns intended to reduce the number of “false asylum seekers”.

4.3.3 Combating trafficking in human beings and smuggling of migrants

Combating human trafficking remains one of the major priorities for MARRI, specially establishing effective regional response mechanisms to combat trafficking in human beings in MARRI Members States.

Particular attention will be paid to the combat of trafficking in children, which represents one of the most dangerous crimes. Victims’ assistance needs to be prioritized as well.

MARRI Network of National THB Coordinators established in 2011 is to serve to that goal.

4.3.4 Document security

The majority of the irregular migrants are not in possession of genuine identity documents. They are often provided with fraudulent travel documents to conceal the true identity. Prevention of counterfeited documents is very important. Further contributing to improvement of document security will be another MARRI priority.

4.3.5 Readmission agreements

The suppression of irregular migration is closely linked, among others, with the proper implementation of readmission agreements and proper reintegration of returnees.

MARRI will continue contributing to capacity building of the national institutions responsible for implementation of readmission agreements in order to develop an effective readmission policy with respect to the fundamental rights. A particular importance will be devoted to the implementation of readmission agreements and to the conclusion of new agreements and implementation protocols.

The issue of the readmission of third country nationals will be addressed.

4.3.6 Border Management

MARRI will contribute to development of integrated border management in MARRI Member States, in order to prevent and counteract against the trafficking and smuggling of people.

MARRI will continue to develop mechanisms for cooperation between Border Police services on airports and other international border crossing points.

4.3.7 Consular cooperation

Since visa regime for all MARRI member countries has been liberated, further activities should be concentrated on developing consular cooperation of member countries within the new legal framework.

4.3.8 Labour Migration

MARRI will concentrate its efforts in the area of labour migration in the future activities. After visa liberalization process, the issue of labour migration seems to have more significant role in the general migration area.

5 CONCLUSION

MARRI shall continue to implement its activities based on regional ownership and offer the best services to the Member States' national institutions responsible for managing areas of migration.

The overall objective is to strengthen and increase the capacity of the existing Permanent Regional Working Groups/Networks for cooperation in order to ensure efficient dissemination and/or exchanging information and best practices. Also, ideas delivered by local experts during common work in Permanent Regional Working Groups/Networks for cooperation, shall be used for designing projects of common interest.

A permanent task for MARRI is to continuously raise and develop MARRI Regional Center technical capacities and human resources in a manner of continuous engagement or filling in the provided positions (Project management and finance experts), as well as continuous improvement of the expertise of the State officials of the MARRI Member States (relevant migration knowledge, knowledge of languages, project cycle management, contacts with relevant state institutions etc.)

Participation of MARRI in projects with multi-beneficiary countries and institutions will be continuation of its policy in order to deliver a lot more knowledge and opportunities as well as new perspectives for development of MARRI Member States bringing more valuable outcomes than the annual financial contribution itself.