

MARRI



Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative

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Strategy 2018-2020

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Foreword

Migration Asylum Refugees Regional Initiative's Strategy 2018-2020 has been developed with the idea to represent the result of a highly participative process reflecting the key common priorities of its six Participants in the forthcoming period. The initial phase has been completed in the first quarter of 2017 by the Regional Centre of this regional initiative through conducting interviews with relevant stakeholders from national administrations and producing six National Reports on needs to be considered during the process of the Strategy development.

The second phase has been done with development of the First Draft of the Strategy, by independent expertise through technical assistance provided by IOM in the framework of IPA II funded multi-annual project¹.

The third phase has envisaged dissemination of the document to international partners: UNHCR, IOM, EC, Frontex, EASO in order to receive inputs for finalisation of the Strategy and ensure alignment with the key UN and EU policies and priorities. This phase was completed in Autumn 2017.

The fourth phase envisaged presentation and discussion on the Strategy by MARRI Regional Committee held on 11 December 2017. Following the Committee recommendation with additional amendments, the Final Draft of the Strategy has been sent to MARRI Regional Forum of Ministers for adoption.

We would like to express special gratitude to the IOM Mission in the Republic of Serbia for substantive comments and amendments given by their team led by Regional Project Manager, Mrs. Donatella Bradic, as well as the UNHCR Regional Representation for South Eastern Europe, Office in Serbia and their Senior Regional Protection Officer Mrs. Olga Kim for guidance in identification of key UNHCR documents. We particularly acknowledge meticulous experts' opinions and advices of Frontex - Unit for International and European Cooperation, headed by Mr. Rick Weijermans and EASO – Department of Operations, External Dimension Sector, headed by Mrs. Malin Larsson-Grave.

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On behalf of MARRI Regional Centre Team
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¹ Regional Support to Protection Sensitive Migration Management in the Western Balkans and Turkey.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONIMS

*Migration Asylum Refugees Regional Initiative – **the Initiative or MARRI***

*Migration Asylum Refugees Regional Initiative Regional Centre – **the Centre, MARRI RC or RC***

*Regional Support to Protection Sensitive Migration Management in Western Balkans and Turkey – **IPA II Project***

*Integrated Border Management – **IBM***

*Trafficking in Human Beings – **THB***

*Central European Initiative – **CEI***

*Democratic Control of Armed Forces – **DCAF***

*Network of Association of Local Authorities in South Eastern Europe – **NALAS***

*South Eastern Europe – **SEE***

*Catholic Relief Services – **CRS***

*Swiss Development Cooperation – **SDC***

*Swiss State Secretariat for Migration – **SEM***

*German International Cooperation - **GIZ***

*Civil Society Organisations - **CSOs***

*European Border and Coast Guard Agency – **Frontex***

*European Asylum Support Office – **EASO***

*European Commission – **EC***

*European Union - **EU***

*Organisation for Security and Co-Operation in Europe – **OSCE***

*International Organisation for Migration – **IOM***

*International Labour Organisation – **ILO***

*United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees – **UNHCR***

*United Nations – **UN***

Introductory Note

The purpose of the Strategy is to set mid-term and long-term objectives of MARRI to support its Participants' capacities for managing migration, based on common denominator of their national needs and challenges and with a view of their joint European perspective.

This document also reflects MARRI Participants' ambition to support the implementation of UN standards and policies in the areas of MARRI mandate.

1. MARRI Vision

Labour migration, irregular migration, internal migration from rural areas to urban centres, refugees' flows, beneficiaries of international protection, return to countries of origin and resettlement affects South Eastern Europe in a variety of ways. All these types of migration have security, social and economic implications. In order to support its Participants to address these implications, MARRI is oriented by the following vision:

Migration is well managed in the MARRI Participants and supports the region's European integration.

MARRI Participants are investing joint efforts to achieve the regional vision in migration, which is, to a large extent, a supra-national phenomenon. In order to be effective, these efforts are to be focused on: a) harmonisation of national legal framework with the EU Acquis, b) institution strengthening through capacity building that supports good migration management and c) information exchange in line with EU standards and practices.

2. MARRI Mission

MARRI has been mandated by its Participants to develop and strengthen regional ownership, enhance regional cooperation and support EU integration of the MARRI Participants in the fields of migration, asylum and refugees.

MARRI's priorities and issues are defined at the political level, by the MARRI Regional Forum of Ministers. These priorities and issues are operationalised and implemented by MARRI Regional Centre², in cooperation with MARRI's practitioners' networks³ and partners⁴.

MARRI defines its mission, reflecting the regional role, Participants' aspiration for EU full-fledged membership and their UN Sustainable Development Goals commitments:

- **MARRI is a relevant and capable hub to support migration management in the Western Balkan region.**
- **Improved migration management contributes to MARRI Participants' EU accession process and implementation of UN migration policies.**

The basis for achieving the regional initiative's mission is a joint understanding of a global approach to migration and mobility. Such a joint understanding remains to be further developed – through discussions and joint learning, shared regulatory provisions, joint and

² The Centre acts as Secretariat of the Forum. MARRI has also the MARRI Regional Committee, intermediary body with mainly advisory role.

³ Border management police network, Cooperation on readmission network, National Coordinators' for prevention of trafficking in human beings network and Heads of Asylum Departments network.

⁴ Further information on MARRI partners can be found at the webpage: www.marri-rc.org.mk/partners

increasingly converging practice of MARRI Participants, and through exchange of information and experience.

MARRI represents a regional mechanism that is also to be valorised as a platform for upgraded dialogue and cooperation with EU, for streamlining and harmonisation of national legal framework in view of EU accession and tool for implementation of UN policies on migration by MARRI Participants' governments. MARRI is guided by the following principles in all its activities: identifying needs of its Participants; finding common denominator for these needs; strengthening communication, cooperation and coordination among Participants and within their national administrations; avoiding overlap with other regional and international stakeholders and making synergies with their activities, when possible and ensuring credibility and sustainability in its actions.

3. Context

Since its establishment in 2004, MARRI has made important accomplishments. At the same time, the Western Balkans have evolved from a region of internal migration and origin of migrants to a region of transit, and, considering the EU perspective, it is expected to become a region of destination. These new challenges are to be tackled by relevant actors in the national – authorities, societies as well as by regional and international organisations.

The efforts MARRI Participants invest in the vast field of migration are to be understood as part of their policies to increase stability and security and development at national and regional level. These goals also represent substantial part of their EU accession.

3.1. MARRI Achievements

- Although at different stages, all MARRI Participants are in the process of their EU accession. Following its mission to boost this process by strengthening regional cooperation, MARRI has organised numerous regional trainings, meetings and conferences that tackle challenges of national administrations in management of migration.
In 2015, MARRI has become a **beneficiary of the IPA II funded project Regional Support to Protection Sensitive Migration Management in Western Balkans and Turkey** that envisages a number of activities, among other, aimed at improvement of interpretation services in asylum procedures and for border authorities of MARRI Participants, as well as at upgrading MARRI RC capacities to address the requests of Integration process, as a regional tool.
- In order to improve its impact and make synergies with other stakeholders in migration management, MARRI RC as a Secretariat of the Initiative has strengthened partnership and cooperation with some regional initiatives (**CEI, DCAF**), European structures and agencies (**Frontex, EASO**), as well as international organisations (**IOM**). Taking into consideration the importance of a synchronised approach to migration management by central and local governments, cooperation with **NALAS** has been established. With the aim to include non- government organisations, MARRI RC has implemented one project with the **CRS** office in Skopje. The efforts produced in the different fields of migration management are important contributions to the **EU accession processes** of MARRI Participants (particularly under Chapter 24).
- MARRI has shown **capacity to implement projects**, funded by third parties. The project "Support of the sustainable development of cooperation among border police in SEE" (**BORDAIRPOL**) has been implemented **since 2013**. This project, financed by SDC and SEM, allows frequent activities of **MARRI network of Heads of border police** with organisation of several annual strategic meetings, tailor made trainings for border police officers and study visits to EU countries.

In **2015**, MARRI RC implemented the project "**Improvement of procedures for establishing identity of irregular migrants**" with financial support of the Embassy of the United Kingdom in Skopje. This project has paved the foundations for establishment of MARRI pool of interpreters for rare languages. The follow up of the activities aimed at establishment of this pool has been envisaged in the framework of **IPA II project with IOM as key implementing agency**.

In partnership with CEI and NALAS, a regional conference has been organised (**2016**). It led to development of **MIGRALONA** project (**2017-2018**) aimed at strengthening cooperation of central and local authorities in migration management, in line with EU policies, regulations and best practices.

- Since June 2015, MARRI has engaged in **organisational development and reform**, especially of its RC, thus showing the commitment to further improve its performance. In this context, **GIZ has been providing technical assistance to the RC since 2015. SDC and GIZ will continue to support the reform process with joint efforts from August 2017-April 2018 (inception phase) and 1st phase of joint programme is planned for the period May 2018- 2020.**

In the framework of IPA II project, **IOM** has produced **MARRI RC Gap analysis (a comprehensive document with 15 specific recommendations for further reforms of MARRI, with focus on MARRI RC) in 2017.**

- **In order to promote its mission and achievements, MARRI RC representatives attend the most important regional and European events related to its mandate. The redesigned web site and Facebook page, as well as informative video on MARRI has shown to be efficient tools for increasing visibility of the Initiative.**

3.2. (Evolving) Forms of Migration

Migration, over time, takes different forms, concerns different groups of persons and affects the region in different ways.

- The wars in the **Middle East**, conflicts in **Central and South Asia**, and poverty in **Africa** are reasons for important migration movements affecting MARRI Participants. Although the Eastern Mediterranean Route (Western Balkans route) is much less practiced since 2016, recent migration movements have shown weaknesses, still characterising the migration management by MARRI Participants.
- MARRI Participants not only see persons transit (mainly to Western Europe), but they need to deal with asylum seekers and refugees, as well as **migrants who intend to integrate in the region**.
- Special attention is to be paid to circular **labour migration** in the region, with focus on its development potential and European policies in this area.
- **Returnees**, especially from Western Europe, continue to come back to MARRI Participants, with or without support for their socio-economic re-integration.
- MARRI Participants witness increase of different evolving forms of **cross-border crime** as a consequence of migration flows through the region.
- Many **young persons** from MARRI Participants still wish to migrate, and significant number actually do **migrate** from the region to countries where they consider to have better chances for organising their livelihoods.

3.3. Challenges

Despite national efforts for establishing and implementing modern regulatory and institutional framework for migration management, there are challenges that can only be effectively addressed at regional level.

Upgraded protection and mechanisms for ensuring rights of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, as well as advanced border security are core challenges to be tackled through regional cooperation. These areas encompass specific challenges to be considered:

- Ensuring the rights of migrants is a concern that is to receive more attention, especially with regard to vulnerable groups among them. In addition, protection of refugees is an obligation that is to receive more attention.
- **Irregular migration** and **cross-border criminality** are a concern for the region and are also to be addressed at a regional level.
- **Human trafficking** has been, and continues to be, an issue for the region. Human beings are being trafficked from, through and to the region. Possibilities for support and protection of victims of human trafficking need to be clearly developed, and coupled with appropriate information and awareness raising with regional dimension.
- **Asylum seekers, refugees and migrants** in need of protection are becoming increasingly present in the mixed migration flows in the region, in addition **to labour migrants**. MARRI Participants have a need to strengthen regional capacities to: better establish identities of these categories of people, ensure more efficient processing of their requests, take into account specific vulnerabilities and immediate needs, receive them in appropriate premises and support their integration (language courses, integration into the labour markets, housing, education etc.). A particular challenge in the region is the language barrier. Communication with asylum seekers, refugees and migrants requires the services of interpreters, which is not always available and, for legal reasons, their support via electronic means is not possible in the entire region.

In order to address afore the mentioned challenges, MARRI needs to focus on the following issues:

- Further **progress in the alignment on EU regulations and accession processes of MARRI Participants** is required. "The European Agenda on Migration" (adopted in May 2015 with its State of Play from March 2017), "The EU Migration Partnership Framework" (adopted in June 2016), "Europe 2020. A European strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth" and "South East Europe 2020", together with the relevant EU Acquis' chapters, are key documents for orienting MARRI activities to support this progress.
- **Cooperation among Participants**, has made tangible progress in fields such as joint border surveillance, management of border crossing points, sharing experience in the field of asylum and exchange of information. More is to be done on increased cooperation, both on political and operational levels and the exchange of information is to be further intensified. In this view, MARRI needs to support its Participants to take part in the inclusive and transparent consultation process on the development of the Global Compact on migration which is to be adopted in 2018, as part of the New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants. The global compact is framed consistent with target 10.7 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in which UN members committed to cooperate internationally to facilitate safe, orderly and regular migration. Additionally, MARRI should enhance its role as a regional knowledge hub for migration related Sustainable Development Goals through collection and dissemination of information, trainings and strategic meetings between MARRI Participants and relevant international stakeholders.
- **Cooperation with civil society organisations** is to be developed in order to promote participation of civil society in migration management and mobilise additional resources, particularly in the area of the integration of refugees. Thus, MARRI should enlarge its partnership with relevant CSOs.
- **Insufficient resources** are a recurrent issue for MARRI Participants. They concern the capacities for developing and renewing strategies and regulations relevant for various aspects of migration, and the capacity for their implementation. The challenges regarding the lack of resources encompasses equipment (for effective and efficient border management), infrastructure (for hosting asylum seekers and victims of human trafficking), information (on migration, on asylum seekers and refugees. MARRI should

strongly advocate its Participants needs before donor community and relevant international institutions.

4. Strategic Objectives

In translating its vision and mission, MARRI defines seven strategic objectives for the period 2018-2020, which contribute to an improved overall performance regarding migration management. The objectives reflect national policies, EU Acquis and UN standards in migration related areas. In order to ensure appropriate focus on both thematic and organisational priorities the objectives have been divided accordingly.

Thematic objectives

The following objectives relate to the core of MARRI's mandate.

1. Integrated border management (IBM) is further strengthened. Borders between the MARRI Participants, as well as between MARRI Participants and EU Member States, are managed effectively and efficiently based on the cooperation among competent actors on both sides of the borders.

IBM is a concentrated action approach to prevent irregular migration, harmonise migration management and asylum policies, to combat trafficking in human beings and other forms of cross-border criminality. At the same time, IBM, based on the awareness of the benefits of legal migration, guarantees efficient legal migration and the conformity of operations of competent authorities with international obligations and human rights law.

2. Asylum procedures are managed effectively and efficiently, both regionally and with respect to the EU Acquis. MARRI Participants are increasingly able to deal with migrants and asylum seekers in a way that is compliant with human rights law, process their requests, and support the integration of those persons benefitting from international protection, in a coherent and consistent manner across the region, in line with EU Acquis.

The region will continue to be affected by mixed migration movements. The capacity to receive, conduct administrative proceedings related to protection of their rights and integrate beneficiaries of international protection will be an increasingly important issue for MARRI Participants. Capacity building within the national administrations of MARRI Participants is needed in order to process their applications in an effective and efficient manner and following applicable standards. A crucial basic requirement in this area is institutional capability to establish the identity of the beneficiaries of international protection. The synergy of MARRI activities with the activities of key cooperation partners is to be achieved, where applicable: UNHCR, EASO and other relevant partners.

3. Protection of vulnerable migrants and combating of trafficking in human beings are strengthened. The rights of victims of human trafficking and the protection of migrants are guaranteed.

The rights of migrants, including refugees, returnees, victims of human trafficking and other vulnerable persons (e.g. unaccompanied children) are protected. Tangible results in this area directly reflect progress in the EU accession processes of MARRI Participants. The synergy of activities is to be achieved with key cooperation partners, where applicable: UNHCR, IOM, EU (EASO and Frontex).

4. Intra-regional legal migration is facilitated with a focus on fostering (circular) labour migration and maximising the impact of migration on national development. MARRI

Participants are increasingly cooperating to encourage regular migration in the region, including development of strategies for diaspora engagement in their country of origin.

Intra-regional labour mobility is an important instrument that can contribute to the improved matching of skills and jobs, transfer of knowledge and technology, increased economic productivity and employment creation. Moreover, encouraging circular migration or temporary return of highly skilled expatriates, as well as facilitating the involvement of diaspora in national development can contribute to mitigating the effects of significant emigration from the region and related brain drain. Cooperation on labour migration can therefore be economically beneficial for both sending and receiving countries in the Western Balkans and is highly desirable, both at a regional and bilateral level.

5. International and European support contributing to improved capacities for EU accession is strengthened. Intensified international ties allow improvement of MARRI's performance in providing support to Participants in the EU accession process, specifically in view of the Acquis' Chapter 24: "Justice, Freedom and Security", and for upgrading donor support to MARRI.

MARRI cannot successfully deal with migration issues on its own. Therefore, it needs partners and external support. The full complementarity, coordination and synergy of activities is to be achieved with main cooperation partners: EU (EASO and Frontex), global actors (IOM, UNHCR, ILO, OSCE) and relevant regional partners. The MARRI Participants' common ambition to become EU members is supported through harmonisation of legislation and practices with the EU Acquis. To this aim, MARRI needs to establish strategic cooperation and regular dialogue with EU and UN competent agencies.

Organisational objectives

The following strategic objectives represent the precondition for successful implementation of 1-5 strategic objectives.

6. MARRI enjoys increased and continuous support by MARRI Participants.

In order to valorise potential of this regional mechanism MARRI Participants commit to regular and timely financial contributions, political and administrative support to MARRI Regional Centre.

7. MARRI's organisational development and operational capacity are strengthened in view of contributing to improved migration management.

Following Objective No. 6, MARRI needs to complete successful reform in order to contribute to improvement of migration management in the region. Untapped potentials for cooperation among Participants are to be used, the capacities of MARRI Regional Centre are to be adapted to support regional cooperation with EU and UN, MARRI's performance quality control is to be increased and higher visibility ensured. Intensified cooperation with international partners will be developed, in order to achieve this objective. EASO can support with capacity building, in particular for the asylum part of the MARRI organizational set up. Recommendations from Gap Analysis on MARRI Regional Centre reform produced by IOM in the framework of the IPA II Project are to be fully implemented.

5. Measures

For each of seven strategic objectives, a set of measures are foreseen.

The measures will be implemented in line with MARRI mandate that encompasses support by initiating, facilitating and coordinating regional activities. Annual Action Plans to be

adopted by MARRI Regional Forum of Ministers will define specific activities and approach to be taken in implementing these measures. These Plans will outline the timeline, costs, partners and human resources required.

5.1. IBM is further strengthened

Capacities

- Strengthening capacities and practices of MARRI stakeholders at all levels (ministerial, operational, Regional Centre) for producing and exchange of information in standardised form.
- Strengthening of institutions and organisations participating in migration management through support in improving the infrastructure and equipment, by advocating regional needs before donors. IBM, with all its components, will be a key focus of MARRI's support.
- Capacitating of staff involved in migration management and IBM through trainings, study visits. The particular attention is to be given to topics such as access to asylum procedures, interviewing capacities for establishing vulnerabilities and needs for international protection.
- Support towards effective and efficient regional approach to migration as a supra-national phenomenon at supra-national level, based on harmonised regulatory frameworks.

MARRI Border Management Police Network

- Further strengthening of the network in order to exchange information, best practices and to assess the level of EU standards harmonisation via regular meetings and/or electronically based communication of its members, with additional efforts of the Cooperation on Readmission Network.

Knowledge and information

- Sharing and acquiring knowledge about EU concept of IBM and know-how relevant for its implementation.
- Improved exchange of information supporting MARRI Participants' migration management.

Practice

- Further development of border management (especially surveillance) through exchange of police officers, including mixed patrols, and through modernising infrastructures and equipment, including the establishment of joint police and customs centres, also serving as a filter for combating irregular migration and cross-border crime will be supported and facilitated by MARRI.
- Further development of border guards' capacity, as first line responders, to adequately assess and identify vulnerabilities and various protection needs of migrants, as well as their knowledge of EU standards in integrated border management.
- Consideration by MARRI Participants of the possibility for implementing a regional approach in establishing the EUROSUR system (an obligation set by the Schengen Action Plan) by cooperating with other regional and international structures.
- Support to the work of MARRI Participants in relation to the introduction and development of "One Stop Border" (border facility that combines two stops for national border control processing and consolidates border control functions).
- Continuation, full coordination and intensification of cooperation with Frontex.

5.2. Asylum procedures are managed effectively and efficiently.

Harmonisation of asylum procedures

- Comparison and possible harmonisation of asylum procedures in MARRI Participants (including registration, competent authorities' decision and integration or repatriation) – among MARRI Participants and with the EU Acquis. EASO Training Curriculum could serve as an important training tool to enhance the capacity and quality within the national asylum services of MARRI Participants.

MARRI Asylum Network

- Reviving of the MARRI Asylum Network in order to exchange information, best practices and to assess the level of EU standards harmonisation via regular meetings and/or electronically based communication of the heads of national asylum departments. Special focus will be given to data protection issues. MARRI will take an active role in the regional Western Balkans practitioners' network that EASO will establish through IPA II Project.

Knowledge & Information

- Collection and sharing information on the countries of origin of the beneficiaries of international protection, also for the purpose of origin verification among relevant actors of MARRI Participants, in cooperation with EASO. Focus will be given to capacity building, in terms of developing country of origin information research capacity, communication and cooperation with countries of origin, methodology, use of sources and databases, organisation of workflows etc). Organisation of regional trainings for public officers in cooperation with EASO is envisaged.

Translation

Development of regional capacities for interpretation. Systematic use of rare language interpreters – a requirement for efficiently dealing with asylum requests (functional MARRI pool of interpreters). Signing of the Protocol on the use of joint interpretation pool in the area of migration and asylum among MARRI Participants represents key step and legal basis for establishment of this pool at MARRI RC. Further, provision of assistance by IOM in the framework of IPA II Project for operationalisation of the pool is directly linked with previous step.

5.3. Protection of migrants and combating of trafficking in human beings is strengthened.

Awareness

- Increasing general awareness about trafficking in human beings and respective risks through a regional campaign with two target groups: national administrations and overall population.
- Increasing awareness about all other vulnerable categories and their needs, with special focus on unaccompanied children.

MARRI National Coordinators for Prevention of Trafficking in Human Beings Network

- Further strengthening of the network in order to exchange information, best practices and to assess the level of EU standards harmonisation via regular meetings and/or electronically based communication of its members, with additional involvement of Cooperation on Readmission Network.

Prevention and protection

- Upgrading the prevention of trafficking in human beings in MARRI Participants with regional activities.
- Enlarge and strengthen possibilities of assistance for victims of human trafficking to contact competent authorities for receiving support and compensation. EASO could share experience in this field and bring capacity building expertise in the identification of victims

and potential victims of trafficking in human beings and identification of vulnerable persons.

Prosecution

- Increasing the capacities of law enforcement institutions for efficient investigation of cases of human trafficking with regional meetings and trainings in partnership with relevant international agencies, and in coordination with existing regional cooperation mechanisms.

5.4. Intra-regional legal migration is facilitated with a focus on fostering (circular) labour migration and maximising the impact of migration on national development.

Knowledge & Information

- Collection and sharing of information on intra-regional migration patterns, as well as on the legal framework regulating labour mobility, including possible legal barriers affecting mobility; - Mapping of national initiatives for promoting circular or return migration and diaspora engagement in the country of origin;
- Strengthening cooperation and exchange of good practices related to legal migration among MARRI Participants;

MARRI Cooperation on Readmission Network

- Reactivation and further strengthening of the network in order to exchange information, best practices and to assess the level of EU standards harmonisation via regular meetings and/or electronically based communication of its members.

Capacity building

- Further development of national capacities and know-how, at central and local level, for an improved management of legal migration in the region;
- Better coordination with relevant line Ministries for promoting legal labour migration and ensuring protection of migrant workers.

5.5 International and European support contributing to improved capacities for EU accession is strengthened.

Cooperation

- Continuation and further development of already established forms of cooperation, with a focus on EU accession process.

Capacity building

- Further development of the organisational capacities and the know-how in the fields of migration management, including asylum and border management, with support from international partners.

Information

- Utilisation of information prepared by third parties (Frontex, EASO, ILO, IOM, UNHCR, but also civil society organisations) in order to improve MARRI performance.

5.6. MARRI enjoys increased and continuous political support.

Lobbying

- Acting of Forum and Committee Members as spokespersons for MARRI in their governments.

Financial and political support

- Establishment of mechanisms for regular and timely fulfilment of Participants' financial obligations.
- Establishment of mechanisms for fast and efficient decision making of MARRI competent bodies.

5.7. MARRI's organisational development and increased operational capacity contributes to improved migration management.

Reform

In order to achieve all strategic goals, MARRI needs to strengthen and fine-tune its organisational and operational capacities. Thus, MARRI reform should lead to:

1. The clarification of responsibilities and upgrade of functional links among MARRI bodies,
 2. Clearly defined work processes within MARRI Regional Centre with focus on accurate work procedures and terms of references for the staff,
 3. Improve MARRI engagement in addressing and reflecting the needs of its Participants through implementation of activities and cooperation with international stakeholders.
- Effective and efficient implementation of the reform goals and recommendations identified in: MARRI Regional Forum declarations from Podgorica 21 June 2016 and Belgrade 27 June 2017, MARRI Annual Programs of Action adopted on 10 December 2015, 21 June 2016 and 27 June 2017, GIZ organisational assessments produced on 11 August 2016 and 20 June 2017 and MARRI Centre Gap Analysis prepared by IOM through IPA II Project.

MARRI Regional Centre

- Decision regarding the staffing of job positions prescribed in basic legal documents of MARRI (Deputy Director and Program Management).
- Selection of integrated expert for analytical work.
- Provision of funds for engagement of Program Manager and Project Assistants in the MARRI Regional Centre's team.
- Specific training for seconded National Representatives at the MARRI Regional Centre in order to improve their performance and links between the Centre and the national administrations.
- Improved coordination with relevant line Ministries to enable a comprehensive approach to migration management.

6. Resources and challenges

In order to achieve its vision, MARRI operates as a regional hub – both for the Participants' governments and for the international organisations. MARRI is fully owned by its Participants who provide staff and funding for the MARRI Regional Centre operations. Additional MARRI value is implementation of all-inclusiveness principle in the regional cooperation. A special contribution comes from Macedonia, host of the MARRI Regional Centre.

6.1. Human Resources

The MARRI Regional Centre Director, six National Representatives, two local staff and one police officer provided by the Host (Macedonia) are personnel of MARRI RC.

Additionally, GIZ provides, for two years 2018-2019, the salary of an expert who supports the MARRI Regional Centre analytical capacities and the organisation of trainings for the seconded staff for upgrading their analytical skills. The integrated expert will have, among others, the task to provide recommendations for MARRI role in complementing MARRI Participants' National Strategies implementation.

Program management will be strengthened in 2018, by selection of external expert for the period of twelve months. Provided that additional financial resources are invested, this position will be covered for a longer period.

IOM has financed through IPA II Project two experts for six months 2017-2018, as follows: MARRI Migration and Asylum Data Expert and MARRI Project Assistant in order to enhance MARRI RC capacities for the project component implementation of IPA II where MARRI has been recognised as a beneficiary.

6.2. Financial Resources

MARRI's financial resources include MARRI Participants annual contributions for the operations⁵ of the Regional Centre and external donor support for project implementation.

6.3. Cooperation

The basis of MARRI functioning is the cooperation among its Participants – at ministerial level (competent national authorities for all fields of MARRI mandate). This cooperation is the core of the regional initiative and the quality of this cooperation determines the success of MARRI.

Another fundamental tool for MARRI to carry out its activities and to achieve its objectives is the cooperation with international partners. International organisations and agencies such as Frontex and EASO⁶, UNHCR and IOM cooperate with MARRI, apart their cooperation on bilateral basis with each of six MARRI Participants. Bilateral donors such as Swiss State Secretariat for Migration and GIZ remain strategic partners for implementation of MARRI project activities.

Cooperation with civil societies' organisations is an added value for MARRI performance.

6.4. Challenges

The key challenges for successful implementation of this Strategy, as well MARRI reform will be fulfilment of the fifteen recommendations identified in the GAP Analysis produced by IOM through IPA II Project. These recommendations provide the essence of the tasks to be completed in the process of MARRI reform, defined in all MARRI documents mentioned in section 5.7 (Reform).

The recommendations envisage: 1) adoption of unique criteria in selection/secondment of National Representatives to MARRI RC, 2) development of MARRI RC new job classification with improved definition of tasks and evaluation mechanisms, 3) engagement of additional permanent professional staff in line with envisaged future MARRI RC activities (Deputy Director, Program Manager e.g.), 4) engagement of short term temporary staff to bridge gaps till implementation of long term solutions, 5) establishment of sustainable MARRI RC that will enhance knowledge management, institutional memory and provide stabile partnership with

⁵ Since 2016 annual budget of MARRI RC amounts to 118.044 euro and can be changed by MARRI Regional Forum Decision.

⁶ EASO will provide exclusively technical assistance.

key international stakeholders, 6) development of clear internal operating procedures for National Representatives' accountability, both, towards national administration they come from as well as to MARRI RC, 7) adoption of internal processes division in Core, Steering and Support processes in line with expertise provided by GIZ, 8) harmonisation of MARRI financial rules with fiscal calendars of MARRI Participants and regular payment of annual contributions, 9) introduction of deadline for payment of annual contributions, 10) adoption of financial reports, budget and annual plans at the end of each calendar year, 11) strengthening options for financial contribution by third parties, 12) improvement of visibility, 13) clear relevant, distinguishable and feasible strategic focus envisaged by Strategy 2018-2020, 14) enhancement of MARRI as coordinator of regular panel meetings between MARRI Participants and EU Member States and EU bodies, as well as relevant regional and international stakeholders and 15) enhancement of MARRI as regional knowledge hub for migration related UN Sustainable Development Goals.

7. Monitoring and Evaluation

The Strategy's implementation will be further aligned with the Annual Action Plans, developed by the competent MARRI bodies, clearly defining the goals to be achieved and their related timeframe, budget allocations and staff assignment. The Annual reports of the MARRI Presidencies⁷ will monitor and report against the vision and the objectives defined in the MARRI Strategy 2018-2020 and provide regular annual evaluation of the implementation.

MARRI Participants and the MARRI Regional Centre can propose (internal or external) evaluations of specific aspects of the Strategy's implementation.

⁷ Presidency manages MARRI on annual basis. Participants rotate on alphabetical order.