

Ref. No: 02-101/33



Kosovo Presidency in Office*

Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative (MARRI)

June 2019 - June 2020

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSC 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence

Priorities of the Presidency in Office

Kosovo* will take over the Presidency in Office of the Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative (MARRI) from Bosnia and Herzegovina at the MARRI Ministerial Regional Forum which will be held on 14 June 2019 in Sarajevo.

The Presidency in Office will continue the efforts and activities of previous MARRI presidencies, in accordance with MARRI's basic legal documents, MARRI Strategy 2018-2020 as well as the relevant documents adopted by EU and UN, towards achieving a strong regional cooperation on common interest, emphasizing comprehensive and harmonized approach to safe, orderly and sustainable management of migration in the region.

The Presidency in Office priorities are as follows:

- 1. Successful implementation of the Readmission agreements among all MARRI Participants and increasing the readmission cooperation with the Countries of Origin;**
- 2. Increasing prevention, protection and suppression of Trafficking in Human Beings and Smuggling of migrants in all MARRI Participants;**
- 3. Harmonization of procedures and capacity building in order to achieve EU standards regarding international and humanitarian protection of asylum seekers;**
- 4. Strengthening the Integrated Border Management among MARRI Participants; with particular focus on National Centres for Border Management and Coordinators of the Centres;**

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSC 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence

5. Cooperation with the EC, as well as with EU and UN agencies and other regional and international organizations in the field of MARRI 's mandate; and

6. Finalization of the MARRI Reform Process.

READMISSION

One of the main priorities of the European Commission, as well as of the upcoming MARRI Presidency in Office is successful implementation of the Readmission agreements among all MARRI Participants and increasing the readmission cooperation with the Countries of Origin. Faced with the fact that the number of migrants transiting through and irregularly residing in the Western Balkans is increasing, readmission is one of the tools that should help these people to return safely to their places of origin. Under the upcoming Presidency in Office, the focus on readmission will revolve around two separate strands:

- Improving the readmission legal framework of all MARRI Participants as well as the framework of cooperation between MARRI Participants and EU Member States, and
- Strengthening the dialogue and developing a legal framework with Countries of Origin in order to sign Readmission Agreements with MARRI Participants.

TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

After the official closing of the Western Balkans Route, the number of migrants has decreased, but they are still present in the WB region. Groups of migrants attempting to cross the borders of MARRI Participants with the support of smugglers and – as is often the case – traffickers of human beings are apprehended on the borders of MARRI Participants on daily basis. Having this in mind, and provided that the biggest challenge of the law enforcement agencies is fight against trafficking of human beings, the Presidency in Office will put particular emphasis on the fight against trafficking in human beings, especially in the area of prevention, protection, cooperation and support of MARRI Participants' administrations. In this regard, the Presidency in Office will give full support to the new project developed by MARRI and GIZ, titled “*Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings in the Western Balkans*”, where the cooperation between all involved stakeholders in the MARRI

Participants in the areas of prevention, protection and partnership in suppression of trafficking in human beings is expected to increase.

HARMONIZATION OF ASYLUM PROCEDURES AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Knowing that a key part of the core mandate of MARRI is supporting its Participants in reaching international and EU standards, and provided that one of the 5 MARRI Strategy 2018-2020 thematic objectives is effective and efficient management of asylum procedures, both regionally and with respect to the EU acquis, harmonization of asylum procedures and capacity building in providing international and humanitarian protection for asylum seekers will be in the focus of the Presidency in Office. In reaching this goal, the Presidency will strongly support the established cooperation between MARRI and European Asylum Support Office (EASO), especially with regards to the realization of the Needs Assessment Report prepared by an EASO expert in cooperation with MARRI Participants' Asylum Departments.

INTEGRATED BORDER MANAGEMENT (IBM)

One of the main priorities of the European Commission, as well as a key requirement in the EU integration path is full implementation of the IBM recommendations and criteria. Special attention is driven to internal border security and to international relations. In order to facilitate the cooperation, coordination and information sharing at national and international level, few MARRI Participants, including the Presidency in Office, have established the National Center for Integrated Border Management (NCIBM). Those Centers have technical capacities for collating, analysing and disseminating information, undertaking multi-agency risk analysis, and serve as a Main Point of Contact for "real time exchange of information" which assist the border agencies in fighting cross-border and organised crime, as well as helping to combat the scourge of corruption. The focus of the upcoming Presidency in Office will be to promote the idea and best practices of the NCIBM concept and strengthening cooperation among bodies engaged in IBM.

COOPERATION WITH EC, EU AND UN AGENCIES AND OTHER REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

All MARRI Participants expressed a clear, unequivocal and unanimous commitment to cooperation with and integration in the EU family, especially with regards to their priorities for their term of the MARRI Presidency in Office. Certainly, this cannot be reached without close communication and collaboration with the European Commission and all EU agencies, as well as with the relevant international and regional organizations. The Presidency in Office will facilitate the continuation of the already established collaborative practice, through increasing the cooperation with all relevant stakeholders in Southeast Europe which are interlinked with the activities falling under the MARRI mandate. This cooperation will be promoted through joint activities, meetings and regional conferences with a view to strengthen the regional approach towards migration management in the Western Balkans. The focus will be on formalising the cooperation through Memoranda of Understanding - where necessary, and on organizing joint events, with a view to promote MARRI as regional migration hub, with the aim of strengthening the initiative itself in the regional and international arena.

MARRI REFORM PROCESS

The Presidency in Office believes that MARRI needs to continue the efforts of the previous Presidency in line with the GAP Analyses conducted by GIZ and IOM, and with the MARRI Strategy 2018-2020, especially Article 5.7 of the Strategy, with the aim of:

- Clarification of responsibilities and upgrade of functional links among MARRI bodies;
- Establishing clearly defined work processes within MARRI Regional Centre; and
- Improving the MARRI involvement in addressing and reflecting the needs of its Participants through implementation of activities and cooperation with international stakeholders.

It is necessary to continue the efforts towards enhancing the internal functionality of MARRI, through:

Following the good example of previous Presidencies in Office with advanced annual scheduling of regular MARRI meetings (MARRI Regional Forum meeting, two MARRI Committee meetings and MARRI Friends meeting) in order to assure adequate participation and preparation of those meetings;

Timely adoption of the key documents needed for efficient functioning of MARRI and regular activities of MARRI RC, as well as regular payment of annual contributions by MARRI Participants;

Stronger involvement of MARRI Coordinators as liaisons between the MARRI Regional Forum and MARRI Regional Centre, through their presents on the MARRI meetings, particularly on the MARRI Committee and MARRI Forum meetings;

Continuation of the activities for upgrading the MARRI Core Documents with clearly defined work processes within the MARRI Regional Centre. Taking in consideration the MARRI Committee recommendations and MARRI Forum decisions from December 2018 and January 2019, as well as in line with the conclusions from the Meeting organized by the MARRI RC Director in April 2019 where the Plan for Finalization of MARRI Basic Documents was presented, the Presidency in Office will strongly support this reform process and will initiate the adoption of the presented Plan and – subsequently – provide support for its implementation and finalization.

In that respect, the Presidency in Office shall endeavour to secure a favourable environment for the finalization of all planned project and reform activities that could respond to the substantive needs of MARRI Participants and provide utmost benefit in the overall cooperation with the EU and other international and regional organizations.

In line with the fulfilment of the above-mentioned priorities, detailed Program of Action is prepared and attached to this document.