



International Organization for Migration (IOM)
The UN Migration Agency



A Strategic Approach to Regional Migration Management in the Western Balkans

The International Organization for Migration (IOM)
and
The Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative (MARRI)

Background

While the Western Balkan Route was officially closed in March 2016, the Western Balkan region continues to see varying levels of intra-regional movements. Migrants are stranded in transit between their countries of origin (mainly the Syrian Arab Republic, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Pakistan and Afghanistan) and the countries they are trying to reach in the European Union. They use migration routes and follow changing trends exacerbating their vulnerability. The nature of these migration flows are mixed and composed of a wide range of job seekers, climate migrants, migrant workers, refugees and asylum-seekers, persons wishing to reunite with their families and vulnerable groups like trafficked persons, pregnant women, the sick and elderly, unaccompanied minors, persons with special needs and abilities.

In the light of these challenges, a *coherent, comprehensive* and *coordinated* response is required to ensure that migrants and refugees have access to appropriate assistance and protection. The migration management and reception systems in the Western Balkans face challenges in responding swiftly and adequately.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is working with migration and border management authorities in the Western Balkans to strengthen migration management systems as well as to ensure the provision of humanitarian assistance and services to those transiting or stranded in the region.

In these efforts, IOM has cooperated with the Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative (MARRI), since the inception of MARRI in 2004 – a cooperation that became formalized in 2008 when IOM and MARRI signed a Memorandum of Understanding.

Moreover, IOM and MARRI recognize that no government can address migration-related issues and challenges individually and in isolation, as migration is a global phenomenon transcending national borders, and hence requires international, regional and bilateral dialogue and cooperation. Additionally, effective cooperation and strengthening of migration management systems remain a key priority for MARRI Participants in light of their EU accession process.

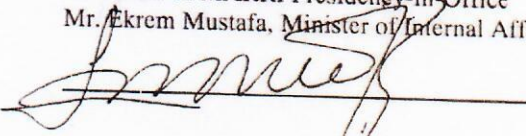
IOM and MARRI work for enhanced coordination and a stronger and strategic regional migration response in meeting today's and tomorrow's challenges linked to the evolving dynamics of migration and the shifting migratory patterns in the region. Against this background, IOM and MARRI have set out the following priorities and commitments in order to move towards **a strategic approach to regional migration management in the Western Balkans.**

Proposed approach

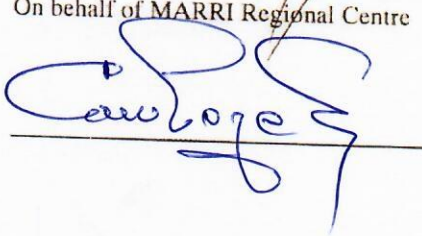
1. MARRI Participants work together on achieving a coherent, comprehensive and coordinated response to key migration issues and challenges in the Western Balkans, namely: Systems and procedures for the collection, management and sharing of migration related data and information and their analysis; facilitating regular labour migration, including circular migration; strengthening of border management and the prevention of cross border crimes such as trafficking in human beings and smuggling of migrants; and readmission, voluntary return and reintegration of migrants.
2. To realize these objectives, IOM and MARRI have agreed to work together in supporting MARRI Participants in achieving a common approach to advanced migration management in line with EU and international standards and more concretely, to work jointly on:
 - Harmonizing methodologies and procedures of data collection and exchange;
 - Promoting regional dialogues on regular migration and labour migration, including circular migration;
 - Integrating migration into development frameworks, policies and programmes at both the national and the regional level;
 - Developing or strengthening existing mechanisms to monitor the risks, threats and other factors that may initiate migratory movements;
 - Supporting the development of regional procedures and contingency plans, including mechanisms for the exchange and sharing of resources in order to flexibly be able to strengthen border management in emergency situations;
 - Supporting the implementation of existing regional mechanisms to share information relevant to the prevention of trafficking in human beings; and
 - Providing assistance to MARRI Participants to fully implement existing bilateral and/or regional agreements, including readmission agreements, and ensuring that voluntary return and reintegration are facilitated.
3. To realize these objectives, MARRI Participants are committed to coordination and cooperation by contributing to and participating in regular meetings, conferences, and partnerships with other identified international partners, organizations or agencies.

Date: 26.08.2019

On behalf of MARRI Presidency in Office
Mr. Ekrem Mustafa, Minister of Internal Affairs



On behalf of MARRI Regional Centre



On behalf of IOM

