

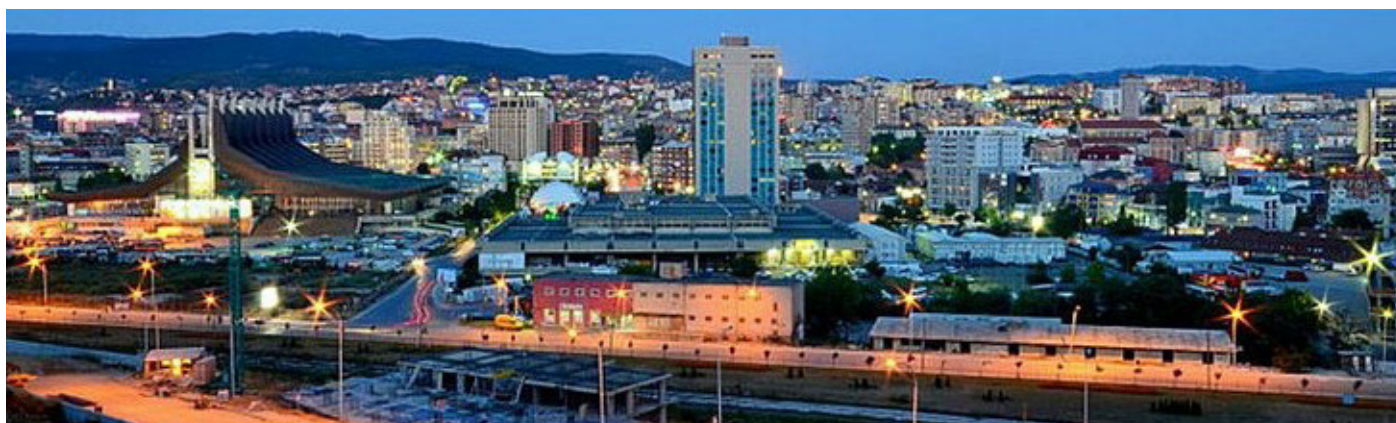
# BULLETIN

3

DECEMBER 2019  
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## MARRI

Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative



**VALDET SADIKU**  
PRIORITIES OF THE PRESIDENCY-IN-OFFICE

*INTERVIEWS:*  
**ROVENA VODA**  
DEPUTY MINISTER OF INTERIOR OF ALBANIA

**MICHAEL SAMEC**  
TEAM LEADER, DEUTSCHE GESELLSCHAFT FÜR  
INTERNATIONALE ZUSAMMENARBEIT (GIZ)

*If you call it “Ahead of the game” (Australian Government) or  
“Fit for purpose” (UN, OSCE), it does not matter.  
A changing world and the 2030 SDG Agenda require many institutions and  
organizations to adapt to the 21st century’s challenges and transformations*



Dear MARRI friends,

MARRI Regional Centre Director Sashko Kocov (right)  
and Senior Advisor Christoph von Harsdorf (left)

The MARRI Strategy adopted by the Forum of Ministers of Interior/Security of MARRI's six Participants on 19th January 2018, anticipates that reforms should lead to an organizational development and increased operational capacity which contribute to improved migration management.

Since I did not find any blueprint for such comprehensive, all elements encompassing reform, I consulted with the Integrated Expert provided by GIZ/CIM, Mr. Harsdorf, about his experiences. One usually distinguishes three organizational levels:

**The steering level** includes sector policy and sector strategy, legal and regulatory framework, human and material (budgetary) resources, MARRI's own Strategy, its steering mechanism, alliances, oversight

**The core business level**, managing the “business” of the organization. The business of MARRI is strategic support to Human Rights and EU conform Migration Management of the six Participants (i.e. regional level). The Core Business level works ideally goal-oriented, with a Results' Model, along a Theory of Change and with a

web-based logframe with indicators.

**The support level** counts upon training, capacity-building, technical preparedness, human resources development, databases, IT, equipment, procurement, infrastructure, control, QM, (Kaizen), managing donors and donor coordination, Media, Press, Social Media

### MARRI's Legal Framework Reform

**A legal framework reform** (see above: steering level) was recommended by the MARRI COMMITTEE and instructed by the MARRI FORUM to the Director and is successfully underway. We just returned from Gevgelija where MARRI Presidency-in-Office, COMMITTEE Members as High Representatives from Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Diplomats, experienced Coordinators from Ministries of Interior/Security, Participants' Representatives to the Centre and the team of the Centre had met to discuss goals, procedures and regulations for a better functioning of MARRI by eliminating inconsistencies, by filling regulatory gaps and by speeding up processes. As a result, accountancy and

transparency will increase and MARRI can make better use of the budget. All documents will now go - with again funding from the German Government and support from GIZ - through a legal editing (end of year) and a final workshop planned for early 2020. It is still my ambition that a new updated framework be adopted by the FORUM by June 2020.

► Additionally, I have identified other necessary improvements to be achieved. I have prioritized them in my **Reform Agenda** as follows:

- Managing upstream instead of downstream;
- Strengthening the human factor, supporting Personnel;
- Putting emphasis on innovation and learning, horizontally and vertically;
- Studying and optimizing our internal processes;
- Filling Alliances (MoU) with life.

You will read more about it in the next volumes of the BULLETIN ■



# Priorities of MARRI Presidency-in-Office

The Chair, Ambassador Valdet Sadiku

*MARRI Regional Center is an important organization whereby its Participants could coordinate better its activities and have a joint and effective approach in combating negative impacts of illegal migration. We were very pleased to take over the Presidency from Bosnia and Hercegovina at the MARRI Ministerial Forum on 14 of June 2019 in Sarajevo. Leading and facilitating the MARRI agenda during this period is very meaningful to us as the youngest Participant of this important regional initiative.*

When setting our primacies of the MARRI Presidency-in-Office our main aim was to prepare priorities which run across the board and resonate with all MARRI Participants when it comes to migration, asylum, refugees and human trafficking. In this regard, the readmission process has emerged as a number one priority depicting important elements both for us and the European Commission. Readmission is one of the mechanisms that should help people safely return to their countries which are transiting or/and have temporary irregular residence in the EU and in MARRI territory. Ensuring the return of irregular migrants and having clear readmission strategies is in fact absolutely essential in order to enhance the credibility of policies in the field of international protection and legal migration.

The second priority we have selected is the Trafficking of Human Beings. It is important to highlight that with the support of German International Cooperation (GIZ) MARRI has managed to develop a new project titled "Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings in the Western Balkans" which will start the implementation during our Presidency and for which we are very grateful to GIZ for their unreserved support. The crucial



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importance of this project is that all MARRI stakeholders will be involved and coordinating their activities in the prevention, protection and partnership in combating trafficking in human beings in our region.

All MARRI Participants continuously strive to reach the EU standards regarding the International Protection (asylum). With the support of the UNHCR, MARRI held a conference in Ohrid on 29 and 30 of October titled "Enhanced collaboration within Western Balkans in providing international protection and respecting the human rights of refugees". In this conference all the participants had the opportunity to present their harmonization of their national legislations with the Asylum Procedure Directive 2013/32/EU and reception

Directive 2013/33/EU. The presence of other stakeholders at this conference i.e. EASO, IOM, UNHCR was very important to familiarize the latter with the current legislation in place and the incorporation of these directives in all MARRI Participants' legislations.

The concept of Integrated Border Management is another crucial point we wanted to give it its due attention during our Presidency-in-Office. The main reason being that this one of the main conditions in the EU integration journey with full implementation of its recommendations and criteria related to IBM. Only few MARRI Participants have established National Centre for Integrated Border Management in order to facilitate the cooperation, coordination and share of information at Participant and international level. Hence the concept of National Center's was flagged to MARRI Participants introducing models of operations in this area whereby other administrations had the chance to get familiar with the operations and were invited to visit these centers.

Last but not least all of the above could not be achieved without the excellent cooperation with Regional and International Organizations related to MARRI's mandate. Close communication and collaboration with European Commission and all EU agencies as well as with relevant international and regional organizations. I am strongly convinced that our capacities will be built more efficiently through regional cooperation and open communication on these issues. At the same time our European path will be built on more solid ground through our serious work in the areas which MARRI RC and its partners support in the region ■



## ROVENA VODA

### Deputy Minister of Interior of the Republic of Albania and MARRI Coordinator

**The latest change in the migration flows through Western Balkans has put the Republic of Albania back on the migrants' favorite routes. What is the current situation in this regard and how does Albania deal with the increased pressure?**

The situation of increasing illegal migration in Albania is a direct consequence of the increase of illegal immigration flows of African and Asian origin (from LMAV countries - Middle East and North Africa) in the Western Balkans in their attempt to reach the European Union countries. This is a phenomenon that has been observed and faced by us for years.

Migration management issues continue to be

one of the main challenges of the Albanian Government, Ministry of Interior, State Police and all other structures, with direct duties and responsibilities in this regard.

During 2018, the number of immigrants caught in the irregular situation in our country was 6893 persons, while during the period January - June 2019, more than 3807 immigrants were detained irregularly. Compared to the same period in 2018 where a total of 3254 illegal immigrants were caught, it results that this number has increased by 553 persons, or, expressed as a percentage, by 17%. The growing trend is evident not only compared to last year, but also from month to month. The increase in the number of irregular migrants

indicates the increasing trend in Greece. Referring to the analysis done, it appears that the number of illegal migrants in our country has increased as a result of external factors, mostly related to the closure of the northern Balkan route (North Macedonia - Serbia - Hungary), a significant increase in the number of migrants arriving in Greece, as well as the establishment of camps by the Greek authorities, near the border with Albania (Ioannina and Thessaloniki).

The increase in irregular immigration was followed by a change in the number of third-country nationals, which was not evident in the last year. The number of irregular immigrants from Syria, Pakistan, Iraq and Algeria accounts for the largest number of irregular immigrants. These data suggest that the number of irregular migrants from Syria still accounts for the largest total number of immigrants.

Albania is facing a difficult situation, but it still cannot be called a crisis.

The Albanian Government has responded to migration emergencies with a series of policies and initiatives aimed at addressing crises at national and regional level with the ultimate goal of implementing best practices



and European standards of border and migration management and protection of migrants' rights and to ensure the right to safe and decent housing for mobile populations in the context of mixed flows at the border and within the territory, especially for vulnerable categories such as unaccompanied minors, victims of trafficking, etc.

► During the first months of 2019, the Albanian Government updated the "Preparatory Plan for a Potential Mass Flow of Migrants and Asylum Seekers at the Albanian Border", reflecting the suggestions/ comments of the responsible Albanian institutions and International Organizations such as IOM, UNHCR etc., with the aim of taking appropriate measures to ensure that the country is prepared to handle the increasing flows of migrants and asylum seekers.

Specifically, the plan review process seeks to guarantee respect for the human rights of migrants and asylum seekers in Albania, to take all measures to work in close partnership with neighboring authorities, potential destination countries and, where possible, both with countries of origin, as well as with international organizations in accordance with specific mandates and areas of expertise.

► Since June 2018, the Ministry of Interior has been leading the process of drafting the National Strategy on Migration and its Action Plan, which was adopted by the Albanian Government in June 2019 (by Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 400, dated 19.6.2019).

The National Strategy on Migration Governance, inspired by global migration processes as much as Albania's EU integration process, aims to provide a comprehensive response to the challenges and opportunities of migration by 2022 of Albania.

**THE GOVERNMENT OF ALBANIA HAS SET THE FOLLOWING POLICY GOAL: 'EFFECTIVELY GOVERN MIGRATION IN ALBANIA TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES RESULTING FROM MIGRATORY MOVEMENTS AND TO ENHANCE THE IMPACT OF MIGRATION ON DEVELOPMENT TO THE BENEFIT OF MIGRANTS AND SOCIETY'.**

On 21 May 2019, Frontex launched the first fully-fledged joint operation outside the European Union with Albania. How do you evaluate the cooperation with Frontex and what are the expectations?

Our agencies regularly exchange information with the neighboring authorities, but also with the authorities of the EU countries and FRONTEX, regarding the migration situation in our country and the possible change of situation in the neighboring countries such as Greece and North Macedonia;

On 5 October 2018, Albania signed an agreement with the European Union on cooperation in border management between Albania and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX). Whereas on 21 May 2019, the Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX), in co-operation with the Albanian authorities, conducted the first joint operation on the territory of a non-EU neighboring country.



**SINCE MAY 22, 2019, TEAMS FROM FRONTEX HAVE BEEN DEPLOYED, TOGETHER WITH ALBANIAN BORDER GUARDS, AT THE GREEK-ALBANIAN BORDER TO STRENGTHEN BORDER MANAGEMENT AND INCREASE SECURITY AT THE EU'S EXTERNAL BORDERS, IN FULL COMPLIANCE WITH ALL COUNTRIES CONCERNED. THIS OPERATION MARKS A VERY IMPORTANT PHASE FOR BORDER COOPERATION BETWEEN ALBANIA, THE EU AND ITS PARTNERS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS.**

What portion of the migrants have intention to remain on the territory of the Republic of Albania and what are Albania's main challenges when it comes to asylum seekers?

Actually, all irregular migrants who enter our territory openly express their intention to travel to Germany, Austria, Sweden or other EU member states.

During 2019, following the selection procedure, out of 3807 irregular immigrants, 22 persons were sent to the Closed Center for Foreigners to undergo compulsory return procedures and 2516 individuals were selected as asylum seekers,

We are currently facing a new phenomenon,

the removal of asylum seekers from the National Asylum Center, abusing their right to seek international protection / asylum, which is a challenge in itself. The asylum seekers accommodated at Babrru Asylum Center stay in this center for a period of 4 days, up to several weeks and then using free movement in Tirana, go to Shkodra or less often to Kukes to continue their journey to the European Union countries;

Moreover, this phenomenon explains the increase in the number of asylum seekers during this period, compared to the same period in 2018, and has forced us to increase border surveillance measures with Montenegro, in the Shkodra and Malësi e Madhe area.

In this context, in line with the EU Directives and the 2019 Progress Report, we will work to improve asylum legislation and make all necessary efforts to increase the management capacity of asylum structures, increasing their role since the beginning of the interview process, at the border or in the territory where the asylum seeker is contacted. There is currently such a project initiated by UNHCR, but will require time and investment.

We will work to strengthen the capacities of the asylum seeker sector from the country of origin, collaborating with organizations such as EASO.

This fact is also in support of the idea expressed by MARRI Participants to create a common network for receiving and sharing information from these sites, which will be active and accessible to all WBC-6. This cooperation would also require the creation of a common network.

**The increased influx of migrants increases in many countries the occurrence of criminal activities, including trafficking in human beings (THB). Is this the case with the Republic of Albania and if so, what measures does the Ministry of Interior undertake against the phenomenon, in terms of prevention, protection and prosecution?**

Regarding the phenomenon of illegal immigrants, our structures are paying high attention to these two indicators: Identifying the potential victims and victims of trafficking among the citizens who come as irregular immigrants and Identifying different individuals who, mixing with the crowd of irregular immigrants, might be terrorists - (FFS - foreign terrorist fighters).

The selection process is not necessarily carried out at the time of the migration situation. Vulnerable categories (women, children, people with disabilities) are provided with humanitarian assistance (food, clothing, medical assistance, etc.) as required by the standard procedure of border police and migration.

If the selection procedure identifies elements

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suspected of being a victim of trafficking or a potential victim of trafficking, the regional / local authority for the treatment of foreigners referred to the guidelines for implementing standard operating procedures for identifying and referring victims of trafficking and potential victims of trafficking, immediately notifies the structures of the fight against trafficking in the regional police directorate and submits the alien against the act of surrender to these structures. Vulnerable categories are interviewed in the presence of the social worker and the psychologist, after being assisted and placed in designated settings. The procedure for determining their best interest is done as part of the interview process.

Further attention will be given to further training for border workers in identifying vulnerable categories in cases of mixed mass flows, ensuring the right to safe and dignified accommodation for migrants at the border and within the territory, in particular in the following categories: vulnerabilities such as unaccompanied minors; and designing programs through inter-institutional consultations that address the needs of vulnerable categories of aliens and monitoring requests for specific services.

**The readmission and return of the migrants require strong partnerships and excellent cooperation. What are Albanian's experiences when it comes to enforcement of the readmission agreements with EU Member States, countries of origin beyond WB and with other MARRI Participants?**

Albania has signed bilateral readmission agreements with several countries, as well as with the European Union, which also includes a clause for third-country nationals. The readmission agreement with the EU is being implemented satisfactorily. In this regard, Albania continues to prioritize and timely review readmission requests from member states.

Regarding the return and readmission of third-country nationals, the key is to identify them quickly and effectively, to enable them later to enter the asylum system, return to the transit country or refer to a closed detention center for irregular migrants. In the future, faster and more efficient cooperation with embassies and border and migration services in the countries of origin, will be needed for the rapid identification of foreign nationals and the implementation of appropriate return procedures.

A matter of concern is the organization of the return of third-country nationals to the Greek state. The lack of a Protocol on the implementation of the EU-Albania Readmission Agreement with Greece, has been identified as a need in some institutional assessments and reports. Readmission negotiations are already underway with a number of countries of origin.

Other challenges identified by the authorities with regard to readmission of third-country nationals, which need to be resolved in the coming period, relate to limited reception capacities at border crossings, limited unaccompanied minors detention facilities, inadequate staff training, limited funds for return to the country of origin as well as translation challenges.

Special attention was paid to strengthening regional cooperation by prioritizing the exchange of information with migration services and diplomatic missions in Tirana of neighboring countries affected by the influx, as well as with foreign accredited liaison officers in our country, in a timely manner, in particular those of potential destination countries. With North Macedonia, Kosovo\* and Montenegro operating joint patrols along the green border, a Joint Information Exchange Center with North Macedonia and Kosovo\* has also been established and operates.

**Albania was the one of the founding Participants of MARRI and it has always been very supportive of the work of the Initiative. What is Albania's most valuable benefits from MARRI?**

Let me bring to your attention that the Regional Migration, Asylum, Refugees Initiative (MARRI) was established in Tirana, where long ago, in 2004, the Host Country Agreement was signed.

The Republic of Albania assumed the Presidency of the Regional Migration, Asylum and Refugee Initiative (MARRI) from the Republic of Serbia in June 2017 in Belgrade and held it until June 2018, promoting activities in accordance with MARRI basic documents and the new MARRI Strategy adopted in 2018. Albania is very engaged in this regional initiative, because our country has faced migrant and refugee flows earlier and for this purpose a common regional approach is needed to be in line with the Western Balkan region, in order to be better prepared in the future.



**IN THIS  
RESPECT MARRI  
IS THE RIGHT PLATFORM  
WHERE IDEAS AND  
SOLUTIONS CAN BE  
EXCHANGED FOR OUR  
COMMON REGIONAL  
CHALLENGES AFFECTING  
MIGRATION AND ASYLUM  
ISSUES**

The Regional Migration, Asylum, Refugee Initiative (MARRI) within the Western Balkans migration management has promoted closer

regional cooperation and a comprehensive, integrated and coherent approach;

MARRI's mission has provided regional support for migration management by initiating, facilitating and coordinating activities aimed at successfully aligning Participants' legal frameworks with the EU acquis, strengthening capacity and improving information exchange;

MARRI has also served as the initiator for various projects in these areas which have given a significant impetus to interaction and increased cooperation in the region, as well as through the creation of direct bridges between experts from the Western Balkans;

Our country appreciates with great positive the excellent regional cooperation and assistance of Frontex, EASO, IOM and UNHCR partners in implementing the first phase of the project "Regional Support to the Protection of Sensitive Migration in the Western Balkans and Turkey IPA II ". The project has provided great support in preventing trafficking and smuggling;

Trainings such as those for detecting counterfeit documents have contributed to increasing the skills of border guards while escort training has been an added value. Cooperation will continue to be equally positive during the implementation of the second phase of the project;

We also very positively appreciate the strengthening of cooperation with other partners such as INTERPOL, GIZ and ICMPD, for the implementation of the projects, which were successfully implemented during our country's presidency.

**How do you see the role of MARRI in the future?**

In line with past successful practices, the Regional Migration, Asylum, Refugee Initiative (MARRI) should continue to be an important voice in the region and play an active role in supporting regional responsibility.

In the future, further strengthening of successful regional cooperation should be pursued, as one of the essential preconditions for achieving EU and international standards in the field of Migration management.

Consideration should also be given to maintaining networks established for cooperation by the institutions of MARRI Participants dealing with migration and asylum, which should play a key role in designing future Participants' and regional policies, as well as in the exchange of information and experiences.

I assure you that Albania will continue to make its contribution to MARRI, to successfully tackle global and regional challenges in the future, aiming for legal, controlled and secure migration ■

\*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



## Michael Samec

*Team leader of the Regional Project on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings in the Western Balkans (PaCT) commissioned by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)*



## PRIORITIES OF THE REGIONAL PaCT PROJECT - PREVENTION, PROTECTION AND PARTNERSHIP

You have been working at the GIZ office in North Macedonia on various projects for more than five years. Who is Michael Samec?

I was born and raised in Vienna, I studied law followed by East European studies in Berlin. I speak Polish and some Russian and I very enjoyably picked up Macedonian. In 2014 I moved to Skopje to work for GIZ in a project with the Secretariat for European Affairs. Ever since I am pursuing my career in international development by managing GIZ projects mainly in the governance sector. I am married and have three children. Together with my family we take joy in hiking and camping in the mountains, for which North Macedonia is a really great place.

GIZ is present in the Western Balkans for many years working in different areas of development. From your

point of view, what is the mission of GIZ worldwide and in the region?

As a service provider in the field of international cooperation for sustainable development, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (in short, GIZ) is dedicated to shaping a future worth living for everyone around the world. It is active in more than 120 countries working on a wide variety of areas, including economic development and employment promotion, energy and the environment, as well as peace and security. For more than two decades GIZ has been implementing projects in the Western Balkans region which are focused on supporting the EU accession process and fostering regional cooperation and integration.

From your experience in working on regional projects, what are the

challenges of regional cooperation?

I am very much in favour of regional projects which allow for intensified cooperation and exchange of information among societies, cultures, economies, thereby strengthening their development potentials. As for the challenges, apart from the travel in the region which can sometimes be a tedious experience, the biggest challenges are the different interests of the involved stakeholders and the legacies of the conflicts in the region. And that is where Germany's approach to implement regional projects on technical issues comes in: Representatives of societies that experienced conflict, sometimes war, are sitting together working jointly on solutions for common challenges, like for example human trafficking or transit migration.

Tell us something about the GIZ



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supported human trafficking project and your cooperation with MARRI?

The GIZ Regional Project on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings in the Western Balkans is commissioned by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and aims at preventing the trafficking of persons and supporting victims of trafficking in the Western Balkans region.

MARRI, the project's strategic partner, plays an important role by facilitating regional dialogue and exchange of good practices, lessons learnt and new approaches.

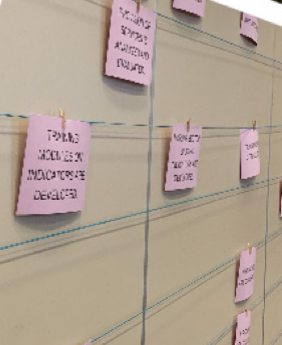
Through MARRI's network of Coordinators for fight against Trafficking in Human Beings we can facilitate regional exchange and cooperation on important aspects regarding the prevention of trafficking in human beings. This will ensure that experiences with different approaches and measures from the region are shared, discussed and possibly expanded to other areas.

Our intensive cooperation with MARRI dates back to the so-called refugee crisis in the Balkans (2015-2016) which showed drastically the need for better regional coordination and communication. In parallel, MARRI and GIZ together initiated a process of organizational and process development of MARRI.

The project officially started in July this year. What results do you expect to achieve by 2022?

Together with MARRI and our partner structure in the region, I hope that we will contribute to better addressing the phenomenon of trafficking in human beings by focusing along the following lines. Prevention - strengthening the resilience of (potential) victims, Protection - strengthening the identification of victims of trafficking in human beings and improving their access to support services and Partnership - strengthening the coordination and cooperation among relevant stakeholders in the referral mechanisms.

Thank you for the opportunity to be part of the MARRI Bulletin, and I am looking forward to reading success stories with tangible results of the project in the upcoming issues ■





# What is MARRI Experts Database

Aleksandar Todosiev  
MARRI RC Programme Manager

On various occasions, MARRI and MARRI Participants were approached by organisations, including donors and project implementing agencies, to recommend local, regional and international experts in areas relevant to migration management. This was also mentioned by most of the participants at the Workshops that MARRI RC organized in each of the MARRI Participants within the Strengthening Regional Migration Governance project.

As an answer to the presented need, MARRI RC will launch MARRI Expert Database, a web-based platform (database/data registry) that provides faster expert registry, better quality and transparent access to the expert database. It will give opportunity to each expert from MARRI region in the key areas of migration management (asylum, border management, return and readmission, trafficking in human beings/smuggling of migrants and labour migration) officially to announce her/his availability to be engaged as an expert, but also it will provide an environment of support for each stakeholder who needs a specific expert profile for a particular project.

The registration process is designed to be very easy. Through a link on the MARRI's web page menu ([www.marri-rc.org.mk](http://www.marri-rc.org.mk)) titled Experts, any person can access and make her/his registration. Whole process will be explained in details, respecting security and privacy rules. In order to avoid any subjective judgment and discrimination, MARRI RC after reviewing registration data, approves or refuses the applications, without making any evaluation of the quality of experts and their work results. Later on, the institution/organization that will like to engage any expert from the Pool, they will run the selection process in accordance to their need and their selection criteria and procedures.

## Main characteristics:

- **Experts from MARRI region;**
- **International experts familiar with the MARRI region (legislation, challenges, modus operandi);**
- **Experts from all relevant stakeholders gathered at one place;**
  - **Regional and International organizations;**
  - **Civil Society;**
  - **Professors/academia; and**
  - **Experts from MARRI Participants' administrations which have significant practical experience in migration management;**
- **Easy registration process;**
- **Open access to registered experts (Public web portal);**
- **Search engine – easy access to specific expertise;**
- **Non-discriminatory;**
- **Personal data respected in accordance to GDPR;**
- **Possibility for update already registered and approved applications.**



The registration and selection criteria are non-discriminatory. Gender, personal photograph, age, race and sexual orientations as well as other discriminatory criteria are not applicable. Personal data are also protected in line with the newest rules and regulations arising from the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

At the end, MARRI RC would like to encourage all experts, domestic or international (familiar with MARRI region) and already involved in the migration management, to use this opportunity and become part of MARRI Experts Database, accesable through MARRI web page ([www.marri-rc.org.mk](http://www.marri-rc.org.mk)) ■

# EU support to migration management in the Western Balkans

In June 2019, the first phase of the regional project “Regional Support to Protection Sensitive Migration Management in the Western Balkans and Turkey” funded by the EU through the IPA II mechanism was completed.

The project brought together the four key migration management actors as joint implementing partners, namely the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX), the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Each partner implemented activities within their own mandate and expertise, while providing support to the other partners in cross-cutting issues.

The project provided comprehensive and holistic regional support to MARRI Participants towards the establishment and operationalization of effective and protection-sensitive migration management systems.

MARRI’s role in the project was two-fold, both as a beneficiary and as a partner. In particular, two important MARRI services were developed with the support of IOM under the project, namely the Regional Remote Interpretation Service (RRIS), and the Regional Platform for Migration Data Exchange in the Western Balkans (WB-MIDEX) which were featured in the previous issues of the MARRI Bulletin.

In July 2019, the second phase of this regional migration management support programme was launched. With the same spirit and implementing partners, Phase 2 will continue to provide comprehensive support to migration management authorities with the aim of developing appropriate protection sensitive procedures which are in line with the relevant EU acquis.



In particular, Phase 2 of the project will focus on:

- i) Further supporting the establishment of effective mechanisms for identification, registration and referral of mixed migration flows;
- ii) Improving asylum procedures in line with EU standards, including support to relevant judicial authorities;
- iii) Strengthening the Participant’s systems for the collection, systematization and analysis of non-personal migration data, and developing a regional network of migration statistics experts;
- iv) Establishing return mechanisms (voluntary and non-voluntary), with the aim of developing effective cooperation with relevant countries of origin;

v) Improving the resilience and social cohesion of local communities which have hosted migrants and asylum seekers.

MARRI’s role and engagement in Phase 2 of the project will be increased.

In particular, IOM and MARRI will continue to develop and operationalize the WB-MIDEX platform and to engage authorities in further harmonization with the EU migration statistics standards through tailored local support.

Moreover, taking into consideration the rising relevance of return and readmission in the region, IOM and MARRI will work together in identifying opportunities for developing regional readmission cooperation among MARRI Participants, and with relevant countries of origin.

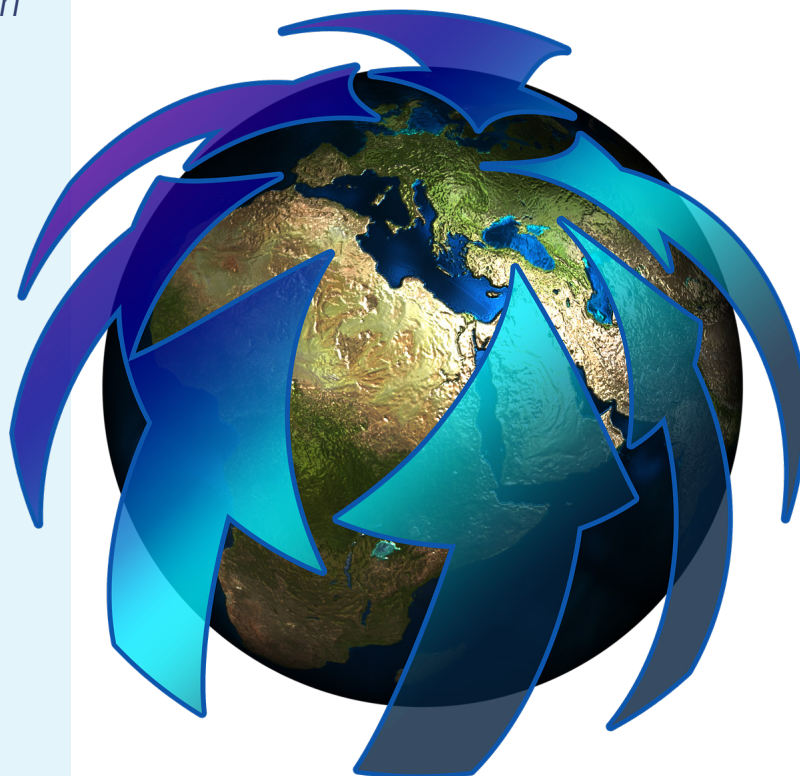
EASO, under the auspices of MARRI, will establish a regional training function which will facilitate enable increased access for asylum and migration management official to EASO’s training tools and more frequent and specialized trainings organized in the region. Additionally, MARRI and EASO will establish a Regional Practitioners network on Country of Origin information (COI), which will provide a mechanism for cooperation and exchange of information among COI officials in the region.

The second phase of this fundamental regional support project has an implementation period of 24 months, and MARRI is looking forward in working together with the implementing partners in order to provide effective protection-sensitive support to migration management in the MARRI Participants and further facilitate the process of alignment with the relevant EU acquis on migration and asylum. ■



# Labour Migration

by Christoph von Harsdorf



## MIGRATION

Migration for bread-winning contrasts with love migration, war migration, natural disaster migration, climate migration, opportunistic, political, social, tribal, religious and seasonal migration.

Homo sapiens left their African homeland to colonize the world. This great migration brought our species to a position of world dominance that it has never relinquished and signaled the extinction of whatever competitors remained - Neanderthals in Europe and Asia, some scattered pockets of Homo erectus in the Far East and, if scholars ultimately decide they are in fact a separate species, some diminutive people from the Indonesian island of Flores (see «Were «Hobbits» Human?»). When the migration was complete, Homo sapiens was the last - and only - man standing... Thirty-six thousand years ago... before the world's human population differentiated into the mishmash of races and ethnicities that exist today, "We were all Africans."<sup>1</sup>

## THE BALKANS

"The Balkan Peninsula has been for Millennia a cross-road between Eastern (i.e. Near Eastern) and Western (i.e. European) civilizations, where the Northern culture meets the Mediterranean one. 1,6 million year old human remains found in Kozarnika cave,

Bulgaria, are among the oldest human remains in Europe found to date. This is evidence for early human migrations to the rest of Europe through the Balkans.

7th millennium BCE – Europe's first Neolithic farmers migrated to the Balkans from the Near East and settled here. 6th millennium BCE – the Great Flood in the Black Sea zone. Many scholars associate it with the Biblical flood. 5th millennium BCE – Balkan Chalcolithic civilization turned, for the first time in human history, metal processing into an industry and built the Europe's first proto-towns. The following ancient people developed their civilizations in the Balkan area: Minoans and Ancient Greeks, Macedonians, Illyrians and Thracians, Celts and Romans as well as different Hellenic, Albanian, Germanic, Iranic, Slavic, Armenian, Jewish and Turkic peoples and communities make the history and culture of Balkans complex and interesting.

Today, we discover the remains of many civilizations in the Balkan territory. Some of the most popular are: The Minoan civilization, the Ancient Greek civilization with the world's oldest democratic state, Hellenistic civilizations and the Empire of Alexander the Great, Roman civilization and Empire, the Orthodox civilization and the Byzantine Empire, the Bulgarian Tsardom (Empire) – home of the Cyrillic alphabet, the Kingdom of Serbia, Wallachia and Moldova etc., West European civilization and the Kingdoms of

Croatia and Hungary, the Crusaders' Latin Empire, Venetian and Genoese Republics as well as Austria; and the Ottoman civilization. In the course of the history parts of the Balkans were conquered for shorter periods by mighty neighbors such as Achaemenid Persia and the Mongol Empires.

The Peninsula is home of three world religions: Since 1st century CE, Christianity (brought by apostles Paul and Andrew) and Judaism (brought by Jewish communities from different parts of Roman Empire but majority of them arrived here in 15th century after prosecutions from Western Europe). Since 14th century, Islam was brought by Ottoman Turks. Today, a majority of Balkan people are Christian Orthodox. Here are the sees of four Christian Orthodox patriarchates (Ecumenical, Bulgarian, Serbian and Romanian). Croatia and Slovenia are the peninsula's traditional Catholic countries, though catholic communities as well as evangelist communities are spread throughout the region. Beside majority of Muslim Sunni Turks in the Balkans live also vital Shia communities.

Famous names from the Balkans you may associate with facts known from history:

**Achilles** – a Greek hero from the Trojan War, **Orpheus** – legendary Thracian musician, poet, prophet and king, **Alexander the Great** (336-323 BC) – king of Macedonia who established the mighty Macedonian Empire, Ancient

<sup>1</sup> Read more: <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/the-great-human-migration-13561/#zwgrZ6rokidxs07X.99>

Greek philosophers **Socrates, Aristotle and Plato, Spartacus** – Roman gladiator of Thracian origin, who led the major slave uprising against Rome, Roman and Byzantine emperors like Diocletian, **Constantine the Great and Justinian** were born in the Balkan provinces of Roman Empire, **Emperor Simeon of Bulgaria** (893-927) – the first Tsar, **Suleiman the Magnificent** (1520-1566) – the greatest among all Ottoman sultans, **Nikola Tesla** – Serbian inventor, electrical engineer, best known for his contributions to the design of the modern alternating current (AC) electricity supply system, **Mother Teresa** – Roman Catholic Religious Sister and world renowned missionary.

## LABOUR MIGRATION

Despite the region's common recent history, the Western Balkans are very diverse as regards migration issues: some are plagued by poverty and high unemployment rates that generate large outflows of migrants, while others already attract immigrants to fill the labour shortages in certain booming sectors of their economy. Much of the emigration from the region is directed towards more developed countries, but considerable intraregional movements also occur. The process of accession to the European Union has further diversified the region and the opportunities and mobility of its nationals.

One of the obstacles to the successful development of adequate policies and programmatic responses to migration issues in the region is the lack of knowledge and reliable information on migration trends and on the latent migration propensity from the Western Balkan region. **Better Migration Governance is needed.**

**A recent Report of the World Bank<sup>2</sup> highlights** that despite stronger economic growth in 2018 than in 2017, the Western Balkan's labour markets improved at a slower pace in 2018 compared with a year earlier. During this period, Western Balkan region created 68,000 new jobs and employment rose a modest 1.1 percent, ranging from a decline of 4.5 percent in Kosovo\* to an increase of 3.3 percent in Montenegro. More than half of the employment increase in 2018 was due to an increase in female employment.

The quality of employment seems on the rise, with most new jobs created in the Western Balkans being formal, waged jobs, while informal employment, especially self-employment, is on the decline. Regionally, the number of self-employed declined by around 125,000 people (down 8 percent). Unemployment reached new historic lows in most Western Balkan region. The number of unemployed fell by 65,000 between the second quarter of 2017 and the second quarter

of 2018, compared to 169,000 the previous year.

Youth unemployment was high and persistent in the Western Balkan region. Although the rate fell to 35 percent in 2018, it was twice as high as the EU average. More than one fifth of the youth population was not in employment, education or training (NEET), which was less than a year earlier, but still high by international standards.

Wages and labour costs were significantly lower in the Western Balkans, compared to the EU and there was no clear convergence in recent years.

When compared to productivity, the apparent labour cost advantage of the Western Balkan region disappears and the two most direct EU competitors, Bulgaria and Romania, with similar or even lower labour costs than some parts of Western Balkans, seem significantly more competitive.

The taxation of labour income in the Western Balkans is skewed towards relatively high social security contributions (combined with a lower and relatively flat personal income tax), which results in a relatively high labour tax level for the lowest wage earners.

Low wage earners are at a particular disadvantage in the formal labour market in terms of their low net take home pay and the relative high cost of hiring them versus medium or high wage earners.

## WHERE IS THE SOLUTION – THESES OF THE AUTHOR

**I. Migration Governance** is the key and must be strengthened. Migration Governance means an approximation of values, policies and frameworks. A community of shared values, harmonized frameworks and joint policies is the solution.

**II. Extreme models are not sustainable.** No one can stop young people. Neither halting the exodus of Balkan labour force to Western Europe totally nor exporting all skilled and unskilled young people to the EU, Canada and Australia is good for the region. A mixed, regulated model with evidence-based components based on rational analyses

and negotiated fair solutions<sup>3</sup> and informed decisions will work.

**III. Migration policies** must be coordinated with **economic development policies** and with **state security policies**. The reconciliation of these three fundamental areas is needed.<sup>4</sup> Not lower wages or reduced social services determine the economic future and provide prosperity, but responsible, accountable politics, reliable independent justice, integer institutions and fair service delivery of the state.<sup>5</sup>

**IV. Three potentials** of the Western Balkans are intertwined: Jobs, Job Seekers and training facilities.<sup>6</sup> Triangular solutions will interconnect the six divided labour markets and inform a regional labour, through platforms, capacity-building and vocational trainings.

**V. Some MARRI Participants** are – in demographic terms and without even recognizing it – ideal **immigration** places (example: North Macedonia), but would need a long-term policy.<sup>7</sup>

**Further dialogue is needed to recognize the gaps and act coherently and consistently. MARRI could offer platforms for the Migration part ■**

<sup>3</sup> Destination countries like Germany get at the moment from the Western Balkans cost-free learned nurses, doctors, mechatronic engineers etc. This financial burden is unfair and needs compensation.

<sup>4</sup> As an example, one stop border or no stop border and regional customs zones will boost the transportation sector.

<sup>5</sup> Doing business in the Western Balkans is already quite attractive, see the World Bank scale: Albania (82), Bosnia and Herzegovina (90), Kosovo\* (57), Montenegro (50), North Macedonia (17), Serbia (44).

<sup>6</sup> Circular labour migration is already quite developed in agriculture (e.g. grapes' harvest), but partly unregulated and leaving workers without appropriate protection. Seasonal work in agriculture is not studied and understood as a model. Many workers speak or understand several Western Balkan languages - which is a great potential. Some Western Balkan region need – in some sectors (like Albania's tourism industry) - higher skilled work forces and adaptation to international standards. Returnees can play a fruitful role as investors, trainers and mentors.

<sup>7</sup> Eco-tourism, fruit, vegetable and animal farming as well as forestry and IT work places can absorb many more workers, even from EU or third countries.



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\*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

<sup>2</sup> The full report and the accompanying database are available on the website of the Jobs Gateway in South Eastern Europe. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/eca/publication/labor-trends-in-wb>