

BULLETIN

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MARRI

Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative



MARRI Participants on their EU Accession Path: Milestones, Challenges and Way Forward

Kosovo* Presidency-in-Office:

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SAMIR KRASNIQI

NCBM Coordinator

Interview: GERRIT ZACH Legal Editor MARRI Legal Framework Reform

Deutsche Gesellschaft für
Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)
assistance in times of COVID-19
in cooperation with MARRI

Covid -19:
10 Ways to Relax in Nature and
Stress Less

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

Dear colleagues,

My foreword to the fourth edition of our Bulletin is dedicated to all those who enable our work from home in times of pandemic.

I start with our dear families. When the video-conferences start, family members take babies to the park, partners turn down web pages, and take children outdoor, mobile phones are switched off, games stopped, doors and windows get closed to keep the traffic noise outside, dogs receive a bone to chew on, cats a bowl of milk – just to keep them all quiet. Because our video-conferences start. Our beloved ones at home deserve our deepest gratitude for their kind understanding and cooperation!

In the second line, I want to thank our superiors in the government, in organisations and companies who put our lives and health above traditional models of work. They have innovated online work. Few had experiences with leading teams from the living room. They all had to learn how to communicate clearly, how to set objectives remotely, how to achieve and measure results. Many thanks to our superiors!

We should also be grateful that our society, labour laws, modes of employment and types of work allow us to stay at home and to avoid physical infection risks. It could be worse. Health workers and pharmacists cannot run away from patients, Police cannot hide from communities, fire brigades, shop keepers and sales staff still work client oriented face-to-face, online food services provide us with pizzas at home, social workers still care for the elderly, nurses are on duty. We are obliged to all of them. Great social coherence in all our MARRI Participants!

We should also think of all these thousands of IT technicians in institutions, organisations and companies who take care of our devices, networks and contracts. Never, service numbers have been dialed more often, never IT advice was higher appreciated than today. Keep us going, IT guys, many thanks to you all!

But rights come with duties. It is every home workers obligation to maintain her/his ability to deliver.



Any employee who stays away from the workplace for preventing an infection, cannot take unnecessary risks otherwise. Irresponsible behaviour destroys this exceptional instrument called “work from home” and the whole idea. Self-quarantine is not an additional holiday and is not leave.

Organising large family gatherings, attending mass demonstrations, the famous “event culture”, ignoring masks and distancing, going on group excursions, partying and other riskful attitudes annul all attempts of the government, of organisations and companies to keep their Personnel out of the risk zone. The privilege of working from home comes with the increased responsibility to keep yourself away from any risks. You cannot bite the hand that feeds you.

You see me today in sport dress because I want to maintain my physical and mental fitness while working from home. Regular physical exercises and trainings guarantee “mens sana in corpore sano”. Healthy, balanced nutrition, reduced use of alcoholic beverages, a diversified and structured daily agenda with clear objectives help enormously to still deliver excellent work results from home and to be highly productive, respecting the needs of our body and soul.

Stay safe!
Your Sashko Kocov





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Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased and honored to address you in the name of the Presidency-in-Office.

Assuming MARRI Presidency-in-Office, persists to be of great importance, and in the meantime, it is a challenging undertaking. MARRI as a Regional platform has been identified of high priority for us, as well as for all Participants. Identifying our concerns for the period of the Presidency-in-Office, our main aim was to prepare priorities thus resonating with all MARRI Participants when it comes to: migration, asylum, refugees and human trafficking.

One of our priorities was also introducing the concept of Integrated Border Management. Until now, there are two MARRI Participants which have established National Centres for Integrated Border Management, in order to facilitate the cooperation, coordination and share of information at national 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.

Unfortunately, in a global scale we all witnessed the consequences effected by the COVID-19 Pandemic. All our borders were closed, restrictions were in a high demand everywhere. There is a high possibility which will determine our new style of living. As announced by authorities, borders will be friendly, and we are convinced that the cooperation will continue as it was in the past, the families will be united again, the economy will rise all over again. Consequently, I am convinced, the cooperation is one of the main pillars, and MARRI as a Regional Initiative is excellent platform which enforces partnership, on the Regional and International scale.

In the name of the Presidency-in-Office, I would like to congratulate Montenegro as a successor and a great collaborator, for taking over the Presidency-in-Office, expressing the honest wish for enhancing traditional cooperation and developing upcoming joint projects.

Wishing you sound health and persistence in addressing upcoming challenges!

H. E. Albert Prenkaj



The Legal Editor Gerrit Zach on MARRI Legal Framework Reform



...from an external perspective, the complex set-up seems to have been translated into practical and well applicable solutions, which is an important basis for the functionality of an initiative like MARRI.

MARRI Bulletin: Could you tell us a little bit about your academic background and professional experience?

Gerrit Zach: I have a graduate degree in law with focus on public international law, including human rights, asylum law and international humanitarian law. I have worked in different positions in Austria, as well as internationally for more than 10 years in areas related to rule of law, human rights and security including on the policy level, as expert in the field, in programming and project management, as well as in research and drafting.

MARRI Bulletin: Did you ever specifically work on topics such as asylum, migration, human and state security and human rights?

Gerrit Zach: Indeed, especially the nexus between the different topics were always of interest to me, with most of my professional career being focused on questions related to human rights and security. For example two years ago, in 2018, I had the chance to write the conference background paper on exactly this topic for the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ international conference on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the World Conference on Human Rights, touching upon different definitions of security and the human rights-security relationship from various thematic angles. I also dealt with legal questions linked to asylum and migration from a human rights perspective in various capacities.

Bulletin: How did you find the MARRI draft documents?

Gerrit Zach: I was very happy to see that the documents were in a finalized state.



I found well-formulated regulations across all of the five documents and a clear hierarchy between the documents that suggested an extensive process of work on them. Also, from an external perspective, the complex set-up seems to have been translated into practical and well applicable solutions, which is an important basis for the functionality of an initiative like MARRI.



So, all in all, it was a very positive impression. I hope this internal reform paves the way for further and increased fruitful cooperation in the Western Balkans and constitutes a continuation of the path towards European integration.

MARRI Bulletin: What methodology did you use and what were your main findings?

Gerrit Zach: As a basis for checking texts like the MARRI draft documents, I always use relevant international and regional documents as a basis in terms of methodology, spelling, formulation, etc. A main question is always consistency of spelling, e.g. American or British English, as well as consistency regarding definitions that are being utilized throughout different documents or sometimes within one document.

In drafting and revision processes like MARRI's, many different persons are involved and important procedural questions need to be resolved. Thus it makes sense to have the editing done at the end by one person to just place the focus on these issues of checking legal language, standardization and harmonisation of language and generally some final polishing that is relevant for such important legal documents.

...I hope this internal reform paves the way for further and increased fruitful cooperation in the Western Balkans and constitutes a continuation of the path towards European integration.

MARRI Bulletin: As a final question, could you tell our readers how familiar you are with the Balkans?

Gerrit Zach: While I was never based professionally in the Balkans, I had the pleasure to work with many dedicated colleagues and some fantastic organizations from the region during the past years. I also travelled there multiple times, professionally and privately. Obviously, from my home country Austria it's not very far! My most memorable trip probably is a bicycle tour across several countries I did several years ago during summer.

MARRI Bulletin: Thank you very much for the interview!

Gerrit Zach: Thank you and all the best for your future endeavours.



*Interview with **Samir Krasniqi**, Coordinator of Kosovo*
National Centre for Border Management*



... focal point for the ‘real-time’ exchange of information, including contact to and from Border Crossing Points (BCP), the Green and Blue Border, internally and support cross-border/international operational cooperation.



Mr. Krasniqi, could you please shortly describe your portfolio?

I am Samir Krasniqi, born on 5th of January 1975. I live in Prizren. I am married and have three children. I have completed University degree on English Language and Literature, Master degree on Emergency Management and I’m PhD candidate.

I am currently holding the position of the Coordinator of the National Centre for Border Management (NCBM) at Ministry of Internal Affairs and Public Administration, being delegated at this position from the Customs since 01.01.2014. I have more than 22 years of experience in different public and law enforcement sectors. As a Coordinator of the NCBM, I closely cooperate and coordinate activities with fellow law enforcement authorities and manage a staff of nearly 20 operators and 5 analysts as part of the overall process of monitoring and overseeing procedures of the border surveillance from conception to implementation carried out 24/7 within NCBM.

The Minister of Internal Affairs is the National IBM Coordinator and delegates the duty to the Deputy Minister who is the National Coordinator, supported by the National Executive Board for Integrated Border Management (IBM) and the NCBM Coordinator. The operation of the NCBM is established by legislation supported by an Administrative Instruction, Standard Operational Procedures and a dynamic Development Plan.

Which is the background and history of the National Centre for Border Management?

The National Centre for Border Management (NCBM) was opened in January 2013 and is located at the premises of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

The NCBM is the primary Coordination, Communication, Support and Information Centre for all Border Agencies (*Border Police, Customs and Food and Veterinary Agency (FVA)* and other Law Enforcement authorities.

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The Centre provides the focal point for the *‘real-time’* exchange of information, including contact to and from Border Crossing Points (BCP), the Green and Blue Border, internally and support cross-border /international operational cooperation.

NCBM is seen as one of the most important elements of our capacity to effectively manage the security of its borders (as highlighted continuously in the different EU and other international mechanisms reports). Another important element of the NCBM is the manning of the Centre by representatives of the Border Agencies, all of whom have direct access to their respective databases. This is judged to be a major accomplishment in operating the best practices of IBM and in ensuring the ‘real-time’ sharing of relevant information.

Which is the purpose and the main role of NCBM?

The purpose of the NCBM is to achieve effective coordination, communication, exchange of information & greater efficiency in implementing an effective IBM system, in line with Law for State Border Control & National IBM Strategy.



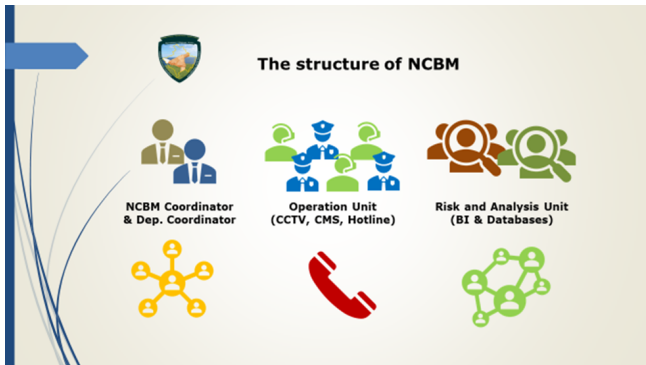
The principle aims of the NCBM is ensuring the “real-time” sharing of information between Law Enforcement Agencies (national & international) & undertaking joint risk analysis (managing an inter agency risk threat management capacity) in fighting cross-border & organised crime as well as helping to combat the scourge of corruption.

Which is the current development of NCBM ?

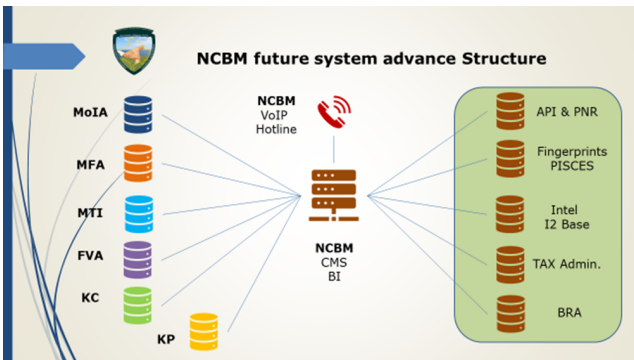
NCBM in 2019 installed a ‘state of the art’ new Case Management System & Business Intelligence & Analytics Platform – currently with direct access to 16 databases (to search and check, fast and easy for people, vehicle, broadcasting, weapon, wanted persona, lost document’s etc.) NCBM shares information in real time with all the Rule of Law Authorities within and outside our territory. NCBM has been involved in 26 International Operations acting as the National Point of Contact (Drugs, Arms & ammunition, money laundering, tax evasion, car theft, immigration, etc) and lately in managing the COVID 19 pandemics.

What about the vision of the NCBM?

NCBM vision for the future is to advance the Centre with modern technology for communicating and monitoring, professional training of staff, (in order to coordinate activities), improving cross-border



The structure of NCBM





24/7 Monitoring the BCP-s



security and enhancing cooperation between all border control authorities (operating as a fully integrated results-oriented centre, led by intelligence and applying common risk analysis, in full cooperation with local and international partners).

Could you please share with us your conclusion remarks?

Last year EU has launched a new Western Balkans Strategy, entitled ‘Credible Enlargement Perspective for the Western Balkans Strategy’.

There are 6 Flagship Initiatives to Support the Transformation of the Western Balkans - Flagship 2 (Reinforcing Engagement on Security and on Migration) calls for each country to establish National Coordination Centre for Border Control. These Centres will then be connected via a regional network for information exchange, including

network for information exchange, including neighbouring Member States.

With implementation of the NCBM Action Plan, including the lessons learned from different study visits, the NCBM will fulfil all the criteria set by the EC for establishing National Coordination Units for Border Control and will also be the model for the region, whilst is operational and functional since 2013.

On behalf of NCBM staff, IBM National Coordinator, IBM authorities and on my behalf I would like to cordially thank MARRI for brilliant cooperation and coordination with NCBM. The special thanks go to our Representative Mr. Bilall Bilalli for his enormous involvement in the process of bilateral cooperation and coordination.

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"Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings" - PaCT Project

Joint answers to global challenges: Global Crisis Regional Coordination Local Response



Emergency situations require immediate response. Such immediate reaction was required at the beginning of 2020, a time when the COVID-19 pandemic started affecting the whole world.

The GIZ's regional project on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings in the Western Balkans works on preventing trafficking in human beings and supporting victims of trafficking in the Western Balkans region. The project is commissioned by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and MARRI is the project's main partner. The project's goal is creating important institutional prerequisites for improving the situation of (potential) victims of THB among the refugee and local population in the Western Balkans. However, those institutional prerequisites cannot be reached without having a safe and secure working environment.

Going back to the beginning and knowing that in some MARRI Participants a state of crisis was declared, the Project Secretariat (MARRI and GIZ) decided to take measures which will address the challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. In this regard, and in close cooperation and coordination with MARRI Participants and MARRI THB Coordinators, it was decided to procure protective equipment and sanitary products for the relevant institutions in response to COVID-19.

German Development Cooperation assistance in times of COVID-19 in cooperation with MARRI

Namely, protective masks (KN95, surgical masks), non-contact thermometers, antiseptic dispensers and disinfectants, protective glasses, gloves, food items and other equipment were procured and donated to the Offices of the Coordinators for Fight Against Trafficking in Human Beings of all MARRI Participants, which officially requested this support.

The target group of the donated equipment are the THB administrations' case workers such as police officers, social workers, persons working in the THB Shelters, non-governmental organisations, the victims or potential victims accommodated in the THB Shelters, as well as the refugees and migrants in the Reception Centers in the MARRI Participants.

This activity has shown that it is necessary for projects to be flexible and sometimes to be adjusted, to meet the emerging challenges and real needs. MARRI RC highly appreciates that Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) is nurturing this approach and takes this opportunity to thank the German Government and GIZ on behalf of MARRI Participants' administrations.

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Aleksandra Krzalovska, MARRI RC Finance Officer



... I like the diversity, versatility , responsibility and the challenges that the position of a Finance Officer is giving to me...I also like that in the last months, I am given a chance to take part in various activities of MARRI through which I get exposed to many other topics...

Ms. Krzalovska, tell us something about yourself that others may be surprised to know about you?

Frankly, I don't think that there is much about me that would surprise others. I am like an open book and in most of the cases you get what you see. I am straightforward, friendly and easy going. Networking is my main daily task. I am very social and eager to get to know more people and be by their side once they need me. Due to these personal characteristics I tend to be quite likable and always have people around me. Apart from all the above mentioned, I am very aware of the fact that people usually either highly like me or completely dislike me because of my openness, bluntness and sometimes being harsh on them when they go over the limits. I am very fast in thinking and sometimes in reacting. At the end of the day I am only a human with all the odds we all have.

You joined MARRI after living and working in Netherlands for almost 10 years. What are your impressions of MARRI vs the expectations before joining the RC team?

Coming back to North Macedonia after rising through the ranks in the corporate life in the Netherlands was a difficult and challenging decision but I never regret

it. In the Netherlands, I have enjoyed my career to the fullest in big corporations such as Calvin Klein, Diageo, Belkin, Friesland Campina and Marchon. Work life as well as private are incomparable in these two countries. It is like looking at two extremes. In North Macedonia we are laid back and more relaxed. We do not take ownership, we do not want to risk and, to my greatest surprise, young people still prefer to work in administration choosing safety over freedom, risk and better working conditions. We, as a society are very closed, very judgmental and quite conservative. In work relations we tend to become friends immediately and we are unable to bear the consequences of too much closeness. We tend to accept orders and be given directions instead of taking initiatives and constantly improving things. On the other side, the Dutch and the other western Europeans are completely different: direct, blunt, no feelings, no drama, individualistic, entrepreneurial, courageous and many other things that we Macedonians and the Balkan people in general are not. I always tend to say something in between these two different cultures would be the best, especially work wise. I was fortunate enough to come across MARRI in my job search and I can clearly say I found an



almost perfect environment to what I was looking for. In terms of tasks, workload, colleagues and life work balance MARRI is ideal spot for me work wise at the moment. To be honest, I was quite hesitant before joining because I was not sure what to expect. But looking the things from this perspective I can assess it a very good step and so far, so good. I really, really like to be part of the MARRI RC team and work and communicate with high level professionals on one side but also lovely humans on the other.

What do you like most about your job?

I like the diversity, versatility, responsibility and the challenges that the position of a Finance Officer is giving to me. As a person I want to have structure and this position is very structured. There are tight deadlines for certain activities such as paying salaries, submitting tax forms, preparing quarterly reports, etc. Those time points are engraved in my head and on my task list and I always follow them and comply. I also like that in the last months I am given a chance to take part in various activities of MARRI through which I get exposed to many other topics. Lastly, I am taking part in the selection process for our next Strategic Development Officer and that is an amazing task that gives me energy and is a pleasant distraction from my numbers and excel files.

Tell us your biggest success story related to - let's say, patience?

Working for the biggest players on the international market has pushed me faster across the learning curve. The perks of working for corporate giants bring some challenges as well. During my master studies at Wageningen University I have trained and developed my new strength -patience. People knowing me before I moved to the Netherlands, would never perceive me as a person who throughout various experiences became very tolerant, open and patient for other cultures and nations from all around the world. That learning experience made me stronger and has improved my tolerance a lot. The biggest success story related to patience is my role as a manager of the final project during my studies. I have been selected trough a vast competition as a project manager for a two months real project. My team was composed of 9 people from different studies (economics, plant science, agriculture) and 8 different cultures (Ethiopian, Bolivian, Brazilian, Dutch, German, American, Chinese plus me as

Macedonian). We worked hard, we played hard but I did my best to foster an environment where everybody felt comfortable in expressing their point of views. In the end, we came first in the competition of 23 other groups (10 people each). Our assignment was challenging and quite demanding. We worked with high schools in the area and apart from being the manager to the team I was the spoke person to the school officials and also financial expert for dealing with the money given to us. Meaning I had very close daily communication with the donor and the accountant. I trained my patience all the way to the sky and back in that period. All this has helped me successfully communicate and collaborate at MARRI with people from different parts of the region.

"I was fortunate enough to come across MARRI in my job search and I can clearly say I found an almost perfect environment to what I was looking for. In terms of tasks, workload, colleagues and life work balance MARRI is ideal spot for me work wise at the moment."

What are your interests outside the office?

Since an early age, I have always been very busy. I have been training basketball my whole childhood till I was 18, and I am a proud winner of 3 golden medals on national level. I never stopped sporting after quitting this sport. At the moment I am doing Pilates, yoga and meditation. That is what I really need at the moment having in mind that I am also a mother of a one-and-a-half-year boy, wife, sister, daughter, friend, colleague, citizen (I probably have some other roles that I cannot remember at the moment). My day always starts at 5 am. At the end of the working day I am exhausted but I have my mother who helps a lot with my son. After I eat and recharge my batteries, I spend some quality time with my small but very valuable family. We try to do outdoor activities when the weather and the corona allow us that. At the end of the day after I put my son Jovan to sleep, I go for glass of beer, or wine, or lately cider. Blueberry cider on my balcony is my favorite wrap up strategy to finish a busy day.



MARRI Participants on their EU Accession Path: Milestones, Challenges and Way Forward

Focus on Border Management

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seconded to MARRI RC

Editor: **Christoph von Harsdorf**, GIZ Integrated
Expert seconded to MARRI RC

The recent EU decision to open accession talks with Albania and North Macedonia, as well as the expected launch of the 2020 European Commission Progress Reports for the Western Balkans, are great impetus to honor the remarkable progress of MARRI Participants towards their EU accession-driven reform commitments in migration management. In this edition of the MARRI Bulletin, the article focuses on recent developments in the Western Balkans in the area of border management, highlighting the successful cooperation of MARRI Participants with Frontex - the EU Border and Coast Guard Agency. The research for this article is primarily based on the latest European Commission assessments and recommendations.

Cooperation with “third countries” is a founding element of the European Integrated Border Management concept. By adopting a new Regulation (EU) 2019/1896 of the European Parliament and of the Council the EU has reinforced the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) which is now allowed to deploy its teams and implement joint operations beyond the EU’s immediate neighbourhood.

So far, the EU has signed Status Agreements on Border and Coast Guard Cooperation with Albania, Montenegro and with Serbia. The Agreement with Montenegro will enter into force in 2020, while the conclusion procedure with Serbia is pending. Similar Status Agreements – are underway with North Macedonia and with Bosnia Herzegovina. Kosovo* has a Working Arrangement with Frontex which enables close cooperation on irregular migration, border crimes, border security and overall border management, including daily exchange of data.

Albania is the first MARRI Participant to benefit from the deployment of joint Frontex teams to its border with Greece. This is the first fully - fledged joint Frontex operation outside the EU, which – according to the latest European Commission Update, has shown good results in addressing irregular migration and security challenges.

The cooperation among MARRI Participants and their neighbours on joint patrols, joint contact centres and local

border traffic is mostly satisfactory. Overall, more financial and human resources need to be devoted to modernising border infrastructure and increasing surveillance of land and sea borders of MARRI Participants. Border police in the region need further capacity building for achieving a consistent registration of irregular migrants, for protection-sensitive profiling and referral to national protection mechanisms. A promising practice in this area is Serbia’s adoption of Standard Operating Procedures for profiling, checking and registering irregular migrants as well as a training plan for implementation.

The approximation of MARRI Participants’ legislation to the EU acquis and the improvement of their capacities to implement and enforce the relevant rules in an EU-compliant manner is a continuous process with many steps. The increased mixed migration flows during the last five years have led to greater responsibility and a more coordinated effort by the migration authorities to advance the EU accession process in this area, while respecting and protecting the rights of migrants and refugees.

The Zagreb Declaration agreed during the online EU-Western Balkans Zagreb summit on 6 May 2020, reiterates the unequivocal commitment of EU leaders to further develop their cooperation with MARRI participants on tackling migration challenges. It further notes that the remaining Frontex status agreements should be concluded without delay and that the EU will continue to support the improvement of reception capacities in the Western Balkans. MARRI Participants, on the other hand, need to maintain their commitment to the European perspective as their firm strategic choice and to swiftly implement the necessary reforms, including improving their migration management frameworks and processes.

Disclaimer: The content of the article is the sole responsibility of its author and any opinions expressed herein should not be taken to represent an official position of MARRI.

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