

## INFORMATION SHEET

# ANALYSIS OF THE INFLUENCE OF COVID-19 ON MIGRATION IN THE MARRI PARTICIPANTS

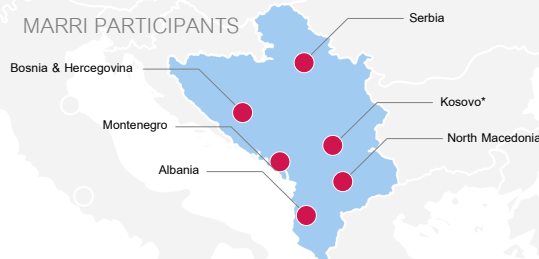
December, 2020



Migrants waiting in line for food at an abandoned customs warehouse in Belgrade.  
(Photo credits: Nema74, dreamstime.com)

## INTRODUCTION

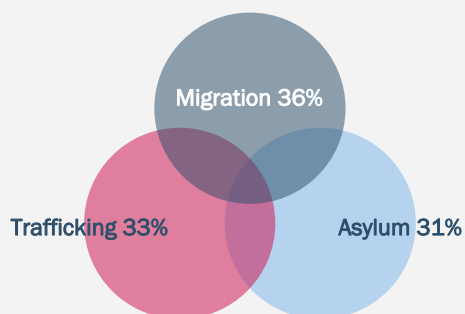
The MARRI Initiative has served as a hub for migration in the MARRI region (Albania; North Macedonia; Bosnia & Herzegovina; Serbia; Montenegro; Kosovo\*) since 2004. During 2020, the presence of COVID-19 has had a significant impact on migration in the MARRI region affecting refugees, asylum seekers, migrants and victims of trafficking. As a result, MARRI Regional Center initiated the study “Analyses of COVID-19 influence on migration”. The study identifies the gaps and needs of key migration stakeholders in adapting to the pandemic. In response to the findings of this research, the study recommends actions for more efficient implementation of the recommendations given by the World Health Organization (WHO).



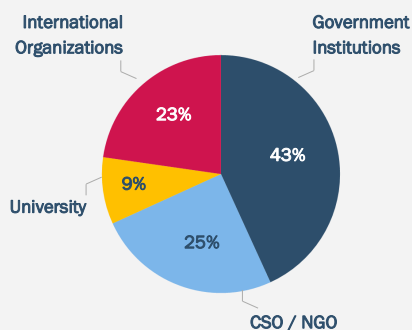
\*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

## METHODOLOGY

Research tools were designed to provide analysis of the COVID-19 influence on migration in the MARRI Participants. The research was conducted from October 24 - December 2020 through desk research and interviews with relevant stakeholders in all MARRI Participants across three areas:



Field research was conducted through mixed interviews and questionnaires with 88 respondents from all MARRI Participants. Across all respondents, 60% were conducted using facilitated interviews, while 40% were done online/self-administered. Interviews were structured in 2 parts: general demographic-oriented questions, followed by 21 questions designated to assess the impact of COVID-19. Summary of respondent professional affiliation:



Police guarding migrants stuck in Belgrade, as they seek ways to move to EU.  
(Photo credits: Nemar74, dreamstime.com)

## OVERALL RESULTS

Based on the findings of the research study, the research team was able to:

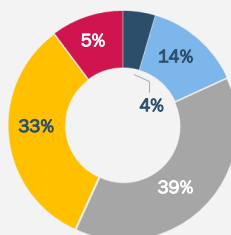
- Analyze and assess the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic had on migration in the MARRI region;
- Identify gaps and needs of key migration stakeholders in adapting to the pandemic;
- Share good practices for the efficient and effective implementation of WHO recommendations;
- Strengthen regional cooperation for addressing migration challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic;

Based on the identified good practices in the region, as well as identified gaps, the team was able to propose policy recommendations for 3 thematic topics: *Irregular Migration, Trafficking in Human Beings and Asylum.*

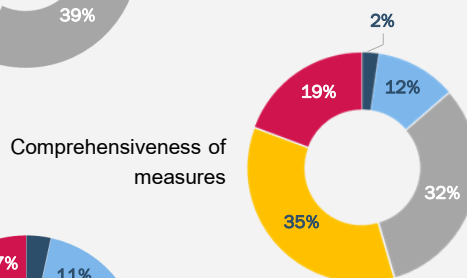


### Effective measures are needed by Governments

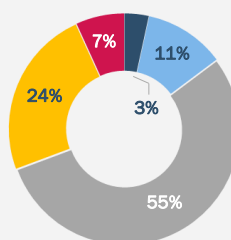
Very Low 1 2 3 4 5 Very High



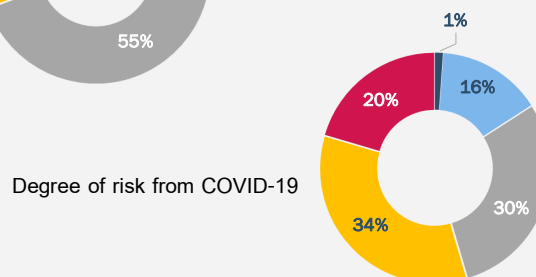
Effectiveness of measures taken by authorities to combat COVID-19



Comprehensiveness of measures



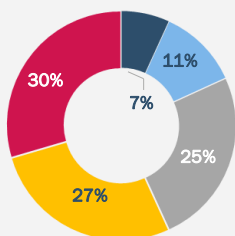
Applicability of measures



Degree of risk from COVID-19



Access of migrants, asylum seekers and victims of trafficking to exercise their rights remains limited

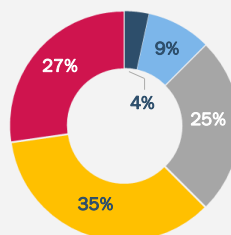
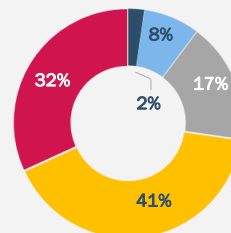


The rate of difficulty to exercise rights during the pandemic



Key migration stakeholders need to make more use of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) tools to share information.

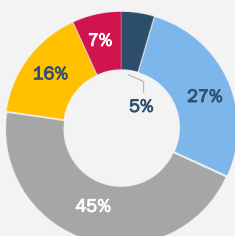
The reported need for ICT facilitation for sharing information internally



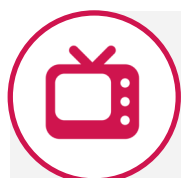
The reported need for ICT facilitation for sharing information to intended vulnerable groups



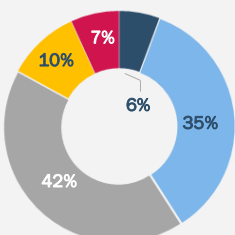
Improved regional cooperation is needed



Extent to which regional cooperation has improved during the pandemic



There is poor media coverage on issues of migrants, asylum seekers and victims of trafficking



Engagement of media reporting activity on issues of migrants

Respondents' thoughts associated with the word "pandemic":



## FINDINGS

- Migrants are recognized by MARRI participants as people in need, while their rights under COVID-19 are extended to health care services, as recommended by WHO.
- Difficulties arise when migrants and refugees, regardless of status, attempt to exercise their rights and gain access to healthcare and other vital services.
- Refugees, migrants and internally displaced persons are not properly accounted for in the pandemic plans of most MARRI participants. Governments, mostly focused on their health and security priorities, inadvertently marginalize a highly vulnerable population.
- MARRI participants, who are geographically based in the east Mediterranean route, should expect further migration pressure.
- Human rights were eroded and impacted during COVID-19 and time will be needed to reverse the process.
- MARRI participants reported increased irregular migration.
- Transit centers and the detention centers in the MARRI Participants are recognized as high-vulnerability points, with the need to take measures to counter COVID-19 risk.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- WHO recommends that governments review their local COVID-19 and/or emergency preparedness and response plan, local capacity, legal framework and regulatory requirements for providing health services to refugees and migrants.
- To accelerate the progress towards achieving universal health coverage for refugees, asylum seekers, migrants and victims of trafficking in the MARRI region.
- Invest in improving standards for migrants and asylum seekers, with the aim to establish well-organized procedures that guarantee integrity and allow for claims to be dealt with fairness.
- WHO recommends that governments enhance capacities needed to continuously provide public services to ensure effective COVID-19 preparedness and response actions.
- Law-enforcement agencies must work on increasing inter-agency communication, working cooperatively and closely towards a common goal of countering the most harmful elements of smuggling where the impact of organized crime is significantly high, and where abuse of migrants is rampant.
- Improve data collection and analysis related to migration.
- Increased data and management are needed to implement WHO recommendations about "identifying/mapping health and isolation facilities available for refugees, migrants and surrounding populations".

- Strengthen partnerships among authorities in the MARRI Participants as well as inter-sectoral and inter-agency coordination, as part of the overall COVID-19 response, which has also been recommended by WHO.



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