

**MARRI**

Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative



**Ref. No: 02-15/31**

## **MARRI REGIONAL FORUM DECLARATION**

Skopje, 29 June, 2023

**We, the Ministers of Interior/Security responsible for the issues of migration, asylum and refugees and High Representatives of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs in the format of the Migration, Asylum and Refugees Regional Initiative (MARRI);**

**Sharing** our Vision that Migration shall be well managed in the Participants, making MARRI a relevant and capable hub, centre of excellence and pacemaker to support migration management in the Western Balkans region, contributing to MARRI Participants' respective EU aspirations and accession processes, and furthering the implementation of relevant regional, EU and international migration policies;

**Seeing** migration holistically, in the light of all relevant international treaties signed and ratified by the Participants, and particularly in the light of the EU Acquis Communautaire in Migration Management, Asylum and connected areas;

**Following** the spirit of the Joint Statement of the Ministerial SEECF Meeting / Regional Forum of MARRI, Herceg Novi, 5 April 2004, which launched MARRI;

**Guided** by the principles laid down in all previous Declarations of MARRI Regional Forum and by the Priorities of the past Presidencies-in-Office and of the future Presidency-in-Office of the Republic of Serbia;

**Inspired** by the Gender Manifestum of the Regional Centre;

**Boosting** the implementation of MARRI Participants' strategic concepts related to MARRI's mandate and setting the regional Agenda in Migration Management;

**Assisting** MARRI Participants in engaging in regional dialogue on migration management and establishing own regional mechanisms for more cooperation towards reducing irregular migration, professionalising controls and increasing economic development;

**Promoting** the cooperation among MARRI Participants in border/boundary management and sharing of best practices in the field of integrated border management;

**Aiding** the enhancement of capacities of MARRI Participants in the areas of



return, readmission and protection of migrants, particularly vulnerable migrants;

**Supporting** harmonisation and quality of asylum procedures and the improvement of harmonisation of visa regimes regionally;

**Augmenting** cooperation among MARRI Participants in preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and smuggling of migrants;

**Encouraging** a dialogue on Migration Governance, intra-regional legal migration and other areas thematically interlinked with the areas mentioned;

**Collecting** and enabling the exchange of reliable data, supporting fact- and science-based analyses, making the Regional Centre a Knowledge Hub and resource for information, research and analysis;

**Reforming** the Regional Centre by closing all gaps mentioned in the analyses of GIZ and IOM and raising the degree of transparency, responsibility and accountability, optimizing information flows, administrative processes, decision making and taking, implementing job descriptions, delegation, involvement of Representatives seconded to the Regional Centre, aiming for accountability, transparency and efficient service delivery;

**Orienting** all thematic and operational activities to the benefit of MARRI Participants' working level, represented by Coordinators in the Ministries of Interior/Security and the Ministries' implementers on the ground;

**Calling** to represent the regional character of MARRI in all activities, communication, participation in regional and international events, and in its own regionally balanced staffing;

**Raising** the interest of donors to cooperate within MARRI's mandate;

**Informing** interested and general public on migration issues in a fair manner, shaping balanced political discourse and constructive narratives on migration, to reduce discrimination, biases, prejudices and racism;

**We recognize and highly appreciate** the work carried out by the extended Presidency-in-Office of the Republic of North Macedonia, by the Committee members, by the Coordinators, by the Representatives seconded to the Regional Centre, by Participants Administrations, by our partners in the Statistical Offices of all Participants, by the team at the MARRI Regional Centre and the integrated expert.

The activities in the last two years of the Presidency-in-Office of the Republic of North Macedonia have included:

- Continuing the Legal Framework Reform
- Working on the STRATEGY
- Being beneficiary of regional projects funded by IOM and EUAA
- Having successfully developed WB MIDEX platform and optimised it



- Having been, together with MARRI Participants, implementing partner of the BMZ/GIZ regional project PaCT
- Being preselected by BMZ/GIZ to contribute to the THB component of a new IPA III project
- Having won a new project with CEI
- Having adopted a Gender Manifestum
- Having adopted a Digital Agenda
- Having negotiated and signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative (RAI), Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Representing MARRI in the regional and international migration community

**We are grateful** to all donors for their generous support, we thank the regional and international migration policy making and management community for their inspiring cooperation.

**We invite and call** all working at and for MARRI to intensify MARRI's link-up to the EU thematic and funding mechanisms, to being aware and becoming part of regional political approximation processes and to facilitate legal border/boundary crossings and intercept illegal border/boundary crossings by all means, respecting human rights and international standards.

**We have gathered at the regular annual meeting of the Forum of MARRI in Skopje on 29 of June 2023 and confirm the following decisions:**

- We endorse the RC Director's Annual Report July 2022 – June 2023.
- We endorse the RC Director's Financial Report for 2022.
- We have elected and appointed a new RC Director effective from 1 August 2023 till 31 July 2026.
- We anonymously adopt the Priorities and Plan of Action of the Presidency-in-Office of the Republic of Serbia for July 2023 – June 2024.
- We agree that the next Presidency-in-Office following the Republic of Serbia will be led by the Republic of Albania.
- We thank the ceding RC Director Mr. Sashko Kocev for his great dedication and strong commitment and his readiness having continued after the expiration of his first three-years appointment for another two years on an ad-hoc basis.
- We stand firm and ready to develop MARRI and support the new Presidency-in-Office and RC Director by all means, including secondment of Representatives to the RC and fulfilling our financial obligations.