

## EDITORIAL

This issue of the Quarterly Review is published in times of major uncertainty. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the entire world. Like any major crisis, it immediately exposed the weaknesses of existing national and international systems and agreements while also making the most vulnerable even more susceptible. While an increasing number of countries are under lockdown, the first ones are already thinking of lifting some of the restrictions introduced. The economic impact of the ongoing crisis remains unknown but the meltdown may be unprecedented.

The longer-term impacts of COVID-19 on migration also remain to be seen. What is the future of labour migration? How will families get by without the remittances existentially needed? When will migrant workers be able to return home, and are they desired to do so at all? Will the criminal services of traffickers and smugglers become ever more demanded but also more brutal in view of the witnessed border closings? What will happen to refugees and internally displaced persons? How does the pandemic affect border management or integration? What about the migrants whose residence and work permits are currently expiring?

The coronavirus will affect all thematic areas of the Prague Process in one way or another. We will try to address the possible consequences of COVID-19 in various ways, thereby informing the future decisions of migration policy makers across the region. The Prague Process Secretariat is currently working from home. All events planned for the first half of 2020 have been moved to autumn, hoping that everyday life and international travel will resume in some form by then. In accordance with the decision of the Prague Process Strategic Group, we would meanwhile like to provide our participating states with a variety of remote activities, ranging from the new Webinar series, to online trainings and intergovernmental meetings. More details on these various formats shall follow in the coming weeks and months.

This Quarterly Review should have been released a few weeks ago already, but we decided to instead make an effort and try to address some of the immediate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on migration. As a result, this issue became much longer than foreseen and now entails news items related to the coronavirus and others that originate from 'pre-corona' times. We hope that you will enjoy the read.

Stay healthy and safe!

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### Looking ahead: upcoming Prague Process activities

- 15 May ● 2<sup>nd</sup> PP Webinar *"The impacts of the corona-crises on migration"* with Professor Rainer Muenz
- 28 May (tbc) ● 3<sup>rd</sup> PP Webinar, *"The Impact of COVID-19 on Ukrainian Labour Migrants in Czechia, Hungary, Poland and Italy"*
- 9-10 June ● 1<sup>st</sup> PP Online Training: *Identification and Profiling at the Border*
- 20-22 Oct (tbc) ● *Training on Identification and Profiling on the Border*, Durres, Albania
- 6-8 October ● *Workshop on Posted Migrant Workers and Social Portability*, Minsk, Belarus
- 16-17 November ● *Senior Officials' Meeting*, Nuremberg, Germany

## The Republic of Belarus develops its National Migration Policy Concept

The *draft* National Migration Policy Concept presented on 19 February 2020 in Minsk represents the main result of the work conducted by the Working Group for migration policy development, with the support of ICMPD and several international experts. The Working Group, led by the Department for Citizenship and Migration under the Ministry of Internal Affairs, comprised representatives of all relevant line ministries, state agencies and academia.

The new Concept sets the overall agenda, concrete objectives and timelines for the various migration policy priorities of Belarus, aiming to ensure the continued efficiency of the migration management system in an ever-changing environment. The Working Group convened regularly throughout 2019, looking into various areas of migration management. To support its work, ICMPD organised four knowledge exchange sessions in Minsk, involving various international experts and addressing the following policy areas, which also correspond to the Prague Process' thematic areas:

1. External labour migration and remittances;
2. International protection;
3. Integration of foreigners;
4. Fight against irregular migration;
5. Migration, development and diaspora affairs;

A delegation from Belarus also took part in a study visit to Poland in November 2019 in order to be acquainted with the formulation of migration policy documents at national and European level.

The Republic of Belarus has a dynamic migration situation, hosting 94.233 registered foreigners (in 2019), with more than half of them living in Minsk. The overall number also includes 8.193 permanent residents. The statistics aggregated at the various border-crossing points show that the main countries of origin include Ukraine, the Russian Federation, Lithuania, Poland, Latvia, Moldova, Germany and Kazakhstan.

Following the presentation of the draft document and incorporation of the feedback of all relevant state institutions, President Lukashenko shall approve the National Migration Policy Concept. The Action Plan for its implementation shall follow thereafter.

From February 2019 to March 2020, ICMPD has been supporting the elaboration of the Concept within the EU-funded Migration Partnership Facility (MPF). For more information on the MPF, please visit <https://mobilitypartnershipfacility.eu>.



## The EU's Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020

The Eastern Partnership (EaP) is a joint initiative of the European Union, its Member States as well as Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Launched in 2009, the EaP is a strategic and ambitious partnership that aims to strengthen and deepen the political and economic relations.

As recently announced by the European Commission, the continued engagement with the EaP countries will remain

a key priority for the EU. It will translate into the further development of political relations with all Eastern partners in both bilateral and multilateral formats. The cultural and geographical links with Central Asia provide additional opportunities to develop mutually beneficial links with the broader neighbourhood.

Building on the Partnership's key achievements, the policy objectives beyond 2020 target the following areas:

economy; good governance and the rule of law; environmental and climate resilience; digital transformation; as well as fair and inclusive societies.

The EU's incentive-based approach (*'more for more'* and *'less for less'*) will continue to benefit those partner countries most engaged in reforms. To increase impact, the EU support has shifted away from project-based financial assistance towards support

for genuinely transformational reform policies. The EaP Summit foreseen for June 2020 shall provide a mandate to develop a new set of tangible deliverables in the second half of 2020.

## Migration and mobility related provisions

As addressing migration challenges is a joint priority, all Parties will continue to work towards facilitating mobility in a secure and well-managed environment, while also ensuring support to vulnerable migrants and refugees. The EU will also continue to support the fight against trafficking of human beings and integrated border management, including through technical and administrative cooperation.

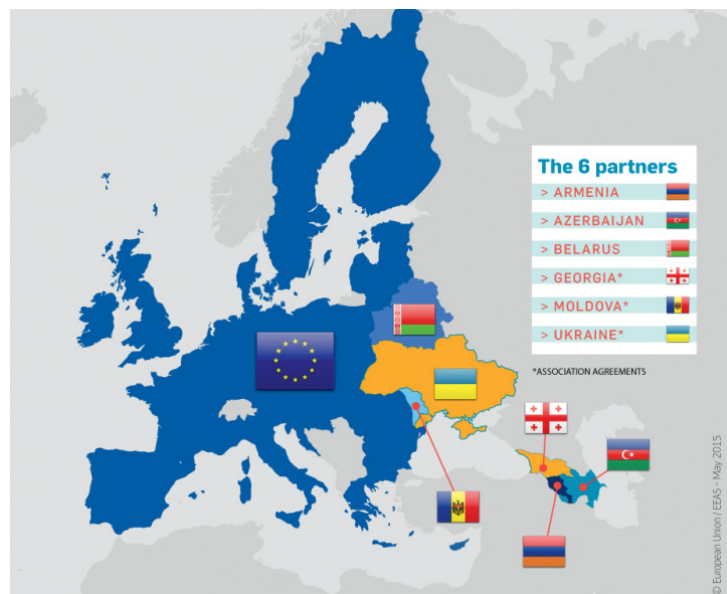
Visa-free arrangements are nowadays in place between the EU and Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, which have fully implemented readmission agreements. Meanwhile, visa facilitation and readmission agreements have been concluded with Armenia, Azerbaijan and Belarus. The possibility to launch visa liberalisation dialogues with these countries will depend on whether well-managed and secure mobility conditions are in place,

including through the satisfactory implementation of the visa facilitation and readmission agreements.

In practice, the mutually beneficial mobility partnerships shall ensure sustainable engagement. Labour migration initiatives among the EaP countries, as

well as towards the EU, shall further enhance legal migration and mobility, while also recognising the negative impact of brain drain.

Check the EC Joint Communication on Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020 [here](#).



## European Commission proposes common border management measures amid COVID-19 outbreak

The first case of the novel coronavirus in Europe was confirmed in France on 24 January 2020. On 13 March, the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared Europe as the new epicentre of the pandemic. By then, several EU Member States (EU MS) had already introduced various travel restrictions and lock down measures. On 16 March, the European Commission reacted by proposing common guidelines for the implementation of border management measures, which were endorsed by EU leaders one day later.

The guidelines provide for an integrated approach to preserve security but also the integrity of the EU Single Market. The document sets rules and exceptions around five interrelated areas: a) transports of goods and services, b)

supply of goods, c) health-related measures, d) external borders, and e) internal borders.

### Measures at the external and internal borders

The EU MS agreed to undertake systematic border checks, which may also include health checks, for all EU and non-EU nationals crossing the external borders to enter the Schengen area. The states may refuse entry to non-resident third country nationals when considered a threat to public health, as well as impose alternative steps such as isolation or quarantine. Importantly, nationals of Schengen associate states, EU citizens and residents must be allowed to cross the Schengen area's external border when returning home,

but again they can be requested to undergo self-isolation or alike. The guidelines further envisage a possible introduction of temporary controls at the internal borders, as already introduced by some EU MS prior to the release of the guidelines.

To ensure continued operability of essential labour sectors, such as health care and the food industry, the states should permit and facilitate the crossing of frontier workers. Since the proper identification of COVID-19 cases remains key, the guidelines propose to install health-screening measures at entry and exit. A coordinated approach is encouraged in particular among neighbouring member states in order to avoid double health screenings on both sides of the border and

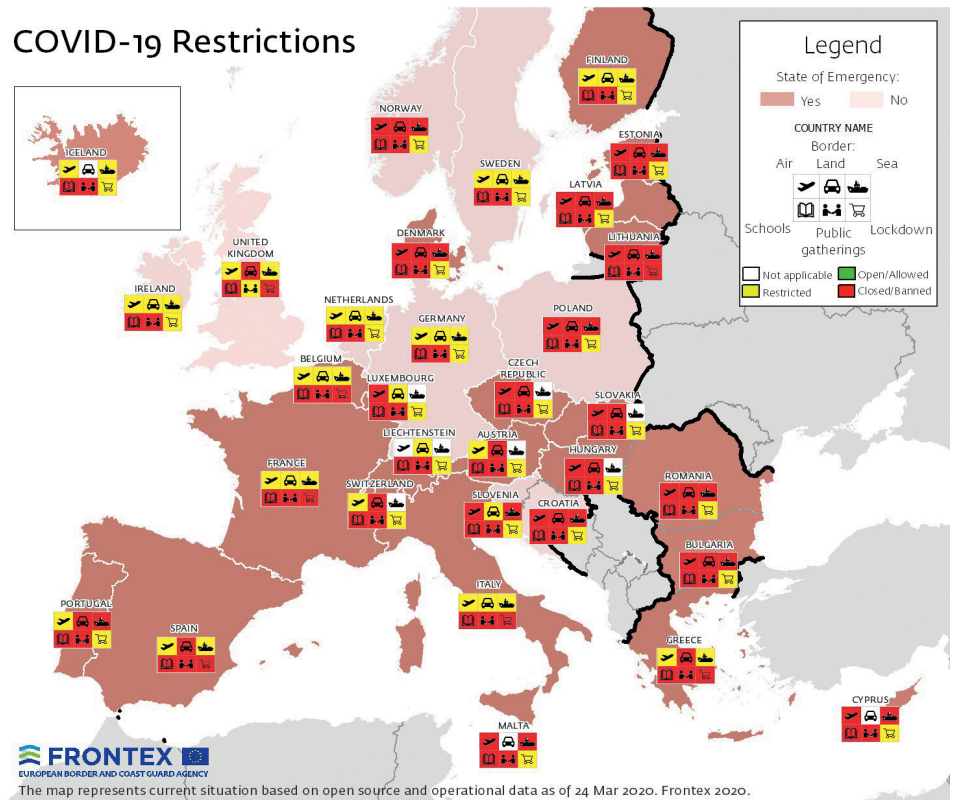
prevent the emergence of large gatherings and queues at the borders. The Commission makes a clear difference between border and health checks, underlining that rather than denying entry to sick persons, they should be offered medical care.

The EU internal market relies heavily on the transport and mobility sector. Therefore, the guidelines prioritise access to emergency transport services (e.g. freight transport) over (fast) 'green lanes' at the border. Unobstructed transport of goods is as crucial, as the safe movement of transport workers, including truck and train drivers, pilots and aircrews.

The EU MS agreed to apply the temporary restrictions of non-essential travel to the EU for a period of 30 days, which can be extended if deemed necessary. In this vein, third country nationals shall cancel their planned trips to the EU, unless they hold a valid residence permit in one of the EU MS. EU nationals and residents shall also avoid any non-essential international travel. Individuals wishing to enter the EU to live and work there should anticipate delays in the processing of their applications.

Read [the guidelines](#), [announcement of the agreement](#) and [the Commission report of 16 March 2020](#).

## COVID-19 Restrictions



## Migration situation at the Turkish-Greek border escalates

Following the adoption of the EU-Turkey Statement in March 2016, Turkey received over 3.6 million Syrian refugees, as well as numerous migrants from countries such as Afghanistan and Iraq. Meanwhile, Greece has been stretching its reception capacities while processing asylum applications and ensuring returns of inadmissible asylum seekers and irregular migrants.

The escalation of fighting in the Syrian region of Idlib in December 2019 resulted in the displacement of nearly one million Syrians to the Syrian-Turkish border. Against this background, the Turkish police, coastguard and border security officials were advised on 27 February to stand down on refugees' land and sea crossings towards Greece. Thousands of migrants headed towards the Greek land borders and the shores off the island of Lesbos almost immediately, trying to make their way into Greece. By 3

March, the Greek government reported of having prevented 24.000 irregular migrants from crossing into Greece. The country sealed off its borders and even suspended the acceptance of asylum applications for a one-month period. As of 1 March, all migrants entering the country were transferred to closed detention facilities or prisons. The UN and EU leaders responded unequivocally by warning Greece to uphold the right to asylum, but the measures nevertheless remained in place until the beginning of April. On 13 March, Frontex launched a rapid border intervention at the Greek land border, mobilising 100 border guards to assist their Greek colleagues. The European Commission further announced financial and operational support to Greece.

On 17 March, the leaders of Germany, France and the UK held a videoconference with the Turkish President, putting

forward the need to assess the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement and thereby the possibilities for its extension or prospects of a new agreement. Possible scenarios to solve the crises include an increase of the funds paid to Turkey or a relaunch of the visa liberalisation process. By the end of March, most migrants had returned from the Greek-Turkish border.

### The threat of the COVID-19 outbreak among asylum seekers

Tens of thousands of asylum seekers have been facing a dire situation in severely overcrowded camps on the Greek mainland and islands near Turkey. Hundreds more arrived after the recent opening of Turkish border. Local residents in Greece have become increasingly frustrated with the migrant presence. Moreover, traffickers have targeted Greece with renewed vigour

with 74,600 people arriving in 2019 (50% more than in 2018).

To make things worse, the outbreak of the coronavirus forced many countries, including the EU Member states and Turkey, to close their national borders and adopt stringent measures. Greece locked down the infamous reception camps from 7 pm to 7 am. At daytime, only one person per family is allowed to go out, with police controlling their movement. Visits to the camps have been temporarily suspended. New arrivals are subject to compulsory fever screening. Some camps, on the islands of Leros and Kos, have been closed entirely.

The poor sanitation and hygiene conditions in the overcrowded camps facilitate the spread of the virus, while making it impossible to follow the recommended preventive measures (e.g. frequent hand washing, social distancing). This has urged many organisations to request an immediate evacuation of the "squalid" camps on the Greek islands. On March 31st, Greece announced the first case of the novel coronavirus in the Ritsona camp located on the Greek mainland. Two days later, another 20 asylum seekers were tested positive, putting the entire camp under quarantine.

The coronavirus is also threatening refugees and asylum seekers accommodated in Turkey. Unlike Greece, over 98 per cent of Syrians under temporary protection live in Turkey in urban and rural areas, with less than 2 per cent residing in the seven remaining Temporary Accommodation Centres.

Nevertheless, many Syrian households still live in substandard shelters. Persons living in rural areas struggle to meet their basic needs, including decent housing, hygiene items, utilities and food. Experts criticise the limited access to health services, especially for undocumented migrants and asylum seekers who may neither receive tests, nor treatment. The situation is even worse for the nearly 1 million displaced Syrians amassed near the Turkish southern border in packed and muddy camps that lack basic facilities. These vulnerable groups are at greatest risk from the COVID-19 outbreak.

### The end of resettlement?

On 17 March, UNHCR and IOM announced the temporary suspension of all

resettlement programmes for refugees, as countries drastically reduced entry into their territories owing to the COVID-19 global health crisis. This development followed a recent long-awaited agreement of Croatia, Ireland, Finland, France, Germany, Luxembourg and Portugal to take in around 1.600 unaccompanied minors and alleviate the burden from Greece. UNHCR notes that the suspension should only take effect after those refugees who have already been cleared to travel reach their destinations. However, several EU member states have in the meantime paused all resettlement arrivals until further notice. The resettlement is now at a standstill even for the most critical emergency cases.

Read more [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)



## The 25th Anniversary of the Schengen Area

A new Europe was born on 26 March 1995, when seven countries - France, Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, and Spain - opened their borders to start the implementation of the [Schengen Area Agreement](#) signed in 1985. Since then, 19 more states signed the Agreement and became part of the Schengen family. In 1999, the Agreement became part of the EU's legal framework through the Treaty of Amsterdam.

Nowadays, the [Schengen Area](#) consists

of 26 member countries encompassing a population of nearly 420 million people. According to recent estimates, there are some 1.25 billion journeys taking place within the Schengen area every year. The common rules cover the external borders, enhanced police cooperation and strengthened cooperation among judicial authorities. The Schengen visa provides an unprecedented value for short-term travellers who may enter 26 states for a period of up to 90 days with one single visa. The

free movement within the Schengen area figures among the greatest achievements of EU integration.

Against this background, the recent re-introduction of internal border checks in response to the COVID-19 outbreak is widely perceived as an unfavourable albeit sensible move. After all, the World Health Organisation had declared Europe the global epicentre of the coronavirus pandemic. This decision also comes at a cost. The [EC Communication](#)

of 23 March concerning the implementation of so-called Green Lanes in response to the COVID-19 outbreak brings major disruptions for the European cross-border mobility and transport. Moreover, a past study on the economic impact of suspending Schengen (European Parliament, 2016) estimated that Member States would stand to

lose between €5 billion and €18 billion per year. As some two million people commute across a European border on a daily basis, the border controls cost commuters and other travellers between €1.3 and €5.2 billion per year.

Read more [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).



## EU opens accession talks with Albania and North Macedonia

On 25 March, the EU Council took the long-awaited decision on opening the accession talks with the Republic of Albania and the Republic of North Macedonia. The decision followed the EC Communication of 5 February on "[Enhancing the accession process - A credible EU perspective for the Western Balkans](#)", aiming to reinvigorate the accession process by making it more predictable, credible and dynamic. This means that four of the six Western Balkan states are now in accession talks with the EU, after Montenegro started in 2012 and Serbia in 2014.

Following the announcement, Olivér Várhelyi, Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement, noted that the "*Opening of accession talks sends a loud and clear message not only to the two countries, but to the Western Balkans as a whole.*" However, the journey to EU membership, or even the actual beginning of the talks, may take a while. Whereas the year 2025 has often been cited as a reference period for accession of all candidate countries, with Serbia and Montenegro supposedly in the lead, nowadays [some experts predict](#) that

North Macedonia could be the frontrunner. Meanwhile, Albania is expected to take longer. However, the negotiations with each country will start based on their own merits and progress.

In a next step, the European Commission is to submit proposals for negotiating frameworks with the two countries. These frameworks, which establish the guidelines and principles governing the accession negotiations with each candidate country, need to then be

adopted by the EU Council. Meanwhile, the Commission will continue to monitor the progress and continued compliance in all areas identified by the Council in June 2018. The hopes of the European Commission to open the negotiations still before the EU-Western Balkans Summit envisaged for 6-7 May could be shattered by the COVID-19 response measures, thereby delaying the official start of the talks.

Read more [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).



## The probable impact of the coronavirus pandemic on Central, East and Southeast Europe

*The Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies (wiiw)* released its economic forecast for Central, East and Southeast Europe (CESEE) amid the outbreak of the coronavirus. The prognosis is unpromising, with the recession suffered in the first half of 2020 expected

to be among the deepest of all time.

The CIS countries, Ukraine and Turkey could be worst affected, whereas the EU Member States and selected Western Balkan countries could fare relatively better. Wealthier states with

better healthcare systems will have more chances to offset the downturn. The economies of countries relying heavily on energy exports (e.g. Russia and Kazakhstan) or tourism - such as Croatia, Albania, Slovenia and Montenegro - could be most affected.

The tourist sector as such shall prepare for a longer-term deterioration.

In general, a lot will depend on the co-ordination among the big central banks in terms of their fiscal response. At the same time, the capacities across the CESEE differ significantly. Opposite to the 2009 financial crisis, countries should not count upon any major support of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Moreover, the remittances received from labour migrants working abroad are expected to decrease significantly.

The coronavirus has temporarily diverted the attention from structural challenges such as the shortage of labour experienced by most countries of the region. These labour shortages are likely to become more acute as the borders close and labour mobility is halted. One

positive aspect may consist in the faster and stronger digitalisation expected, which could help CESEE countries to increase their productivity and improve their service sectors. The digitalisation will eventually require a (re)skilling of the labour force and significant investments in new technologies.

*This article is based on the wiiw webinar: Spring Forecast 2020 for Central, East and Southeast Europe. You can find the related publications [here](#):*



## New project aims at strengthening Integrated Border Management in Ukraine

In December 2019, ICMPD launched the new project “EU Support to Strengthening Integrated Border Management in Ukraine” (EU4IBM). The start of the project is very timely, following the adoption of the National Integrated Border Management Strategy until 2025 in July 2019.

Funded by the EU, the project aims to increase the efficiency of cross-border mobility of people and goods and facilitate the integration of the relevant economic entities into the global economy while also ensuring the highest level of security and preventing cross-border crime. The 30-month project will provide expertise and overall support to bring the border management system of Ukraine ever closer to the applicable EU standards.

To learn more about the project, the Prague Process Secretariat interviewed Mr. Borut Eržen, Head of the ICMPD Border Management and Security Programme, and Mr. Arunas Adomenas, the EU4IBM Team Leader.

**Mr. Eržen, EU4IBM is not the first project that ICMPD implements in the area of IBM. What makes this particular project unique and why is it important to implement it in this very moment?**

*ICMPD has been implementing Integrated*

*Border Management (IBM) related projects at the global scale since 2004, starting in the Western Balkans and extending it to the other countries afterwards. In fact, ICMPD was also one of the first international organisations tasked to support and develop the concept of IBM for the European Commission’s external cooperation. As*



a result, IBM has become ICMPD's landmark area of expertise in the EU's external dimension. Among EU development partners, ICMPD became a point of reference when it comes to IBM.

The IBM concept is not based on a "one-fits-all" principle, but rather on a flexible approach that takes into consideration different aspects and variables, thereby making each national IBM concept unique. The IBM concept developed in Ukraine is exceptional because it is based on universal IBM principles, but its final design and shape reflect the specific Ukrainian realities, demands and capabilities. ICMPD is providing assistance to this process by combining national and international good practices and expertise. However, the guiding principle is a strong national ownership. The whole world has been facing new challenges over the last decades, and Ukraine is no exception. IBM is one of the tools that can support national authorities in dealing with and overcoming these various challenges. By its nature, it helps to improve security and contributes to economic and social development by engaging all relevant actors and bringing them together in their endeavours.

**What will be the project's key benefits for the EU, Ukraine, as well as ordinary people and businesses?**

The key benefits are twofold: supporting Ukrainian national security and enhancing the mobility of people and goods at the national and international levels. Ukraine has been putting substantial efforts in improving its border management concept. Bringing the Ukrainian border management to the highest international standards will make it a modern and efficient system that supports human mobility and provides a certain level of security. Modern border management is, inter alia, designed to rationalise human, material and financial resources, and this is the process that is currently ongoing within Ukrainian border agencies. The result will be visible also beyond the competent institutions. Ordinary people will move faster across borders - in a less troubled but secured way. The visa free regime with the EU proves that Ukraine is heading in the right direction. Trade facilitation is one of the key IBM components: open and functional trade corridors, short customs procedures through introduction of the "one-stop-principle", for instance, can indeed support economic development and provide a competitive environment for business.

**Are there any particular challenges expected concerning the implementation of the IBM concept in Ukraine as compared to other countries?**

Every introduction of IBM anywhere around the globe brings along certain challenges. No country is immune. However, there are different ways how to deal with them. Ukraine is in a long process of approximation to the EU and NATO, hence the political commitment and willingness is in place. Border agencies, in particular the State Border Guard Service and the State Customs Service play the key role, not only as individual agencies, but also in working together. Inter-agency cooperation is extremely important in reaching the main objective of IBM. Transparency, accountability and integrity play a very important role vis-à-vis society. The implementation of the IBM concept in Ukraine is already rolling out, and all those contributing to the process have to do their best to continue the progress. Whereas Ukraine can learn from the experience of its EU neighbours, the other Eastern Partnership countries could refer to Ukraine's lessons learned over the years of IBM implementation.

**How will the ongoing spread of the coronavirus affect the project implementation?**

The current crisis will definitely affect the implementation process. This is a new reality and it is difficult to estimate the magnitude of the impact. It is a test of IBM, including already introduced measures such as contingency planning in cases of threats to public health. ICMPD is preparing for a longer lockdown and is already organising activities remotely. What is clear now is that the crisis will change the whole society. It provides an opportunity to look for new ways to do business, maybe even more efficiently than in the past.

**Mr. Adomenas, you became Team Leader of the EU4IBM project about a month ago. Could you briefly introduce yourself to our readers?**

I was born in Kaunas, Lithuania, graduated from Mykolas Romeris University with a Master's degree in Law and Police Activities. In 2000, I started my career in Lithuanian Customs, which culminated in my appointment to the Director General position in 2016. As of 15 February 2020, I work for ICMPD as the Team Leader in the EU4IBM project.

**How do you assess Ukraine's current border management system? What possible improvements does it require?**

To my knowledge, Ukraine has made substantial progress in the area of border management over the recent past. Last year, the Cabinet of Ministers adopted a new IBM Strategy and its Implementation Plan. These documents set quite ambitious objectives for the competent national institutions. I think the most important task is to reform the law enforcement institutions and to increase the capacities of the State Border Guard Service and the State Customs Service in combatting smuggling and other cross-border crime. The IBM services in Ukraine need to invest considerably into improving the border infrastructure and modernizing their equipment but even more into the professional development of their staff in order to ensure the resilience of the institutions and systems.

**What are the main differences between the national customs and border management systems of Lithuania and Ukraine? Did Lithuania have to face challenges similar to those faced by Ukraine at present? Are there any lessons learned that would also apply to Ukraine?**

In general, the Customs and Border Management institutional frameworks are similar. Lithuania and Ukraine share a similar history of building their state institutions from scratch after regaining independence in 1990. Before acceding the EU in 2004, Lithuania received a great deal of support from the EU and other international donors for developing its national legislation and institutions. The main differences are



**Mr. Arunas Adomenas,**  
the EU4IBM Team Leader



*in the legal frameworks – Lithuania applies the EU Border Management and Customs legislation, while Ukraine is still in the process of approximation to the EU acquis. Moreover, there are some significant differences between the EU's Customs IT Systems used in Lithuania and that of Ukraine. For many years, Ukrainian Customs has been seeking to accede to the Convention on Common Transit and to introduce the New Customs Transit System applied in the EU and in some neighbouring countries.*

*In terms of challenges, Lithuania and Ukraine are definitely facing similar issues. The first relates to the constant shortage of financial resources. Even when considerable deficiencies are identified in terms of infrastructure, equipment and human resources, this does not necessarily result*

*in receiving the required budgetary allocations. Another important challenge is corruption. Lithuania started addressing this problem in the end of the last century. Nowadays, the state institutions in Lithuania report only few cases of detected corruption per year. To my knowledge, this challenge still remains to be adequately addressed in Ukraine. In Lithuania, there are still many civil servants, who were drafting legislation or developing control methodologies and IT systems during the EU pre-accession period. They have gained a lot of experience and are always eager to share their lessons learned.*

**What are the main project activities planned? How will they affect the daily operations at the borders of Ukraine?**

The project will address the implementation of IBM in Ukraine. The main beneficiaries are the State Border Guard Service and the State Customs Service. The project will start with a business process analysis (BPA) and re-engineering. Based on the findings of BPA, the project shall lead to improvements in the areas of interagency cooperation, risk analysis, procedures at the border crossing points, human resource management and asset management. As already mentioned, the overall objective of the project is to ensure the smooth border crossing for travellers and goods while also ensuring the protection of the society.

**Mr. Eržen and Mr. Adomenas, thank you for the interview!**

## COVID-19 outbreak: Migration policy measures adopted across the Prague Process region

- **Countries lift the requirements for the extension of visa, residence and work permits**

Numerous Prague Process states temporarily lifted the requirements for extending or renewing visa, residence and work permits for migrants forced to remain in destination countries due to the travel restrictions introduced in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. They are also exempt from penalties related to 'overstaying'.

As foreseen by the EU Visa Code (Art. 33) in case of *force majeure* [1], **Schengen visa holders** who were unable to leave before the expiration of their visas can apply for their extension at the competent authorities of the respective EU Member State (EU MS). The practical guidance issued by the European Commission on March 30 concerning the implementation of the temporary restriction on non-essential travel to the EU, specifies that the consulates of the EU MS should remain open and ensure **minimum service for processing visa applications** by travellers exempted from the temporary travel restrictions (e.g. long-term residents). Third-country nationals present in the Schengen area who are forced to overstay their short-term visa can receive an extension up

to a maximum stay of 90 days in any 180 days. Moreover, EU MS should issue **long-stay visas or temporary residence permits** to short-stay visa holders and visa-free travellers who are compelled to stay beyond 90 days in any 180 days. Member States are also encouraged to **waive sanctions** on non-EU travellers who are unable to leave in time because of travel restrictions. Overstays linked to travel restrictions should not be taken into account when processing future visa applications. [2]

**Portugal** went a step further by **granting citizenship rights to all migrants and asylum seekers** who have submitted residency applications, thereby securing their full access to the social security and health care systems in view of COVID-19. Those who have applied for citizenship receive citizenship rights until at least July 1. [3]

The Embassy of the **Czech Republic** in Moscow announced that Schengen visa holders who were unable to travel due



to the state of emergency will be exempt from visa fees when re-applying again. [4]

The **United Kingdom** equally extended the visas of foreigners unable to leave the UK due to travel restrictions or self-isolation until May 31. Exceptionally, applications for a long-term UK visa can be submitted online from within the country until May 31. Moreover, migrant doctors, nurses or paramedics working for the National Health Service and their family members are automatically granted a visa extension of one year if it is due to expire before 1 October 2020. The visa is free of charge and requires no application. [5]

The National Police (*Préfecture de Police*) of **France** announced that all residence permits will be extended by three months as of March 16 to cover any expirations during the lockdown [16].

**Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Montenegro, Russia, and Ukraine** also issued similar regulations. In Ukraine, residence permits that could not be processed due to the introduced quarantine measures shall not result in penalties for the respective applicants [6]. In **Russia**, the Ministry of Internal Affairs announced on March 19th that expired visas, residence permits and visa-free stays will be extended without penalties, while also allowing foreigners present in the country to submit work permit applications [7]. Due to its special quarantine regime, **Azerbaijan's** State Migration Service (SMS) also exempted foreigners from the requirement to apply for an extension of temporary stay. If their stay expires in April, its continuation is approved automatically and prolonged for the period corresponding to the paid state fee. This fee is the only obligation currently in place [8]. The obligation to submit notarised copies for obtaining work and stay permits has also been cancelled [9]. On 31 March, the **Republic of Moldova** in a similar manner announced that residence permits expiring during the state of emergency are extended for 60 days with no sanctions applied in this period [10]. On 24 March, **Montenegro** also advised its competent authorities to consider expired residence and work permits as valid [Measure 69]. Similarly, **Kazakhstan** announced an extension of visa-free periods or visa validities for 30 days to all foreigners affected by the

quarantine measures announced on 19 March [11].

- **Countries sent doctors to help Italy**

**Albania, Ukraine and Russia** were among the countries sending surgeons, neurosurgeons, anaesthesiologists, virologists and nurses, as well as medical equipment to Italy to help fight the COVID-19 pandemic. It is worth mentioning that Italy hosts large Albanian and Ukrainian communities [12, 13, 14].

- **Migrant services temporarily suspended across Europe**

On March 13, **Greece** announced that it would suspend all asylum services until April 10. Nevertheless, expiring residence permits will 'remain valid' for the period of suspension.

Most migrants and asylum seekers in **Italy** have to go to the police administrative headquarters (*questura*) to renew their residence permits or asylum papers. Some *questuras* request to contact them via email rather than going to their offices in person. Various legal services managed by the Italian interior ministry are now limited. As most of the police staff has been reassigned for emergency duties, applications and renewals of residence permits were suspended for 30 days, starting from March 2. Services for asylum seekers are also affected in terms of employment and legal assistance, which are run by public authorities and by NGOs. While these have been heavily reduced, the Italian language classes were also suspended until further notice. [15]

- **Refugee and migrant medics might be mobilised**

Facing a **shortage of medical staff** to battle the coronavirus, the regional medical board of Saxony, **Germany**, called for the support of migrant doctors who do not yet have a license to practice medicine in Germany. Within a week, 300 people responded to this **Facebook appeal**, including "many foreign doctors whose licensing procedures are not yet completed, whose help is very welcome".

**In the UK**, hundreds of refugee doctors have called on the government and the General Medical Council to **process**

**their accreditation swiftly** so they can support the National Health Service in tackling the pandemic. The Health Secretary announced to discuss a proposal to expedite qualified doctors from overseas into the NHS.

The **Irish Medical Council** has also said that refugees and asylum-seekers who were trained as doctors and nurses in their home countries, but are not registered to work in Ireland, may be able to provide "essential support" during the coronavirus pandemic. [UNHCR]

- **Restriction on movement of refugees and asylum seekers**

The movement of asylum seekers and migrants housed in asylum and reception centres in **Serbia** was temporarily restricted and put under increased surveillance. Accommodated migrants are only allowed to leave the facilities in justified cases (e.g. doctor visit) and for limited time. They further require a special permission of the national Commissariat for Refugees and Migration. [17]

The authorities of **Bosnia and Herzegovina** (BiH) started transferring migrants from the streets of Sarajevo to the Blazuj reception centre in order to limit the spread of the coronavirus. At least 2,000 migrants and refugees staying in abandoned buildings and train stations in the country's Northwest will also be transferred to a **new tent camp** in Lipa, close to the border with Croatia. Meanwhile, those staying at reception centres have been restricted from going outside. [18, 19]



## Newly released publications of the Prague Process Migration Observatory

### Policy brief by Olga Gulina

#### “Russian nationals looking for refuge in the European Union”

Since 1990, many Russians have sought international protection in the EU. However, while the overall recognition rate of their asylum applications has been declining, the number of vulnerable people whose rights and interests require special protection in Russia has been on the rise. The EU Member States have meanwhile been revising their approaches to international protection, among others also considering the chances of the individual asylum seeker’s successful integration.

This policy brief analyses the past and present flows of Russian nationals seeking asylum in the EU, identifies the main challenges and puts forward concrete recommendations for policy makers in Russia and the EU.

Access the brief [here](#)



### Policy brief by Andriy Orlean

#### “Countering Human Trafficking: Identifying, Returning and Assisting Victims from Ukraine”

The emergence of atypical human trafficking schemes poses new challenges to Ukraine’s authorities in terms of identifying, returning and assisting the trafficking victims. The most problematic cases feature the involvement of trafficking victims into criminal activities abroad. As the public authorities often fail in making a coordinated effort and in gaining the trust of the trafficking victims, the successful response to human trafficking continues to depend considerably on the active engagement of non-governmental and international organisations, as well as private persons. The state, however, has already

accumulated sufficient experience to proactively assume its responsibility for the victims. In order to raise their level of trust towards the competent institutions and ensure an improved response to human trafficking, the state must address the remaining legislative gaps, improve the coordination between the responsible agencies and ensure that their personnel is properly trained and adheres to the principle of confidentiality towards the trafficking victims.

Access the brief [here](#)

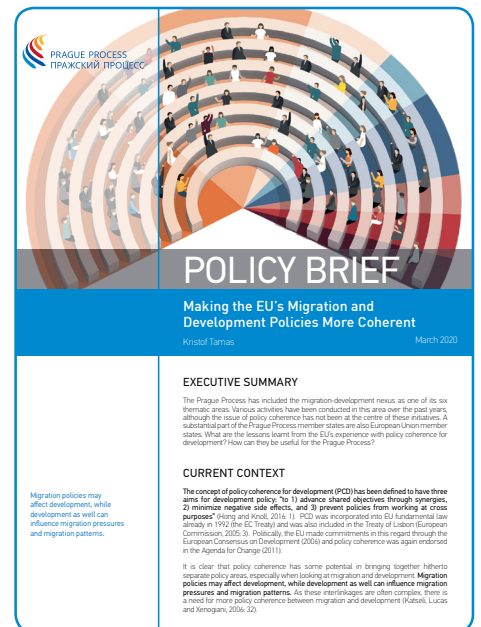
**Policy brief by  
Kristof Tamas**

**“Making the EU’s Migration and Development Policies More Coherent”**

The Prague Process has included the migration-development nexus as one of its six thematic areas. Various activities have been conducted in this area over the past years, although the issue of policy coherence has not been at the centre of these initiatives. A substantial part of the Prague Process member states is also European Union member states. What are the lessons learnt from

the EU’s experience with policy coherence for development? How can they be useful for the Prague Process?

Access the brief [here](#)



**Policy brief by  
Glen Hodgson**

**“Intra-corporate Transferees (ICTs):  
The benefits for the EU and the opportunity cost”**



Despite the issue of refugees and illegal migration grabbing the headlines across Europe over the recent past, the EU requires high-skilled labour and this demand cannot be met from within its own borders. European economic growth, business competitiveness and labour markets all suffer as a result. The Directive on Intra-Corporate Transferees (ICTs) was adopted in order to address this shortfall, given the clear shortages in sectors like computer programming and engineering.

The full range of simplifications and options available in the ICT Directive are still not offered across the EU. The current patchwork means that arbitrary

quota systems exist in some countries; approval/rejection processes are different across the EU; some countries do not have a fast track system; and intra-EU mobility as well as the ability of ICTs to work at customer sites is limited in certain EU Member States. Moreover, the entire process is often slow and administratively heavy too, meaning that businesses cannot get the skills they need, when they need them. The result is that companies and the economy as a whole lose out. In this paper we make recommendations for each of these areas and highlight some best practice.

Access the brief [here](#)

## Interesting reads

### ICMPD Expert Voice: COVID-19 – Migration in the age of biosecurity by Hugo Brady

Sars-CoV-2 (Covid-19) is doing to travel and migration what the 2008 financial crash did to banks and the flow of capital. Instead of a 'credit crunch', the world economy is crippled by a global mobility shutdown. The road back will not be easy. This is the fifth crisis of global openness since 2001 and by far the most serious: [more than 20 per cent of the world's population is in lockdown](#). In the rich world, the first phase of rising infections and deaths will be dramatic but over, as with China, South Korea and Singapore, relatively quickly. However, global economic

activity and regular mobility across borders will take years to return to pre-crisis levels. Even in a scenario where an effective vaccine is available worldwide by 2021, anxiety over the cross-border spread of disease will remain. [ICMPD field operatives in the region](#) expect Covid-19 could kill up to 100,000 people in Afghanistan alone, twice the current global total, with infections set to spiral to staggering heights along the Silk Route.

Read more [here](#)



### ICMPD Expert Voice: 'Too important to be neglected': Refugees in Europe are now essential to keep societies afloat by Veronika Bilger, Paul Baumgartner, Meike Palinkas

For most people who have kept their jobs, home office and video conference meetings are the new normal. But not for all: in recent weeks, attention has shifted to those essential workers needed to keep economies and countries running during the crisis. This relates in particular to jobs in the health sector, but also to jobs in the food retail sector, agriculture, transportation and logistics, and the care sector. Countries like Germany have started to turn to migrant communities to help alleviate expected shortages in medical staff. And migrants – among these also refugees who arrived during 2015, are responding by offering help to the health and care sector. Five years ago and in another crisis, the arrival of a large number of refugees in a short period of time caused deep concerns all over Europe. In the meantime, however, large parts of these refugees have integrated into their host societies and have become economically self-sufficient.

Read more [here](#)

Persons in selected systemically relevant jobs in Austria as percentage of total persons in gainful employment



	Refugees		Total population	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Health professionals	2.0%	6.6%	1.9%	6.7%
Health associate professionals	1.1%	9.2%	0.9%	2.3%
Personal care workers	3.1%	5.6%	0.7%	5.7%
Sales workers	12.4%	23.1%	4.1%	12.0%
Drivers and mobile plant operators	4.3%	0.2%	6.5%	0.4%
Other occupations	77.2%	55.3%	85.9%	73.0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: ICMPD FIMAS+Integration<sup>2</sup> (weighted data); Statistik Austria (Mikrozensus 2018)

### Migrant Farmworkers Whose Harvest Feed Europe Are Blocked at Borders by Liz Alderman, Melissa Eddy and Amie Tsang

When Europe tightened its borders to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, France's biggest farmers sounded an alarm: The workers they rely on from other countries to harvest much of the nation's food could no longer make the trip. The concern is widespread. In Britain, farmers are struggling to find people to pick raspberries and potatoes. Part of Germany's prized white asparagus crop risks rotting in the ground. And in Italy, over a quarter of the strawberries, beans and lettuce ripening in coming months may lack harvesters. European governments have declared food supplies a matter of national security as millions flock to supermarkets to brace for prolonged home confinement. But border lockdowns have immobilized legions of seasonal workers from Eastern Europe who toil in fields from Spain to Sweden, forcing a rapid rethink of how to supply labour to those farms.



Read more [here](#)

### Five Ways COVID-19 Is Changing Global Migration by Erol Yayboke



Photo: Erol Yayboke

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed human mobility for those of us washing our hands vigorously and avoiding social contact. But in addition to these disruptions to daily life, the pandemic could be fundamentally changing the face of global migration in at least five key ways. Only when people have stopped moving do we realize how much freedom of movement—the ability to visit a neighbour, to catch

the train to work, to see a movie in the theatre, or to fly across the world to see family—is a fundamental part of the human experience. Today, unprecedented travel and mobility restrictions have potential short- and longer-term repercussions. Here are five possible ways that could happen.

Read more [here](#)

#### Contacts:

Prague Process Secretariat/ CMPD HQ  
Gonzagagasse 1 | 1010 Vienna  
pragueprocess@icmpd.org  
Tel: +43 1 504 4677 0  
Fax: +43 1 504 4677 - 2375