

EDITORIAL

Since the release of the **EU's New Pact on Migration and Asylum** in September 2020, EU Member States have advanced on several key matters. The second quarter of 2021 saw the adoption of the very first **EU Strategy on Voluntary Return and Reintegration**, the launch of the **Talent Partnerships Initiative** and the **New Avenues for Legal Labour Migration**. In June, just shortly before the handover of the Presidency of the EU Council from Portugal to Slovenia, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) was re-established as the **EU Agency for Asylum (EUAA)** with a new enhanced mandate.

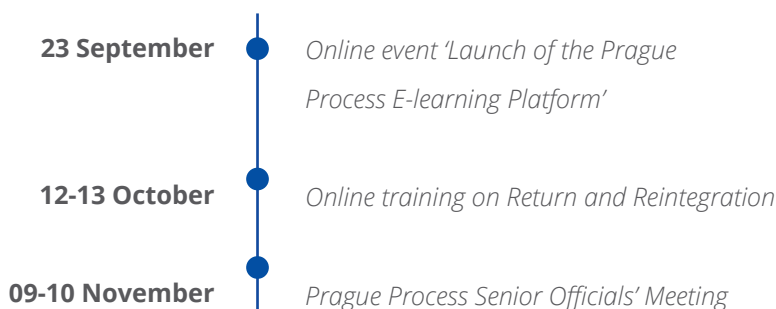
The second quarter has been equally busy for the Prague Process participating states, which met on three occasions to discuss current priorities and provide

their inputs to the update of the Prague Process Action Plan. The statements gathered during the three thematic consultations, as well as additional national contributions submitted in written, will be presented during the annual Senior Officials' Meeting in November 2021.

Beyond the mentioned topics, this issue of the Quarterly Review will also address the outcomes of Portugal's EU Presidency, as well as the latest CIS Inter-Parliamentary Assembly, and assess recent developments in Afghanistan with a focus on potential migration and displacement to the Prague Process region.

Enjoy the read and stay safe!

Looking ahead: upcoming Prague Process activities in 2021



Webinars envisaged for autumn and winter 2021

'Demography and Migration in the PP region' with Prof. Ronald Skeldon, University of Sussex

'Refugee Status Determination' with Judith Gleeson, Upper Tribunal Judge, United Kingdom

'The EU Strategy for Voluntary Return and Reintegration' (tbc)

'Introducing the European Labour Authority' (tbc)

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The Prague Process webinar series

In the second quarter of 2021, the Prague Process organised three webinars:



The webinar **'Which Perspectives for Labour Migration Partnerships in the Prague Process region? Lessons from EU funded Pilot Projects on Legal Migration'** held on 15 April brought together Mr Marco Funk, International Relations Officer of the European Commission, Mr Mario Lelovsky, Director of the Digital Coalition Slovakia, and Ms Diana Stefanescu, ICMPD's Project Specialist on Labour Migration. The speakers presented key lessons learned from EU funded labour mobility initiatives, provided a general overview of the European Commission's new Talent Partnerships concept announced in the New EU Pact on Migration and Asylum, and outlined next steps envisaged for their operationalization. The webinar also introduced the first EU-funded labour mobility pilot project to be implemented in the Eastern Partnership region between Slovakia and Moldova.

In early May, the webinar **'Social Capital and Transnational Human Smuggling: What is the impact of Counter-Smuggling Policies?'** with Mr Andrew Fallone, Researcher at the European University Institute, applied a critical perspective



to the market for human smuggling, elucidating the role that personal relationships and community knowledge plays in shaping both migrants' decisions and smuggling service providers' operating practices. In doing so, the webinar provided policymakers, scholars, and informed observers with a more nuanced understanding of the far-reaching ramifications of counter-smuggling policies.

In June, the webinar titled **'Reporting Migration: the role of media in shaping public opinion and policies**

on migration' gathered Mr Adalbert Jahnz, European Commission Spokesperson for migration, home affairs and citizenship, Mr Robert McNeil, Deputy Director of the Migration Observatory at the University of Oxford, and Mr Tom Law, Media Policy Adviser of the Global Forum for Media Development. Beyond addressing the role of media, the event also introduced the Handbook on "Reporting Migration" developed in 2020 within the MOMENTA 2 (Migration Media Training Academy) project, funded by the German Federal Foreign Office. Its main aim has been to improve media migration reporting in the Eastern Partnership countries by helping journalists to create impartial, fact-based reporting in an engaging way.



The recordings of the online events are available on the [Prague Process website](#).

Consultative meetings on the six thematic areas of the Prague Process Action Plan



In line with the Road Map towards the 4th Prague Process Ministerial Conference, the second quarter of 2021 saw **three thematic consultations**, each devoted to two thematic areas of the Prague Process Action Plan (PP AP). The consultations provided the Prague Process states with an opportunity to express their views on the continued validity of the current Action Plan, or on the possible need to reformulate and update its six thematic areas. Most of the

attending states considered the current Action Plan as valid and comprehensive, underlining the continued need for exchange of information and good practices, for sustaining capacity-building measures and balancing among the different modes of cooperation.

Chaired by Hungary and Poland and co-chaired by Ukraine, the first thematic consultation - on **Irregular Migration, Readmission, Return and Reintegra-**

tion - took place on 11 May 2021. In recent years, *cooperation on irregular migration* has become ever more prominent. There is a growing need to take a whole-of-route approach and strengthen operational cooperation, supporting each other with risk analysis and early warning. The states also see the need to address the root causes and pay due attention to effective border protection, organization of information campaigns, anti-trafficking and anti-smuggling efforts. In the *area of return*, the states unequivocally agreed to perform a mapping of return and reintegration systems to identify training and cooperation needs and support capacity-building efforts. All return activities require strong partnerships and knowledge sharing, as well as an increased use of modern technologies.

Chaired by the Czech Republic and Georgia, the second thematic consultation - **on Labour Migration and Migration & Development** - took place on 25 May 2021. While agreeing on the need to better utilise existing labour migration tools and reflect upon the

changing demographic profiles and socio-economic environment, attending states proposed to look into tailor-made approaches in line with labour market needs. Other ideas included a stronger engagement of the private sector, employment services and social partners, the establishment of migrant resource centres, and the introduction of digital solutions, including vaccination passports in view of COVID-19. Discussions on the thematic area of migration and development highlighted the need to ensure better mainstreaming of M&D along with better utilisation of diaspora potential and circular migration, while carefully balancing between policies of control and facilitation.

Chaired by Lithuania and Turkey, the third thematic consultation - **on Asylum and Integration** - took place on 9 June 2021. The participants emphasized the continued need to strengthen capacities in the area of international protection through tailored trainings and timely needs assessment. They also highlighted the importance of information exchange supporting early

warning mechanisms, preventing secondary movements and abuses of the asylum systems. A particular focus on vulnerable groups among seekers of international protection should also be ensured. The future cooperation on asylum shall be both strategic and operational and linked to other migration areas such as return. Within *the thematic area of integration*, participants particularly highlighted the significance of actions on the local level and communication efforts towards a more positive narrative on migration. Integration policies require a whole-of-society approach and shall align with other immigration policies (labour and student mobility), as well as make use of new digital solutions for skills development and access to services.

The gathered state interventions shall feed into three Senior Officials' Meetings serving to prepare the political declaration and update the Action Plan for the Prague Process cooperation in 2023-2027.

Interview with Portugal on the outcomes of the EU Presidency



The Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the European Union (PT EU PRES) that ran from January to June 2021 concluded the work on several important files in the area of migration. To take stock of the progress made and results achieved, the Prague Process Secretariat talked to Ms Maria Henriques, Head of International Relations Unit in the Portuguese Immigration and Border Service (SEF). During the PT EU PRES, she also served as the coordinator of the Department of International Relations, Cooperation and Public Relations at SEF.

Dear Ms Henriques, to start our discussion, could you please tell us about the priorities of the PT EU PRES in the area of migration and asylum?

Portugal took over the Presidency of the Council of the European Union motivat-

ed to work towards solutions, but also to maximize the opportunities, ensuing from the current crisis. For this purpose, the Presidency liaised with all European partners to balance all wills and interests in the spirit of the values and fundamental rights of the EU.

Following on the Programme of the Trio of Presidencies, Portugal channelled its efforts to strengthen the spirit of resilience, materialize a positive and comprehensive approach to migration, by setting up a dialogue with third countries, with special emphasis on African Partner Countries, and promote a safe and secure European Union, focusing on the capacity to anticipate, prepare, prevent and act.

Recognizing the importance and contribution of legal migrants to the economic, social and cultural development of

Europe, PT PRES selected the promotion of legal / labour migration channels to the EU as one of its priorities to improve safe mobility and to strengthen the migrants' rights. In addition, within the scope of legal labour mobility, PT PRES succeeded in concluding the long-standing negotiations on the revision of the "Blue Card" directive. PT PRES also prioritized a reflection on the development and establishment of Talent Partnerships to facilitate legal migration and labour mobility, an initiative officially launched by the European Commission on 11 June.

Another priority was to support the European Commission (COM) in the new Pact on Migration and Asylum, in particular by working on the Commission's legislative initiatives aimed at reforming the Common European Asylum System, for an equitable sharing of efforts and obligations.

On the subject of irregular migration and return, the objective was to conduct an in-depth analysis of the situation in the main countries of origin of migrants, including in the area of cooperation on return. To that effect, a debate was launched on the evaluation exercise that the COM carried out under Article 25 a) of the Visa Code.

On the defence of Schengen, priority was given to the effective control of the external borders and the operationalization of the new European Border and Coast Guard (Frontex) mandate.

What were the main events, achievements and challenges of the past half year?

Two major external developments of entirely different nature framed the preparation and conduction of the activities during the Presidency: the COVID-19 pandemic, and the delivery of the New Pact on Migration and Asylum.

The pandemic represented a challenge, insofar as it prevented face-to-face meetings and entailed an element of uncertainty as to the expected progress, throughout the entire six-month period. Meanwhile, the Pact on Migration and Asylum was a challenge due to its size

and scope, but being an instrument of extraordinary strategic relevance, it represented a rare opportunity for the development of a transversal work in several working groups.

Despite the constraints posed by the pandemic and the workload related to the negotiations of the Pact, Portugal succeeded in organizing two major events: the European Migration Network Annual Conference on Digital Transformation in Migration held online on 30 April, and a Seminar and Ministerial Conference on the Management of Migratory Flows held on 10 and 11 May.

Additionally, the European Commission launched the mechanism of "Talent Partnerships" for a broader policy in terms of migration management and mobility in a high-level event organized by the Portuguese Presidency.

In terms of substantive achievements, a special note deserves the agreement on the adoption of the mandate of the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) reached on 29 June in the political trilogue with the European Parliament after five years of intense debate. This is one of the most important results of the PT PRES in the JHA area, reflecting the EU's commitment to improving the management of the Common European Asylum System.

Lastly, the final compromise on the EU's European Travel Information and Authorization System (ETIAS), following the provisional political agreement reached on 18 March.

What progress has been made concerning the EU's new Pact on Migration and Asylum?

The Portuguese Presidency tried to find balanced solutions for the most pressing challenges currently faced by the EU, namely the imbalances in the migratory pressure existing in Europe. Thus, discussions were held on the proposals for the Asylum and Migration Management Regulation, the Asylum Procedure Regulation, as well as the Border Screening Regulation. This work was essential for all Member States to be able to confirm their general commitment to support

each other and to offer solidarity contributions in case of pressure on one of them.

The proposals for the Asylum and Migration Management Regulation and Asylum Procedure Regulation contemplate the basis for solving the most difficult political issue to be resolved: the equity between responsibility and solidarity in the management of migratory flows. The distribution of the irregular migratory burden among Member States, the distribution of asylum seekers in the EU, and the management of migratory movements within the EU are the three cornerstones of those proposals.

The solidarity mechanism proposed in the Asylum and Migration Management Regulation is one of the most demanding and challenging points among Member States. The PT PRES promoted a constructive debate on the simulation exercise on the Solidarity Mechanism, developed by the European Commission that allowed a better understanding of the functioning of the border procedure and the solidarity mechanism proposed in the PMA, moving from the abstract plan to a plan based on concrete, albeit hypothetical, data. PT PRES also discussed the definition of a general framework for the management of migration and asylum, establishing the key principles of this approach, supported by a monitoring and governance structure, both at EU and national levels, based on solidarity between Member States.

On the internal dimension, emphasis was given to the importance of the agencies' responsiveness (FRONTEx, EASO and EUROPOL) and their willingness to support and collaborate with Member States if migratory pressure increases.

Within the scope of the external dimension, a debate was launched on the creation of an external action coordination mechanism, as the relationship with partner countries requires effective coordination between the EU and Member States at bilateral, regional and multilateral levels.

With regard to a Regulation establishing a common procedure for international protection in the EU, PT PRES presented a new working document with revised articles, based on discussions with and contributions from Member States and based on drafting sessions held with the European Commission, the General Secretariat of the Council and the Council Legal Service. However, there is still a lot of work to be done on the two legislative proposals, both technically and politically. On the Border Screening Regulation, it was possible to complete the technical work.

The Presidency ended with the political agreement on the European Union Agency for Asylum. What are the main expected benefits from this decision?

The EUAA will be in a position to provide greater and better technical and operational assistance to any Member State in managing the challenges associated with asylum, reception of applicants for international protection, resettlement and other transfer programs for refugees and seekers of international protection. The agency will also be able to develop its support programs for third countries. It is a significant step in creating the only multinational asylum system in the world.

The PT PRES pursued the goal of building a digital Europe. Could you tell us about the related initiatives concerning migration and mobility?

The most emblematic initiative was the EMN Conference on "Digital Transformation in Migration". The topic corresponds to a transversal priority of the program of the trio of Presidencies, with the previous German Presidency having started the discussion on the digital transformation in migration management with the Migration 4.0 event. The Conference aimed to provide participants with an overview of recent policy developments at the EU and national levels, as well as practical examples and lessons learned from the implementation of digitization processes, with innovative examples, including the use of artificial intelligence, and focusing on Digital safeguards and ethical standards.

How do you assess the overall cooperation with partner countries from the Prague Process region?

The evaluation of cooperation with these countries is positive and should be encouraged. The EU-Western Balkans Senior Officials Meeting held on 17 May, allowed for a positive and fruitful exchange of experiences and latest developments in migration management,

asylum, migrant reception conditions, and returns. It also allowed for an exchange of information regarding the national biometric systems for the registration of asylum seekers and irregular migrants, with a view to achieve greater interoperability.

Following the end of the Presidency, what will be the main focus of work in the migration area at the national level?

Portugal will continue its efforts towards a comprehensive and balanced migratory policy, encompassing legal pathways for mobility and migration, towards the setting up of tailored and mutually beneficial agreements with partner countries, and towards the reinforcement of Schengen as an area of security, freedom and justice.

Dear Ms Henriques, thank very much for your time!



The reform of the EU's Legal Labour Migration Policy

The EU's existing legal migration framework remains fragmented with many parallel national legal acts creating obstacles for third-country nationals (TCNs) in terms of equal treatment, intra-EU mobility, entry and re-entry conditions, residence status, work authorisation, social security and family reunification. This fragmentation hampers the Union's ultimate goal of having a comprehensive migration policy as well as meeting [migration-related targets of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals Agenda](#). Against this background and as part of the efforts to tackle irregular migration in Europe by creating legal pathways,

[the EU has initiated reforms](#) on unified and harmonised legislation.

On 20 May 2021, the European Parliament (EP) adopted the [New Avenues for Legal Labour Migration](#), proposing to simplify and harmonise the existing legislative framework by aligning the provisions of the various legal migration directives. To improve information exchange on legal migration and help match employers with prospective employees, the EP calls for the development of an EU talent pool, representing a one-stop-shop for TCN workers, EU employers and national administrations

that covers all sectors of employment. The document equally stipulates simplifying and streamlining the mechanisms and arrangements for mutual recognition and certification of diplomas, certificates and other professional qualifications across the Member States (MS).

On 11 June 2021, the European Commission launched the [Talent Partnerships initiative](#), as announced in the EU's [New Pact on Migration and Asylum](#). It aims to address the Union's skills shortages and strengthen migration cooperation with partner countries through labour matching practices. The initiative targets

labour market and skills intelligence, vocational education and training, integration of returning migrants and diaspora mobilisation. As stipulated by the Pact, the initiative represents an “enhanced commitment to support legal migration and mobility with key partners”, as they seek to:

“(...) provide a comprehensive EU policy framework as well as funding support for cooperation with third countries, to better match labour and skills needs in the EU, as well as being part of the EU’s toolbox for engaging partner countries strategically on migration..”

The simplified and harmonized EU framework for legal migration is a crucial part of a holistic approach to migration. It shall not only attract talents needed in the EU MS and guarantee their equal treatment but also make migration more orderly.



EASO becomes EUAA and the latest asylum trends

In late June, marking the tenth anniversary of its founding, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) was officially re-established as the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) by the joint political decision of the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Council of the EU.

The reason for transforming EASO into EUAA comes from the need to respond to current challenges through a new mandate and increased flexibility, as also reflected in the [EU’s new Pact on Migration and Asylum](#). EASO’s Executive Director, Ms Nina Gregori, highlighted: “It is a significant step in creating the world’s only multinational asylum system. The implications of this development cannot be understated. (...) Importantly, this will also lead to improved conditions for people in need of international protection.”

The EUAA will continue building on the successes of EASO and will provide the necessary technical and operational

assistance to EU MS by means and the mandate necessary to manage challenges in asylum and reception. The established complaints mechanism and liaison officers in the Member States and third countries will support the work of the EUAA. Through closer cooperation, monitoring mechanisms and information exchange, the Agency aims to ensure more convergence in international protection with full respect of fundamental rights in accordance with the Union’s asylum law.

The latest [EASO Asylum Report 2021](#) reaffirms the importance of this transformation that occurs amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Over the past year, the pandemic had a profound impact on migration flows and the functioning of asylum systems in Europe, both by creating and amplifying protection needs and by impeding access to safety. Recognising the difficulties faced by the Member States during the pandemic, the European Commission issued [a communication to provide guidance on](#)

ensuring the continuity of asylum and return procedures and resettlement. On its basis, EU MS introduced various measures to safeguard the physical well-being of individuals. Among others, this step accelerated the digitalisation of asylum procedures.

Although travel restrictions led to a 32 % drop in asylum applications in the EU in 2020, those countries that kept their asylum procedures open during the first wave recorded smaller decreases. The drop in asylum applications provided an opportunity to tackle the backlog of pending cases. For the first time since 2017, the decisions issued across the EU outnumbered the applications lodged.

Overall, almost two-thirds of all asylum applications in 2020 were lodged in just three countries: Germany, France and Spain. Similar to 2019, the top countries of origin were Syria, Afghanistan, Venezuela, Colombia and Iraq. Among the Prague Process states, the main or-

igin countries were Turkey, Georgia and Russia, albeit at a much lower level. In terms of migration routes, there were fewer arrivals on the Western and Eastern Mediterranean, and more arrivals on the Western African, Central Mediterranean and Western Balkan routes.

Among other important developments, the [report](#) highlights amendments to the list of safe countries of origin. Thus, in 2020 the Netherlands added Armenia to its list, while Cyprus added Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, North Macedonia, Bosnia Herzegovina, and Georgia along with other 15 states. The most recent update was issued in Sweden that added Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Northern Macedonia, and Serbia to its national list in May 2021.

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



(c) Picture credit: EASO

The EU Strategy on Voluntary Return and Reintegration

On 27 April 2021, the European Commission adopted the first EU Strategy on Voluntary Return and Reintegration, which promotes assisted voluntary return and reintegration as an integral part of a common EU system for returns and sets out new approaches to the design, promotion and implementation of related initiatives. The Strategy aims to develop a more uniform and coordinated approach to unlock the full potential of voluntary return by creating stronger structures inside the EU and featuring more effective cooperation with priori-

ty partner countries as part of comprehensive, balanced, tailor-made and mutually beneficial migration partnerships.

The Strategy recognises the achievements and experience of recent return and reintegration initiatives but highlights a number of shortcomings that hamper the progress of return and reintegration actions: the fragmentation of approaches, the insufficient data collection and coordination among stakeholders, the lack of a coherent framework for return counselling and a referral mech-

anism along with the lack of ownership and capacity of origin countries that result in a lack of sustainability. The lack of sufficient funding and the COVID-19 pandemic represent additional obstacles in the area of return. Moreover, there is a clear understanding of the importance to not only consider the return rates but also the situation of the individuals concerned, enabling their return in a dignified manner and taking into account their reintegration prospects upon return.

In response to these challenges, the strategy sets out a wide range of measures under the following seven pillars:

- 1. A more effective legal and operational framework.** Envisages work on various elements, in particular the Regulation on Asylum and Migration Management, the recast Return Directive, the Asylum Procedures Regulation and the Eurodac Regulation proposals.
- 2. Effective coordination between all stakeholders.** The Commission will ensure coordination in relevant partner countries among all parties involved in the return and reintegration process.
- 3. Supporting voluntary return and reintegration of migrants from and between third countries.** Further exploration of possible partnerships at regional and multilateral levels.
- 4. Effective return counselling and referral.** EU MS should engage in early, active and effective outreach to irregular migrants, while taking due account of vulnerabilities, and develop effective return counselling structures following the EU framework for return counselling. The pillar envisages the finalisation of the common curriculum for return counsellors and the further development of EU-level information tools.

5. Ensuring quality of support. The Commission will make available a quality framework for reintegration service providers based on common quality standards and promote its use.

6. Fostering sustainability of reintegration support and ownership of partner countries. The Commission will integrate and streamline return and reintegration into development programming activities at national and local levels in partner countries. The latter will be assisted in the development, planning and implementation of the legal, policy and operational frameworks and programmes for reintegration.

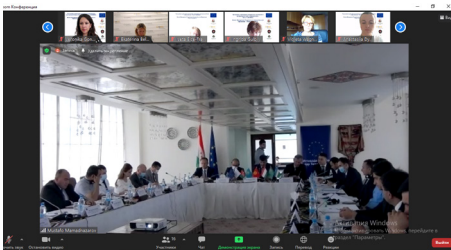
7. Funding for voluntary return and reintegration. The Commission will take account of the objectives of this strategy in Member States' multi-annual programmes. EU MS should continue supporting the voluntary return and reintegration of migrants returning from their territory through their national budgets as well.

Within the above pillars, the role of Frontex will be reinforced. The agency should increase the number of return operations and take over the activities carried out under the European Return and Reintegration Network by mid-2022. It will also step up training on return and apply the quality framework in managing the joint reintegration services provided to returnees who are referred to the Agency by national authorities. Meanwhile, EU Member States should make full use of the operational assistance of Frontex can offer in relation to voluntary return and initial reintegration.

[Read the Strategy.](#)



BOMCA-10: the new phase of the EU flagship initiative for Central Asia and Afghanistan is launched



In April 2021, the Border Management Programme in Central Asia and Afghanistan (BOMCA) entered into its 10th phase. This long-lasting EU-funded flagship initiative that has covered the five countries of Central Asia, has expanded its geographical focus to Afghanistan. BOMCA-10 aims at increasing security

and stability in the region by fostering sustainable economic development through integrated border management. The current phase will also support cross-border cooperation and seek to improve living conditions for people residing in the border areas of Central Asia.

Since its start in 2003, the BOMCA Programme has supported institutional capacity building and institutional reform in line with the EU's practices in the area of border management, provided assistance in the development of trade corridors, while also improving border management systems and elim-

inating drug trafficking. With the motto **"People and well-managed borders – together to security and sustainable development"**, the 10th phase of the Programme builds on the achievements of the previous phases and introduces new cooperation avenues. As H.E. Ms Charlotte Adriane, Ambassador of the European Union to the Republic of Uzbekistan noted: *"The European Union has been supporting the long-term and successful regional project as BOMCA to help the Central Asian states to improve border security and tackle drug trafficking, including easing border crossing both for people and for goods within Central Asia and from*

Central Asia to the rest of the world. We are delighted by the fact that the new phase of BOMCA includes Afghanistan, which is a very important step towards building a strategic partnership with the countries of Central Asia to foster cooperation, as well as to ensure peace, stability and prosperity in the region”.

The new phase is led by the Latvian State Border Guard and implemented by a consortium of EU MS border management agencies and ICMPD, which is responsible for the financial, administrative and technical management of the project. The regional structure of the programme consists of the Regional Of-

fice in Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan), and Country Offices for Afghanistan and Tajikistan (Dushanbe), Kazakhstan (Nur-Sultan), Kyrgyzstan (Bishkek), Uzbekistan (Tashkent) and Turkmenistan (Ashgabat).

Thematically, BOMCA-10 works towards results within four key areas, each entrusted to one of the partners. The **first component** provides support to the border control agencies in *developing and strengthening institutional and operational capacities*. The **second component** supports law enforcement agencies in *enhancing and improving detection capacities*. The **third component** aims at *harmonisation of institutional, technical*

and legislative practices of legitimate trade flows across borders. The **fourth component** targets local authorities, civil society and non-governmental organisations to *improve living conditions in border areas through local economic development with a focus on human rights, gender equality and vulnerable groups*.

The overall budget of 21 million EUR is unprecedented, thus raising considerable expectations from BOMCA-10 over the coming five years. The official opening conference is envisaged for 1 October.

The impact of the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan on security and migration in the Prague Process region

The unstable situation in Afghanistan is causing continued security threats for several Prague Process countries, especially those in Central Asia. [The ongoing withdrawal of US and NATO](#) troops from Afghanistan may result in considerable forced displacement and refugee flows. There are concerns over [a re-emergence of IS](#) following the withdrawal, which could exacerbate the [main security issues](#) such as terrorist attacks in border areas, the spread of religious extremism, an increase in illegal drug trafficking and human trafficking and other transnational crimes.

The unfolding armed conflict in Afghanistan might affect Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and particularly Tajikistan, which is bordering the northeastern provinces of Afghanistan known as combat zones used by militants from various terrorist groups. Some [reports say](#) the situation has impeded the implementation of the national development strategy of Tajikistan and threatens its national security. Against this background, the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) is deploying additional measures. Moreover, CSTO, the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), the Commonwealth of In-



dependent States (CIS) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) created a dialogue platform for the exchange of views on regional security issues. Both Russia and China have their military bases in Tajikistan with some [recent media reports](#) suggesting the US military will seek to reposition some of its troops in Central Asia after withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, the EU and Turkey are fearing the rise of terrorism and mass migration from Afghanistan, which already figures among the [main countries of origin](#) of asylum seekers and the prime origin of unaccompanied minors entering the EU. In 2015-2016 Afghans were the [second-largest group](#) of migrants travelling to Europe. While the EU-Turkey Statement of 2016 led to a consid-

erable decrease in numbers, Afghans again represented the largest group in sea arrivals to Greece in early 2020. Turkey - a vital hub for Afghans heading towards Europe - apprehended almost half a million irregular Afghan migrants between 2014 and 2020. Afghans also constitute the second-largest group of asylum-seekers in Turkey. However, without any legal status and access to jobs, and due to the constant threat of deportation, Afghans in Turkey struggle to survive.

A potential mass exodus from Afghanistan may occur amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Unsurprisingly, many actors thus call for a closer cooperation with and stronger [assistance](#) to the countries bordering Afghanistan. [A new security format](#) may be needed to strengthen cooperation between Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Iran, Pakistan and China, as well as Russia, India and the USA, and to take preventive measures against the challenges and threats arising. There are also calls for [Turkey to](#)

[maintain its presence](#) at the Kabul International Airport. This may help to avoid the closure of the embassies and international organisations in the city. While the EU signed a [Joint Declaration on Migration Cooperation \(JDMC\)](#) with Afghanistan to facilitate the deportation of Afghans without a regular status only in April 2021, it will also need to initiate a proactive dialogue with transit countries to avoid a major humanitarian crisis.

Migration issues discussed among CIS Member States



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The 52nd plenary session of the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of the Member States of the Commonwealth of Independent States (IPA CIS) on 16 April 2021 addressed the legislative regulation of migration processes during the pandemic and the respective role of the parliaments of the CIS Member States (MS). The attending Heads of parliaments and representatives of international organisations focused on labour migration issues and the impact of the pandemic on migration flows and the

economy of both receiving and sending countries. The various restrictions on mobility have worsened the vulnerability of labour migrants, highlighting the need for flexible solutions and closer international coordination. As noted by the Director of the IOM Moscow Office, countries may require a new cooperation format in the future in order to address migration in times of emergency. Meanwhile, Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and UNHCR provided updates on the migration-related actions implemented

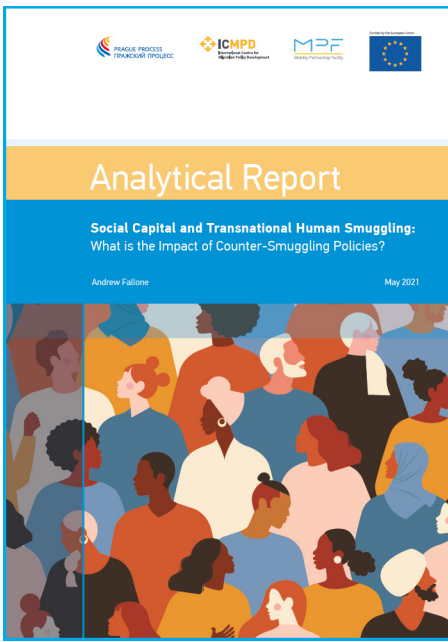
over the past year, including legislative amendments or the use of new technical solutions.

The IPA CIS further discussed and adopted the model Migration Code for CIS Member States, prepared by the Assembly. This document shall guide the CIS MS in developing, amending and complementing their national migration codes while striving for a further harmonization, convergence and unification of migration legislation, law enforcement practices and implementation of interstate agreements across the CIS. In addition to general provisions concerning the entry, stay and departure of nationals, the Code also reflects upon the various unmet requirements of national migration legislation and different state approaches in the migration field (e.g. control, statistics, protection of migrants' personal data, integration assistance).

The [next meeting](#) of the Assembly will be held in Minsk on 15 October 2021.

Read more [here](#).

Newly released publications of the Prague Process Migration Observatory



Analytical Report by Andrew Fallone

'Social Capital and Transnational Human Smuggling: What is the Impact of Counter-Smuggling Policies?'

The defining characteristic of the transnational market for human smuggling is the agentive choice by migrants to purchase services in order to facilitate their transportation across state borders. This broad definition includes a large variety of transactions between migrants and actors performing distinct roles, based on the nuances of diverse local dynamics. This analytical report applies a critical lens to the impact of counter-smuggling policies, in order to enable governments to set better-informed policy priorities. It is important that policymakers do not approach regulating human smuggling exclusively through the lenses of criminality, security, and law enforcement. Although human smuggling services are purchased through informal markets that infringe on national laws, these informal markets

share many characteristics with other legal economic activities. A narrow focus on the criminal nature of the human smuggling industry would problematically draw policymakers' attention away from understanding how the laws and regulations that they enact influence the lived experiences of migrants. By expanding this focus, this analytical report aims to provide government actors with a tool for understanding the nuances of the human smuggling market and the full effects of potential counter-smuggling policies. Understanding the role of social capital in the market for human smuggling will allow government actors to design migration management policies that more effectively safeguard migrants' wellbeing.

Access [here](#).

Interesting reads

ICMPD's Policy Brief

'The promise of an EU approach to community sponsorship'

Community sponsorship seems to yield some solutions for admitting refugees in safe and legal ways, fostering refugee integration and rectifying narratives on these issues. Although admission schemes are national, the European Commission wants the EU to play a role in encouraging and supporting the expansion of community sponsorships. This brief finds that the EU could offer a framework for reference and corresponding support tools for community sponsorship schemes across Europe.

Access [here](#).



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Conflict and Health

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Migrant children in transit: health profile and social needs of unaccompanied and accompanied children visiting the MSF clinic in Belgrade, Serbia

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Abstract
Background: Thousands of children migrate to Europe each year in search of safety and the promise of a better life. Many of them transit through Serbia in 2018. Children journey alone or along with their family members or caregivers. Accompanied migrant children (AMC) and particularly unaccompanied migrant children (UMC) have specific needs and experience difficulties in accessing services. Uncertainty about the journey and daily stressors affect their physical and mental health, making them one of the most vulnerable migrant subpopulations. The aim of the study is to describe the demographic, health profile of UMC and AMC, and the social services they accessed to better understand the health and social needs of this vulnerable population.
Methods: We conducted a retrospective, descriptive study using routinely collected program data of UMC and AMC receiving medical, mental and social care at the Médecins sans Frontières clinic, in Belgrade, Serbia from January 2018 through January 2019.
Results: There were 3889 children who received medical care (3738 UMC, 2551 AMC). UMC were slightly older, mostly males (90%) from Afghanistan (82%). Skin conditions were the most prevalent among UMC (52%) and AMC (37%), among the 46 mental health consultations (46 UMC, 21 AMC), most patients were from Afghanistan, with 98% of UMC and 67% of AMC being male. UMC, as well as AMC, were most likely to present with symptoms of anxiety (22 and 29%). There were 34 UMC, 898 males and 808 females from Afghanistan that received social services. They had complex and differing case types: 8% of UMC required assistance with accommodation and 73% with accessing essential needs, food and non-food items. Several required administrative assistance (12.9%) and nearly a third (29%) legal assistance. 38% of beneficiaries needed medical care. Most frequently provided service was referred to a state Centre for social welfare.
Conclusion: on next page

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Migrant children in transit: health profile and social needs of unaccompanied and accompanied children visiting the MSF clinic in Belgrade, Serbia

Thousands of people migrate to Europe each year in search of safety and a better life. In 2018, around 30,000 of them were children “in transit”, staying only temporarily in one or more countries along the route. Serbia is a key transit country along the Balkan route. Among the 1,140 migrant children present in Serbia in December 2018, many were unaccompanied or separated from their families. Public authorities struggled to address their health and social needs, providing limited to no access to social, education activities or tailored integration programs. This study describes the demographic and health profile of those children who received medical, mental or social care at the Médecins sans Frontières clinic in Belgrade, and helps to understand their specific needs. It also analyses the care services offered at the Clinic, identifying existing gaps and recommendations for improving them.

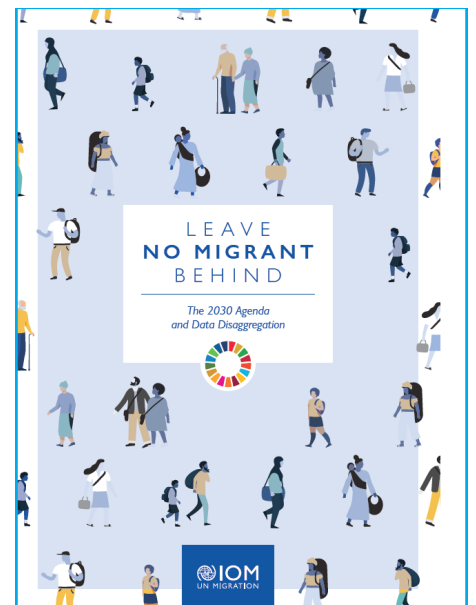
Access [here](#).

GMDAC Guide ‘Leave No Migrant Behind: The 2030 Agenda and Data Disaggregation’

To date, disaggregation of global development data by migratory status remains low. Migrants are largely invisible in official Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) data. As the global community approaches 2030, very little is known about the impact of the 2030 Agenda on migrants. Despite the focus on data disaggregation (i.e. breaking down of data into smaller sub-categories) growing worldwide, there is a lack of practical guidance, tailored to address individual needs and improve national capacities.

The guide shall help practitioners disaggregate data related by migratory status, to address the needs of migrants and highlight their contributions to sustainable development. It centres on nine SDGs focusing on hunger, education, and gender equality among others, and seeks to address a range of different categorization interests and needs, suggesting practical steps that practitioners can tailor to best fit their context. The guide also highlights the key role disaggregation plays in understanding the many positive links between migration and the SDGs, highlighting migrants’ contributions to the 2030 Agenda. Moreover, the guide outlines key steps for actors to plan and implement initiatives by looking at sex, gender, age and disability, in addition to migratory status. These steps include undertaking awareness raising, identifying priority indicators, conducting data mapping, and more.

Access [here](#)



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