

**Eastern Partnership Panel on Migration, Mobility and Integrated Border Management
Concept note for the upcoming panel meeting focusing on information campaigns**

The Eastern Partnership Summit of 24 November 2017 endorsed the 20 Deliverables for 2020 and a revised architecture which includes a **Panel on Migration, Mobility and IBM**. This new Panel is the result of merging the previous Panel on Asylum and Migration and the one on IBM. This Panel meeting will have a focus on **information campaigns** and is foreseen for 11-12 October 2018. The Panel will be kindly hosted by Georgia in Tbilisi.

1- Context

Information and awareness raising campaigns addressing prospective irregular migration are an increasingly used tool by European and partner countries. These campaigns try to help migrant to make informed decisions, since they often lack information or rely on false claims. Increasing awareness and changing migrants' perceptions and behaviour is a major challenge: aspirations to migrate are built over time on a narrative of a Europe of opportunities, perpetuated by mass and social media. Regardless their motivations, prospective migrants are interested in information helping them assess the likely rewards of a risky choice, rather than in the risks themselves.

The recent Commission's Communication on the Delivery of the European Agenda on Migration (COM(2017)558) envisages further efforts to enhance the EU communication strategy on migration, including information campaigns in third countries. For **visa-free countries** such as Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova, the development of high-profile information campaigns on the rights and obligations of visa-free travel is **a key area for action in the First Report under the Visa Suspension Mechanism**. These targeted campaigns include information on rules regulating access to the EU labour market and liability for any abuse of rights under the visa-free regime.

Recent figures show an increase in the irregular migration trends for nationals from EaP countries, which raise serious concerns among the EU MS. In this context, partner countries have initiated processes to strengthen their information campaigns and approached the Commission bilaterally for input and feedback.

2- Objectives

The purpose of this panel meeting is to:



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- 1) **share and promote best practices** on targeted information campaigns about the rights and obligations of citizens when travelling visa-free or under the provisions of the Schengen visa
- 2) **Address specific common challenges** that may arise in the practical implementation of these information campaigns
- 3) **Ensure a coordinated approach** through which the EU, EU MS and partner countries can benefit from communication synergies and coherence of information and awareness actions

2.1. Sharing and promoting best practices on campaigns in the field of migration

While acknowledging that the situations of each Eastern Partner and their nationals varies significantly requiring a tailor-made approach, this panel should focus on identifying key common elements and practices that have allowed for effective campaigns in the field of migration. Some important elements to discuss could include:

- **EXISTING RESEARCH** to identify the target audiences, their characteristics, motivations, information needs and the most effective approach to influence their behaviour, as well as to ensure complementarity and synergies with similar initiatives and relevant partner country government's measures.
- **OBJECTIVES** of the communication activities, namely supporting migrants in taking informed decisions regarding the risks of irregular migration and their rights and obligations when traveling to EU under visa free regime.
- **TARGET AUDIENCE**, which could include both prospective migrants and key influencers (families, religious or community leaders, teachers, diaspora, social contacts, etc.)
- **MESSAGING**, tailored to the target audience (motivations, level of knowledge and literacy) and adapted to the context (e.g. urban, rural, etc.) and objectives.
- **RIGHT MIX OF COMMUNICATION CHANNELS** which can include traditional and social media, word of mouth and personal testimonies (e.g. community and religious leaders, diaspora, returnees, etc.). Although the most effective channels depend on the country and objectives, research generally shows that the most effective channels are those conveying trusted messages: one-on-one conversations, group conversation with community members, Facebook messaging with persons known to migrants or trusted by them. Mass media (e.g. TV, radio,) are less relied on generally, but can be effective to reach a wide audience and bring across messages by role models or persons having authority. Mass media messages can also be used in support of messages through trusted channels.
- **STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT** in the design and implementation of the information campaigns and communication activities, with the objective of building ownership and



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enhancing the sustainability of the different actions. The discussion should also help to identify relevant stakeholders, including national, regional or local authorities and non-state actors, such as community leaders, local NGOs, private sector etc.

- **MONITORING AND EVALUATION**, with a view to identifying appropriate mechanisms, based on relevant indicators.

2.2. Addressing common challenges during implementation

In addition to sharing best practices, the panel is encouraged to discuss common challenges that may arise when implementing information campaigns with specific reference to the elements mentioned above. For instance:

- **POSITIVE MESSAGING:** the risks of irregular migration, overstaying or not respecting visa conditions will not probably impress migrants who feel ready to start their journey. How to send a positive message that is more likely to convince them?
- **SUSTAINABILITY OF EFFECTS:** how can campaign design be improved so as to allow for more sustainable effects and local ownership?
- **BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE:** awareness does not automatically change behaviour. Many social and cultural factors beyond mere information influence migrants' decision-making. What is needed to change actual behaviour?

2.3. Ensuring a coordinated approach

Finally, to maximise the potential of future campaigns and communication activities and to make them more effective, this panel should discuss ways to improve coordination between the EU MS and the Eastern Partner Countries.

A coordinated approach will prevent duplication of efforts, rationalise resources, and most importantly, ensure coherence in contents and methods of information activities. A coordinated approach should be ideally start at the early stage of conceptualisation and planning, through early consultations and using the above framework and best practices as a reference.

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