



Report of the Panel Meeting on Migration Strategies

7-8 December 2016

Minsk, Republic of Belarus



The Project is funded by the
European Union



The Project is implemented by
International Organization for Migration



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Migration strategies appeared in focus of the current Panel meeting held in Minsk on 7-8 December 2016. Participants from the EU and EaP countries discussed why it is important for a country, or even for a whole region, to have a migration strategy, how to effectively organize its drafting and eliminate obstacles for its adoption and implementation.

The meeting, jointly organized by Belarus and Lithuania with support from the European Commission and the Mission of the International Organization for Migration in Ukraine, began with welcome speeches from the respective officials: Mr. Nikolay Melchenko, Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of Belarus, Ms. Andrea Wiktorin, Head of the EU Delegation in Belarus, Mr. Andrius Pulokas, Lithuanian Ambassador in Belarus, and Ms. Argentina Szabados, IOM Regional Director.

During the session I the speakers were reflecting on the role of a national strategic document in the sphere of migration (Belarus) as well as the EU instruments setting up strategic priorities for its member states, such as GAMM, European Agenda on Migration, Common Agenda for Migration and Mobility and others (European Commission). ICMPD explained, based on their experience under the Migration EU Expertise – MIEUX, how to start developing a migration strategy and what should be considered and ensured in the process. Ms. Valeria Ilareva from the Foundation for Access to Rights, Bulgaria, emphasized an importance of a bottom-up approach in designing migration strategy, such approach implies engagement of target groups, i.e. migrants and refugees. IOM Ukraine presented an overview of various national approaches to migration management strategizing by the selected EU and EaP countries.

In the course of the next two sessions the participants got more detailed information regarding drafting, implementation, monitoring and revision of migration strategies of individual countries: Hungary, Armenia, Georgia, Lithuania, Ukraine, Moldova, Azerbaijan, whereas Belarus shared its experience in implementation of border control policy. Dr. Raymond C. Xerri, President of the pan-European organization “Europeans throughout the Word”, expressed his vision of how diaspora and its potential shall be involved when devising a national migration strategy, while Ms. Anna Pilat from the Institute of Public Affairs, Poland, spoke on modalities of involvement of civil society in the drafting process and challenges associated with it. Denmark drew attention to the need for defining new durable solutions in countering human smuggling and trafficking.

After the thematic sessions, IOM Ukraine presented the results of the evaluation of its support function to the Panel provided in 2012-2016, including the beneficiaries’ satisfaction rate and recommendations for the future evolution of the Panel.

The European Commission proposed to the representatives of the participating countries to study a draft work programme of the Panel for 2017, which included the following four topics: (i) border and migration management in emergency situations, (ii) return, readmission and reintegration, (iii) prevention of facilitation of irregular migration and (iv) economic integration of migrants, with the view to accept a role of a host for one of those meetings.



7 December 2016 – Day 1

Welcome and opening

Mr. Nikolay Melchenko, Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus, welcomed the participants at the last 2016 meeting devoted to migration strategies. Deputy Minister noted that thoughtfully developed and effectively implemented migration strategy is a prerequisite for a stable migration situation in any country. Therefore the Ministry is planning to start developing a national migration strategy in 2017. The present meeting is expected to become a source of international experience and knowledge to support this process as well as to activate cooperation between the Ministry and international partners.

Ms. Andrea Wiktorin, Head of the EU Delegation to the Republic of Belarus, noted that the meeting has dual importance: due to active participation of the EaP countries including Belarus and due to the topic since migration is presently a serious concern in Europe and a global challenge. Migration was one of the priorities of the EU cooperation with Belarus in 2016 and as the result the Mobility Partnership was signed. Joint cohosting of the meeting by Belarus and Lithuania – the neighboring countries – also strengthens the idea of cross-border cooperation.

Mr. Andrius Pulokas, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Lithuania in the Republic of Belarus, confirmed that for Lithuania the Eastern Partnership remains the absolute priority as well as the topic of migration including within the bilateral cooperation with Belarus. Migration problems cannot be solved by countries acting alone, but rather jointly. The Ambassador thanked all the parties involved in organization of the meeting and wished the participants fruitful exchange of opinions.

Ms. Argentina Szabados, International Organization for Migration Director for South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, stated that in the modern world of enhanced mobility we have to be prepared and proactive rather than reactive, and hence a discussion on migration strategies cannot be more timely. Such discussions have to take into consideration all the aspects, including the national security balanced with protection of individuals. The Regional Director listed the main issues being normally considered in IOM when speaking of migration policy or strategy: proportionality between discussions and actual implementation, revision, cross-border cooperation, experience exchange.

Session I. Role of a strategic document in the sphere of migration

Moderator: Mr. Robert Rybicki, DG HOME, European Commission

Mr. Aleksey Begun, Department of Citizenship and Migration, Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus, described the current migration situation in Belarus and noted that in absence of a comprehensive document in the migration sphere certain elements of the Belarusian migration strategy are reflected in a wider state programme “People’s Health and Demographic Security”. In 2017, the state authorities will start developing a national migration policy concept which shall be based on the Extended Migration Profile covering the years of 2014-2016 and its implementation shall be divided into two- or five-year periods. [See the presentation “Importance of Having a National Migration Strategy”](#).

Mr. Robert Rybicki, DG HOME, European Commission, made an overview of the major EU strategic documents in the area of migration such as those defining priorities in international cooperation and providing instruments to deal with the migration crisis. The Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (GAMM) is a general tool describing the EU’s international interaction related to migration. Separate tools are used for cooperation with different groups of third countries: those in close neighborhood,



those having prospects of joining the EU, those with similar problems the EU faces, those directly linked to the crisis situation etc. The European Agenda on Migration is another strategic document adopted in the context of the migration crisis and setting up short and long term priorities for the EU MS.

Mr. Oleg Chirita, International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), introduced the Global EU-ICMPD Initiative “MIEUX” under which ICMPD assisted different countries in developing their migration strategies. Based on the acquired experience Mr. Chirita explained why migration strategies might not work as planned and what intervening factors shape migration policies; what should be ensured, e.g. institutional and policy coherence; how the “public policy cycle” methodology is applied in the process of the strategy development. More details on the issues just listed as well as lessons learned can be found in [the presentation “Preparing the Ground for the Elaboration of Migration Strategies – What, Who and How?”](#).

Ms. Valeria Ilareva, Foundation for Access to Rights (FAR), highlighted importance of the bottom-up approach in designing and implementing a migration strategy. Its underlying idea is a strong connection between a long term strategic vision with the existing reality and current needs. Such approach also presupposes active engagement of the target groups who will be impacted in the process of the strategy implementation. This approach by no means contradicts the top-down approach but rather complements it. Even though it is more time- and resource-consuming it adds to credibility and effectiveness of the strategy. [See the presentation “Long-term Vision and Practical Insight: a Bottom-up Approach to Strategic Thinking?”](#).

Ms. Laura Scorretti, Mission of IOM in Ukraine, presented [the discussion paper](#) accumulating information related to migration strategies received from eleven countries and containing analysis of their relevant experience. The document contains chapters on the role and status of national, regional and global strategic documents in the sphere of migration; actors involved in the drafting process and how objectives, priorities and thematic areas are defined; duration of the strategies and their implementation action plans; legislative, institutional and other changes resulting from the strategies implementation; monitoring, evaluation and reporting mechanisms. [See the presentation “Migration Strategies: Overview of National Approaches to Strategizing in Migration Management in the EU and EaP Countries”](#).

Discussion

ICMPD referred to the *Extended Migration Profile (EMP) of Belarus developed in 2010 and the Migration Profile Light prepared in 2015 under the Prague Process and drew attention of the Belarusian side to the Organization’s expertise available also for development of the EMP 2014-2016. Belarus addressed all the participants with the question about consultations with the civil society and general public in the process of the strategy drafting. The EC, Ms. Valeria Ilareva from FAR, ICMPD and Dr. Raymond C. Xerri from “Europeans Throughout the World” all pointed at the need to consult NGOs providing direct services to migrants, other practitioners working with migrant population, diaspora organization and trade unions while drafting a national migration strategy, as well as the need of providing the general public with adequate and precise migration statistics and other relevant data.*

Azerbaijan noted that the country has largely implemented its migration programme and is planning to update the document in line with the EU’s approach and in light of the current migration crisis, and it asked the EC what capacities the latter has to support countries in revising and updating their migration strategies. The EC responded that while shaping the national migration policy is an ultimate responsibility of an individual country the Commission can provide tools and access to information and important issues, for example through the forums like the Panel itself, it also has capacities to identify relevant experts should the country request expert assistance.



Session II. Drafting and adoption of the migration strategies

Moderator: Mr. Eduard Balandin, Deputy Head of the Division on Migration and Work with Foreigners and Stateless Persons of the Department of Citizenship and Migration of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus

Dr. Raymond C. Xerri, “Europeans Throughout the World”, started his presentation on inclusion of diaspora issues in national migration strategies with illustrative figures describing the scale of the European diaspora. The speaker listed the following diaspora-related aspects to be taken into account while devising a migration strategy: defining the size of the diaspora by using statistics from different sources; seek assistance from the proper institutions (e.g. “Europeans Throughout the World” offers consultations on how to implement national diaspora strategies which are closely intertwined with migration strategies); create possibilities for citizens living abroad to contribute to the homeland and vice versa; establishing proper structures dealing with diaspora and their capacity building etc.

Dr. Ágnes Töttös, Department of European Cooperation, Ministry of Interior of Hungary, while sharing the Hungarian experience in preparing a new migration strategy, described the general migration situation in the country prior to the strategy, preliminary considerations put at its base, the drafting modalities, and the chosen structure of the document. Extended information on the strategy’s content can be found in [the presentation “Drafting Method and Process of the Hungarian Migration Strategy”](#).

Ms. Anna Piłat, Institute of Public Affairs, analyzed different aspects of the engagement of the civil society in the migration strategy drafting process, including who should be engaged and how, challenges associated with NGOs’ involvement and comparison between advocacy at European and national levels. The speaker provided an example of the NIEM project in the sphere of migrant integration, the only project so far submitted by the civic organization and not by the MS as a leading partner. Please see [the presentation “The Key Elements When Drafting the Migration Strategy: Engaging Civil Society”](#).

Ms. Maria Allahverdyan, Migration Policy Unit, State Migration Service, Ministry of Territorial Administration and Development of Armenia, spoke about the state of affairs with the drafting of the new national migration policy concept, which is the fourth document of its kind to cover the period of 2017-2021. The new challenges to be addressed in the concept, its vision and goals, the target (beneficiary) groups, the document’s structure and its content are laid out in [the presentation “Republic of Armenia’s Draft Concept on State Regulation of Migration for 2017-2021”](#).

Mr. Temur Goginovi, Secretariat of the State Commission on Migration Issues of Georgia, in his presentation disclosed particularities of the drafting of the migration strategy of Georgia for 2016-2020, including identification of interested parties and creation of a working group, timeframe, preliminary decision on the structure and thematic areas, coordination with other strategic documents etc. Based on this drafting experience a document on lessons learned was developed for internal use. [See the presentation “2016-2020 Migration Strategy of Georgia: Strategic Planning and Lessons Learned”](#).

Discussion

Belarus continued discussion on the consultations with the civil society and general public. In response to the relevant question Georgia informed that in the course of preparation of the draft migration strategy they engaged those organizations who had experience in the sphere of migration, academia and students from the migration management department of the Tbilisi University. Most comments provided by the organizations implementing migration projects concerned outcomes of their project activities; over 50% of those comments and proposals were taken into account. Ms. Marta Szczepanik from the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, Poland, added that the Polish authorities involved those organizations who had offices on the ground as well as the Institute for Public Policy who possessed research expertise. She also stressed the importance of involving actors performing the de facto state



functions (legal assistance to refugees and psychological assistance to victims of trauma or tortures etc). **Dr. Raymond C. Xerri, “Europeans Throughout the World”** further stated that NGOs play a key role in work with migrants and hence they have to be identified and consulted, including religious and other organizations. **IOM Ukraine** noted that involvement of general public in the discussion process can be considered as a bidirectional process: as a measure of information/awareness rising on migration issues but also can help to learn about the public opinion and attitude.

The next question **Belarus** addressed to all the participants concerned the issue of incorporation of the diaspora strategy in the migration strategy. **Dr. Raymond C. Xerri, “Europeans Throughout the World”** responded that merging both or implementing them in parallel brings the maximum results. **ICMPD** added that inclusion of diaspora issues depends on the objectives of the migration strategy: if the strategy contains a development component then this should be a comprehensive document and include diaspora issues. **Latvia** mentioned that this decision depends on the historical background of each country, for Latvia, similarly to some neighboring countries, the objective remains to return own nationals and this will be reflected in the future strategy.

The following question from **Belarus** to all the participants brought up the issue of different terms of the strategies’ validity, including open-dated documents. According to the representative of **Georgia**, their strategy’s end year was chosen as 2020 based on the planning cycle ending. The **EC** commented that sometimes the timeframe coincides with the political cycle, change of the governments and their migration policies. **ICMPD** commented that with the view to ensure policy coherence migration strategies should coincide with other policies such as demographic policy etc; there should be a long-term vision and, since the migration situation tends to change, short-term objectives.

8 December 2016 – Day 2

Session III. Implementation of the migration strategies

Moderator: Mr. Gintaras Valiulis, Senior Adviser, Public Security and Migration Policy Department of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania

Mr. Anders Lisborg, Danish Center against Human Trafficking, talked about a paradigm change regarding human smuggling and THB in the context of the migration crisis. Such changes and new durable solutions include inter alia rethinking of the idea of “spontaneous asylum seeking” and territorial contact as the requirement for seeking asylum, reforming the current refugee regime/asylum system (1951 Convention), prioritizing direct assistance to conflict areas and neighboring countries etc. For more information please see [the presentation “Human Smuggling and Trafficking in a Migration Management Perspective – the Need for New Durable Solutions”](#).

Mr. Maksim Afanasjev, Public Security and Migration Policy Department, Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania, made a presentation on the monitoring of the strategy implementation. It touched upon such aspects as the strategy’s goals, changes of the main migration indicators in 2015, the key measures applied in different migration related areas – emigration and return of own nationals, immigration, international protection, integration of foreigners, countering irregular migration, organizational structure and cooperation, international cooperation – as well as conclusions and recommendations. [See the presentation “Key Aspects of the Monitoring of Implementation of the Migration Concept of the Republic of Lithuania”](#).

Ms. Tetiana Kasian, Organizational Support Department, State Migration Service of Ukraine, revealed the Ukrainian experience in revising its migration strategy which will reflect the state’s unified approach to migration management till 2025. To get more information on the strategy’s goals, principles of its implementation and timeframe, its main directions, mechanisms of its monitoring and evaluation, as



well as the Ukraine's migration context (IDPs, labour migration), please see [the presentation "State Migration Policy Strategy of Ukraine for the Period till 2025"](#).

Ms. Daniela Chiperco, Legislative, Coordination and Data Management Department, Bureau for Migration and Asylum of the Republic of Moldova, described the reporting and monitoring mechanisms for the strategy implementation. Reporting is performed by the responsible ministries and other agencies as well as the Ministry of Internal Affairs while monitoring is entrusted to the Commission for Coordination of Certain Migration Activities. [See the presentation "Key Aspects of the National Strategy on Migration and Asylum of the Republic of Moldova: Reporting and Monitoring Procedure"](#).

Mr. Namik Jafarov, Department on Refugee Status Determination, State Migration Service of the Republic of Azerbaijan, summed up Azerbaijan's outcomes of the migration programme and its action plan implementation: creation of the State Migration Service, introduction of a one-stop-shop approach to provision of migration services, the Unified Migration Information System, electronic system for online visa issuance, development of the national asylum system, launching of readmission procedures, operation of the accommodation centers for irregular migrants and refugees etc. Other results are mentioned in [the presentation "On Experience of Development and Implementation of the National Migration Strategy \(Policy\) in the Republic of Azerbaijan"](#).

Mr. Andrey Kuksov, Legal Department, State Border Guard Committee of the Republic of Belarus, familiarized the audience with the state of implementation of the border control policy of Belarus including development of the legislative framework in this sphere, particularly the law "On the State Border". The Law covers a range of migration-related issues such as entry, stay and movement of persons in the near-border zone, responsibilities of the passenger carriers etc. Responsibility for administrative offences in the sphere of border control and border security was restructured but also preventive measures are widely used by the border guard authorities. In the changing circumstances and with the emerging challenges the authorities conduct monitoring of the situation and are planning further development of the legal framework.

Discussion

Armenia asked **Denmark** about the actions undertaken by the EU and the individual MS to disrupt the networks of migrant smugglers in Sub Sahara Africa and the Mediterranean. **Denmark** answered that last year the EU set up the anti-smuggling agency whose 60 experts identified more than 12,000 people involved in smuggling activities. In Africa the EU funds a number of initiatives as well as military operations in the Mediterranean whose objective is not only to search and rescue migrants but also dismantle the smuggling networks. At national level more resources are being allocated to police for the same purpose. **IOM Ukraine** further expanded the topic by asking about the national law-enforcement authorities' capacities to investigate the crimes and prosecute the smugglers operating cross-border. **Denmark** responded that international law-enforcement cooperation has always been a challenge, but at the same time there are institutions within the EU (e.g. joint investigation teams) and internationally (e.g. Interpol) which improve the collaboration. The **EC** added that the EU has also recently established the European Border and Coast Guard Agency with large budget and new capacities in terms of human and technical resources, information access.

Belarus raised the question whether the **EC** considers it necessary for the countries to have a migration strategy as a separate specialized document or whether it is sufficient if a corpus of relevant policy and legal documents, action plans jointly define the national vision in the sphere of migration. The **EC** informed that there is no unified requirement and each country decides which approach serves the purpose based on its legal and administrative culture.

Belarus inquired whether **Azerbaijan** expects any significant changes in their new migration programme compared to the previous version and whether the number of the authorities responsible for its implementation – 22 – will be increased or decreased. **Azerbaijan** informed that the new programme will cover the period of 2016-2025, but the Concept approved in 2004 will remain fundamental and



unchanged. The new programme will contain measures building upon the results achieved earlier and further developing mechanisms and institutions set up under the previous programme as well as new objectives related to information technology use, relations with the EU, readmission, eradication of statelessness etc.

General Panel Business

Mr. Robert Rybicki, DG HOME of the European Commission, offered to the attention of the representatives of the participating countries the draft work programme of the Panel for 2017. The countries considered a possibility to host one of the following four meetings: (i) on border and migration management in emergency situations, (ii) on return, readmission and reintegration, (iii) on prevention of facilitation of irregular migration and (iv) on economic integration of migrants.

Ms. Yuliya Ryzhykh, Mission of IOM in Ukraine, shared the outcomes of the evaluation of the IOM Ukraine's support function to the Panel's work in 2012-2016 conducted by IOM Ukraine in July-August 2016. The presented results illustrated the impact of the project (how it contributes to the exchange and promotion of good practices to strengthen relevant national policies between the EaP countries and the EU MS); efficiency and effectiveness of IOM Ukraine's support services as well as relevance and user-friendliness of the Panel's website <http://eapmigrationpanel.org>. For concrete figures and recommendations for the Panel's future development please see [the presentation "IOM Ukraine's Support to Work of the EaP Panel on Migration and Asylum: Evaluation Results"](#).

Summary and closure

Mr. Robert Rybicki, DG HOME of the European Commission, reiterated the need for the states to be flexible while implementing their migration strategies in the ever changing realities. He also emphasized the importance of the meeting particularly due to a possibility to discuss very new ideas in migration management, such as establishment of so called safe cities, as well as complex issues, such as civil society engagement in migration strategies drafting.

Mr. Aleksandr Tatura, Deputy Head of the Department of Citizenship and Migration, Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Belarus, expressed his satisfaction with the well-balanced agenda of the meeting that provided enough time for substantial presentations, questions-and-answers sessions, and also for informal exchange of opinions between the participating experts on the margins of the event.

Mr. Gintaras Valiulis, Senior Adviser, Public Security and Migration Policy Department, Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania, noted that even though each country's migration strategy depends on its geopolitical situation there are still many similarities observed. He expressed assurance that the meeting participants had a good opportunity to learn from each other's experience and will bring home new useful ideas and examples.

All the presentations mentioned in this report as well as all the materials related to the meeting can be found on [the Panel website](#). The presentations are accessible to logged-in users only.

