Concept Note

Eastern Partnership Panel on Asylum and Migration
- with special focus on integration of foreigners and refugees and IDPs

Prague, 13 – 14 November 2013

The Panel on Migration and Asylum was created in 2011 within the context of the Eastern Partnerships’ Platform for Democracy, good governance and stability. The establishment of the Panel incorporated the work carried out within the former Söderköping process and will build on the achievements and experiences developed within that framework. The Panel will work towards strengthening the Migration and Asylum systems of Eastern partners and advance the dialogue on migration and asylum issues between the EU and Eastern Partners, as well as amongst the Eastern Partners, in line with the EU Global Approach to Migration and Mobility.

Context and objective

1. Integration

The first day of the Panel is devoted to integration of migrants.

Legal migration and integration of third-country nationals are part of an important debate today across the European Union. Integration plays a key role for functioning migration management. Integration is also a cross-cutting policy issue which cannot be addressed by individual measures alone but needs to involve a broad array of policy areas and stakeholders.

As to the EU framework, given the increasing migration over the past decades, the integration of third-country nationals living and working in the EU has gained increasing importance on the European agenda in recent years. The aim to grant third-country nationals rights and obligations comparable to those of citizens of the EU was first settled in 1999 at level (European Council Tampere (Finland)). An institutional framework was added in 2003 by establishing National Contact Points on integration (NCPs), and regular EU level reporting on integration is provided since than as well. A common Handbook on Integration for Policy-Makers and Practitioners was published in 2004. In view of greater co-ordination of national integration policies and EU initiatives in this field the basic reference document is the Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration Policy in the European Union, from 2004 coupled with a Common Agenda for Integration have been completed. The Stockholm program from 2009, states that ‘Member States' integration policies should be
supported through the further development of structures and tools for knowledge exchange and coordination with other relevant policy areas, such as employment, education and social inclusion.” In addition identification of European modules to support the integration process by develop core indicators for monitoring the results of integration policies was called for. Since 2009, there is a formal EU mandate to promote integration (following changes to the basic Treaty) which, for the first time, provides a legal basis for the promotion of integration at EU level: in providing incentives and support for the action of Member States with a view to promoting the integration of third-country nationals residing legally in their territories, excluding any harmonisation of the laws and regulations of the Member States.

At national level in the EU while countries with longer immigration history try to revise their already existing integration policies in order to adjust them to newly changing environment (for example integration of second and third generation of immigrants), other countries had just built up their integration policies. Challenges and opportunities linked to integration, however, are a common feature for Europe and show a number of similarities for all migrant receiving states and societies. Experience over the last few years has shown the usefulness of the exchange of information and best practice. As a result, there has already been a certain amount of convergence in terms of policy and objectives for integration across the EU.

For Eastern Partnership states, integration of migrants is a relatively new area of intervention albeit attracting more attention since the Eastern Partnership countries may become soon countries of destination themselves with a need to develop their own integration policies. Therefore most states started to set up large parts of their institutional framework in the area of migration management anew and to elaborate and adopt new legislation accordingly. This institutional knowledge on developing and implementing integration policies however can already be shared with countries with lesser experience in this particular field.

International cooperation between state authorities who have gathered experience on related policies and measures can foster capacity building and mutual learning, resulting in an improved quality of integration policies. It also allows transferring the established knowledge to those states which are in earlier stages of development of their national integration systems.

The Panel will facilitate this exchange while providing an overview of the state of play in integration policies across the EU as well as in the Eastern Neighbourhood. This will contribute to intensifying co-operation in migration management with a focus on integration.

2. Internal Displacement

The second day focused on the rights of internally displaced persons.

In relation to the Eastern neighborhood of the European Union the situation for internally displaced persons is of crucial importance. The frozen conflicts in Caucasus are in many aspects linked to internal displacement.

The emergence of IDPs as a category of individuals in need of protection became more visible in the 1990s and onwards. At the end of 2011, there were an estimated 26.4 million internally displaced people around the world, down slightly on the year before.
Around 2.5 million people were internally displaced in Europe as of the end of 2012. The majority of them reside in Eastern Partnership countries. These people were mainly forced to leave their homes some 15 to 35 years ago as a result of armed conflicts and are living in situations of protracted displacement.

Despite the human rights guarantees enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights, and reflected in the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and several Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly Recommendations and Resolutions on the issue, the number of internally displaced persons in Europe has not declined significantly over the past decades. Only about a quarter of the overall number of IDPs in Europe has found a durable solution to their displacement.

Furthermore, the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Campsala Convention) is the only binding instrument for the protection of and assistance to internally displaced persons in the world to date. The UN Human Rights Council in its Resolution on Mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons encouraged other regional mechanisms to consider the development of similar normative framework for the protection of internally displaced persons. In this regard, the feasibility of drafting relevant regional normative framework on the basis of existing international norms and UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement is an important issue to address.

**Structure of the Panel meeting**

The Panel will be dedicated to the issues of integration of foreigners and refugees (1st day of the Panel) and the issue of IDPs (2nd day of the Panel).

**SESSION I: Building up integration policy**

Within a common European framework, Member States have developed specific answers to their specific challenges. The exchange of corresponding best practices and lessons learned adds value to the further development of integration policies in all States engaging in the Partnership.

The first session will provide a general overview of the EU integration framework by European Commission and input from a representative of academia. A tour de table will follow, providing a broad overview of the different national integration policies in Eastern Partner States and in EU Member States.

Integration is a process that starts on the ground: integration policies should be developed with a genuine bottom-up approach, close to the local level, with the aim of increasing migrants’ participation in society. Integration measures include language trainings, adaptation courses, support measures for accessing the labour market, education and vocational training, capacity building of civil servants working in integration, information and communication.

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1 Global Overview 2012. Internal Displacement Monitoring Center of the Norwegian Refugee Council.

campaign to raise awareness and fight against discrimination, etc. It is broadly agreed that the acquisition of language skills is critical for integration. Enhanced language skills lead to improved job opportunities, independence and participation in the labour market, including of migrant women. Integration measures also increasingly target vocational training and labour market integration of immigrants, putting language training and civic orientation programmes in this context as well.

This section will reflect all the above-mentioned issues and will allow for presentations on integration policies with a focus on labour market and on language and adaptation courses, which will be presented by both Eastern Partnership countries and EU Member States.

SESSION II: Integration in practice at regional and local level, access to information and counselling

It is commonly agreed that in order to increase the efficacy of integration measures it is vital to involve the regional and local level in the elaboration and implementation of integration policies. This is one of the basic principles of the European integration policy and a goal of the European Agenda for integration of 2011. The active role of the local and/or regional administration is an essential precondition in this respect. A key role is played by integration support centres at local or regional level. They act as information centres, provide counselling, language and socio-cultural orientation courses for immigrants in cooperation with other actors, mainly NGOs.

Session II will deal with the integration at local and regional level, including the role of integration centres, in national integration policies. The session will open with the presentation by the European Commission of a new feature of the European Website of Integration (EWSI), an Interactive Map of integration practices supported by local and regional authorities. This will be followed by inputs on information service and counselling in integration centres in the EU. Experience of NGOs working in Eastern Neighbourhood and a discussion will conclude this session.

SESSION III: Integration of refugees

Integration measures for recognized refugees (with granted asylum or subsidiary protection) have been developed as well. These policies partly overlap with general integration measures, partly address specific needs of this target group. The discussion will include procedures in language instruction, provisions of accommodation and assistance to compete in the labour market.

Thus, the third session is devoted to integration of refugees. The presentations can contribute to advancing discussions and sharing experiences of capacity building in the different areas.

SESSION IV: Internally displaced persons: Protection and Assistance

The introductory session on the internal displacement will cover the overall situation in Europe, where the speakers and participants will be able to discuss inter alia the existing normative framework on internal displacement. Absence of any legally binding international or regional instrument on the protection of IDPs makes the issue of national normative framework very relevant.
SESSION V: Rights of internally displaced persons

Many IDPs in Europe have been marginalized by failure to protect their human rights, in particular economic, social and cultural rights as a result of the huge magnitude of the problem and lack of financial resources. Around 310 000 IDPs in Europe still live in atrocious conditions in collective centres. Some countries have made significant efforts for improving living conditions of IDPs and solving their social problems. Relevant laws and state programs have been adopted and implemented so far. But there is still a need for a clear and stronger legal and institutional framework assuring effective protection of IDPs and addressing their specific vulnerabilities.

This session will address the issue of human rights of internally displaced persons as provided for in international documents and national legislations of EaP countries.

The session will also include the presentations on specific internal displacement situations in Azerbaijan and Georgia as an example of efforts made by these countries with a view of protection of human rights of IDPs.

Session VI: Sustainable solutions and Cooperation

It has to be noted that seeking durable solutions for internal displacement and guaranteeing the protection of their rights under the relevant normative instruments is very important for the peaceful coexistence and development of the countries in the region. In this regard it is very important to facilitate the political dialogue for voluntary and unconditional return of IDPs where possible. The issue of return, resettlement and reintegration of displaced persons will be discussed as a means of sustainable solutions for internal displacement.

This session will also focus on cooperation between international and national stakeholders for the protection of IDPs. Continued international assistance to IDPs in terms of financial aid and technical assistance is still very important in the context of the current global economic crisis. The session will include presentations by the UNHCR and IOM Country Offices in Azerbaijan on protection of IDPs in the country as an example of international community’s engagement to the solution of the problem on the ground.

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3 Global Overview 2012. Internal Displacement Monitoring Center of the Norwegian Refugee Council