# Report

# SARAJEVO MIGRATION DIALOGUE 3

Advancing the Skopje Declaration on Sustainable Migration Governance



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# Introduction

Guided by the commitments made by the Western Balkans partners through the Skopje Declaration and some of the key priorities set forward in the new EU Action Plan on the WB, the third edition of Sarajevo Migration Dialogue was held on 8-9 June 2023.

The conference aim was to define concrete follow-up actions towards the implementation of the Skopje Declaration commitments through the new Action Plan for Sustainable Migration Governance in the Western Balkans 2023-2025 - to address smuggling of migrants and trafficking in human beings, increase access to alternative pathways for migrants in protracted transit situation and work towards a holistic return management approach. The conference was co-hosted by the Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the EU with facilitation by IOM.

The conference brought together Western Balkans partners, European Union Member States, relevant institutions and international organizations to inform the proposed action plan according to their respective areas of expertise and the migration trends in the region. The Western Balkans delegations included Ministers and Senior Officials from authorities relevant to the three main thematic areas outlined above.

The adopted Action Plan for Sustainable Migration Governance in the Western Balkans 2023-2025 contains 21 key measures that were identified as critical to advance comprehensive, sustainable and solutions-oriented approaches to effectively manage migration in the region. This Action Plan is in line with the objectives of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) and aims to support and complement existing Strategies and Actions Plans in the WB, including the EU accession pathway.

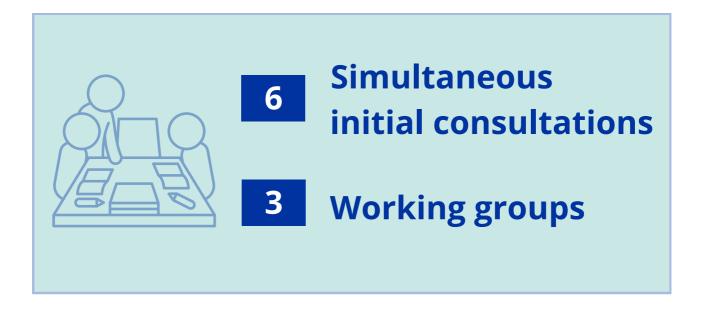
# SMD 2023: Facts and Figures





WB6 high-level representatives

41% Governmental institutions and authorities
39% Multilateral and international organisations
Diplomatic community and civil society





# Opening Addresses



"The conference will cover all important aspects of the migration crisis. I hope that at the end of it, we will be even better connected in the understanding that we can only deal with such a big problem as the migrant crisis together and united."

**Nenad Nešić** Minister of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina







"Now more than ever, there is the need to shift the focus into a longer-term and forward-looking approach to migration and look at migration not only as a potential security challenge, but most importantly as a development leverage for the region."

**Ugochi Daniels**IOM's Deputy Director General for Operations



"Managing migration is a common challenge that the European Union and the Western Balkans must address together in close partnership."

Maria Malmer Stenergard Minister of Justice of Sweden (video message)





"We have a strong common interest in cooperating closely on all aspects, looking for a balanced approach where incentive and legal pathways for regular migration flank the necessary work on stronger border management and return."

Lugi Soreca Ambassador, Special Envoy for External Aspects of Migration, European External Action Service







"Only together can we meet the ever-changing patterns of migration, the methods of the traffickers and the scrupulous actions of the organized criminals. Now more than ever, with a war in Europe, do we need to work together and find common solutions."

Anders Hall
State Secretary on Migration and Asylum issues of Sweden



"This year marks the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is important for us to remember that at the heart of this discussion are the fundamental human rights and human dignity of the people that we are talking about."

Ingrid Macdonald
UN Resident Coordinator in Bosnia and Herzegovina





**Ministerial Session** 

# Statements from WB6 Ministers and Heads of Delegation











**Plenary Session** 

# Sharing Perspectives on Migration Governance in the Western Balkans

# Smuggling of Migrants and Trafficking in Human Beings



Countering human trafficking and migrant smuggling in the Western Balkans

222

(potential) victims of trafficking identified in the region in 2022

2,662

smuggled migrants identified in the region in 2022 <sup>1</sup>

633

investigations in 2022<sup>2</sup>

15

joint investigations involving WB partners in 2022<sup>3</sup>

513

indictments in 2022

<sup>1, 2, 3, 4</sup> IOM based on aggregated data received from national administrations, not to be reported as official statistics.

# Labour Migration and Regular Pathways in Mixed Migratory Flows



# Labour migration

1 vs. 4

In the Western Balkans, every person immigrating equals 4.3 people emigrating <sup>1</sup> 1.5 million

first-time residence permits issued by EU to WB citizens from 2013 to 2021<sup>2</sup> 25%

of WB companies surveyed report difficulty finding workers with required skills<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> UN Population Division Migrant Stock Database (2020 Data)

<sup>2</sup> EUROSTAT data on First permits by reason (1990 – 2022 period).

<sup>3</sup> Region Cooperation Council (RCC), Balkan Barometer 2022.







# Alternative pathways for the most vulnerable

340

persons granted with the refugee status in the Western Balkans since 2014 <sup>1</sup>

501

persons granted protection status in the Western Balkans since 2014<sup>2</sup>

4%

of arrivals in 2022 opted to enter asylum claim in the WB<sup>3</sup>

**70%** 

of migrants declare they do not have information about asylum or how to get documents to stay regularly in the country of intended destination<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1, 2, 3</sup> UNHCR

<sup>4</sup> IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) data. Flow Monitoring Survey in the Western Balkans in 2022. 1,069 respondents.

# Holistic Return Management



Return management in the Western Balkans

>2800

voluntary returns facilitated by IOM since 2016

All WB partners have return and readmission arrangements with the European Union.

1

formal readmission agreement between BiH and Pakistan.

5

established mechanisms for provision of post arrival reintegration assistance to returnees in CoO: Bangladesh, Jordan, Pakistan, Morocco and Somalia.



**Breakout Sessions** 

# Simultaneous Working Groups



# Working Group A: Strengthening cooperation to address smuggling of migrants and human trafficking

**Session 1:** Leveraging risk and vulnerability analyses within mixed migration flows to improve identification of victims and inform operational response.

Facilitated by Ms. Tijana Šuković, Head of Anti-Trafficking Department, Ministry of Interior of Montenegro and Ms. Nerimana Rifatbegović, Sub-Regional Project Manager, IOM Bosnia and Herzegovina.



# Working Group A: Strengthening cooperation to address smuggling of migrants and human trafficking

**Session 2:** Enhancing cross-border cooperation mechanisms for smuggling and trafficking prosecution and victim-centered investigation.

Facilitated by Ms. Tijana Šuković, Head of Anti-Trafficking Department, Ministry of Interior of Montenegro and Ms. Nerimana Rifatbegović, Sub-Regional Project Manager, IOM Bosnia and Herzegovina.



# Working Group B: Increasing access to regular pathways to harness the potential of migration

**Session 1:** Leveraging risk and vulnerability analyses within mixed migration flows to improve identification of victims and inform operational response.

Facilitated by Ms. Silvana Banushi, General Director for Migration and Asylum Development, Ministry of Interior of Albania and Ms. Margherita Vismara, Programme Coordinator, IOM Bosnia and Herzegovina.



# Working Group B: Increasing access to regular pathways to harness the potential of migration

Session 2: Advancing rights-based actions to expand access to regular pathways for vulnerable categories.

Facilitated by Ms. Silvana Banushi, General Director for Migration and Asylum Development, Ministry of Interior of Albania and Ms. Margherita Vismara, Programme Coordinator, IOM Bosnia and Herzegovina.



# Working Group C: Working towards a holistic return management approach

**Session 1:** Consolidating rights-based and process-driven systems and procedures for effective return management frameworks in the Western Balkans.

Facilitated by Mr. Mirsad Buzar, Deputy Director, Service for Foreigners' Affairs, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Mr. Junaid Khan, Regional Programme Officer, IOM Bosnia and Herzegovina.



# Working Group C: Working towards a holistic return management approach

**Session 2:** Strengthening dialogue and cooperation among WB partners and with countries of origin.

Facilitated by Mr. Mirsad Buzar, Deputy Director, Service for Foreigners' Affairs, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Mr. Junaid Khan, Regional Programme Officer, IOM Bosnia and Herzegovina.



# Closing remarks



"As a result, the conference has an Action Plan that confirms our commitment to the EU and to the security of the region."

### Nenad Nešić

Minister of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina







"I very much welcome the commitments taken and the decision to adopt the Action Plan that will help you and us deal with the ongoing challenges. Three out of the five priorities of the European Union Action Plan are reflected in this new Action Plan."

# Johann Sattler

Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Bosnia and Herzegovina and European Union Special Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina



"It is crucial that we continue on this path, taking joint steps forward for migration to be safe, orderly and regular, that we work together towards a harmonized and common approach in migration management."

> Maria Malmer Stenergard Minister of Justice of Sweden





"I want to reiterate IOM's support to further advance this dialogue with all the states and partners in the region and also with the European Union, in light of the further alignment of all countries and partners. IOM will continue to support the states and the partners in the region."

### Manfred Profazi

Regional Director for the IOM Regional Office for South - Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia





# **Panelists**



Nenad Nešić Minister of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina



Maria Malmer Stenergard
Minister for Migration of Sweden
(video message)



Anders Hall
State Secretary to the Minister for
Migration of Sweden



Ugochi Daniels
IOM's Deputy Director General
for Operations



Luigi Soreca
Ambassador, Special Envoy for
External Aspects of Migration,
European External Action Service



Johann Sattler
Head of the Delegation of the
European Union to Bosnia and
Herzegovina and European Union
Special Representative in Bosnia
and Herzegovina



Sofia Östmark
Head of the Division for Migration,
Ministry of Justice of Sweden



Ingrid Macdonald
UN Resident Coordinator in
Bosnia and Herzegovina



Monica Goracci
IOM's Director of the Department
of Programme Support &
Migration Management



Zorica Vulić
Deputy Head of Department for
Foreigners, Ministry of Interior of
the Republic of Serbia



Lotje Van Der Made Head of Pre-Return Assistance Sector, European Center for Return (ECRET), Frontex



Samir Rizvo
Assistant Minister to the Minister
of Security of Bosnia and
Herzegovina



Carla Di Quattro
Head of the International Relations
Office at the Department for Civil
Liberties and Immigration, Ministry
of Interior of the Republic of Italy



Anne-Marie Deutschlander Principal Coordinator for South-Eastern Europe, UNHCR



Dragan Dašić
Head, Department for Foreigners,
Migration and Readmission,
Directorate for Administrative
Affairs, Citizenship and
Foreigners, Ministry of Interior of
Montenegro



Manfred Profazi
Regional Director for the IOM
Regional Office for South -Eastern
Europe, Eastern Europe and
Central Asia



Ola Henrikson Regional Director of IOM's Regional Office for the EEA, the EU and NATO



# Annexes





# Skopje Declaration on Sustainable Migration Governance in the Western Balkans

We, the representatives of Western Balkans, gathered in Skopje on 15-16 of November 2022 at the Ministerial **Conference on Sustainable Migration Governance in the Western Balkans** co-hosted by North Macedonia and the Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, in the context of the Czech Presidency of the Council of the EU:

- WELCOMING the objective of the Ministerial Conference to identify comprehensive, sustainable and solutions-oriented approaches to effectively manage migration in the Western Balkans;
- BUILDING on the expertise gained since 2015 responding to mixed migration flows in the Western Balkans,
   following the unprecedented mixed movements observed along the Eastern Mediterranean Route;
- ACKNOWLEDGING the progress achieved by the Western Balkans and EMPHASIZING the further needs in improving capacities to manage migration flows in accordance with EU and international standards, and in improving cooperation within the sub-region, with EU Member States, Western Balkan partners and countries of origin, to effectively tackle common challenges in relation to irregular migration;
- RECOGNIZING that mixed migration movements in the Western Balkans are a reality to be reckoned with for the foreseeable future, and that sustainable migration governance in the Western Balkans is inextricably linked to long-term development;
- RECALLING the conclusions of the EU-Western Balkans Ministerial Forums and other relevant Ministerial statements;
- TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION the European path of Western Balkans partners, the EU Enlargement Policy and the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum;
- WELCOMING the Ministerial Conference as a conducive cadre to take stock of the advancements and ways forward to further align with the EU acquis, especially Chapter 23 on Judiciary and fundamental rights, and Chapter 24 on Justice, freedom and security;
- REAFFIRMING the leadership of Western Balkans partners in addressing irregular migratory flows in a safe, humane and orderly manner;
- ACKNOLWLEDGING the importance to collect and utilize accurate and disaggregated data as a basis for evidence-based policies;

As regards the comprehensive, sustainable and solutions-oriented approaches discussed to effectively manage migration in the Western Balkans:







COMMIT to further strengthen cooperation to address smuggling of migrants and trafficking in human beings, and:

- Take measures to adopt rights-based and victim-centered approach, in compliance with international and EU standards, notably to identify, protect and reintegrate victims of trafficking.
- Improve cooperation and coordination through threats assessments, route-based analysis and enhanced digital and community-based prevention strategies.
- Strengthen judicial cooperation to improve the effectiveness of prosecution and convictions of smuggling and trafficking in persons across the sub-region, as applicable.
- Enhance the efforts to align visa policy in line with the Western Balkans efforts on European path.

COMMIT to increase access to legal pathways for migrants in protracted transit situation in line with relevant competences, and:

- Increasingly adopt a comprehensive approach, as critical for cooperation to promote pathways to harness the benefits of migration for the development of the sub-region.
- Optimize the use of existing regulations to increase access to temporary or permanent legal pathways.
   Pathways include asylum, temporary residence for humanitarian reasons, return and readmission and legal migration schemes
- Foster social inclusion and individual integration pathways to protect the most vulnerable groups, in particular children, and uphold migrants' rights to education, work, housing and a dignified life.

COMMIT to work towards a holistic return management approach, and:

- Promote the understanding that return is an integral part of sustainable migration management;
- Improve return, readmission and reintegration practices through rights-based and process-driven systems and procedures.
- Maintain dialogue with countries of origin with the aim to have approaches and mechanisms to effectively implement return, readmission and reintegration programming.
- Advance readmission cooperation with countries of origin through more flexible arrangements,
   aligned with the context and needs of main countries of return and Western Balkan partners.
- Incorporate readmission cooperation into wider dialogue processes with countries of origin, to leverage the benefits of reintegration, increase circular labour migration and accelerate other areas of cooperation.

Adopted in Skopje, North Macedonia November 16, 2022



# ADVANCING THE SKOPJE DECLARATION: ACTION PLAN FOR SUSTAINABLE MIGRATION GOVERNANCE IN THE WESTERN BALKANS 2023-2025

The Action Plan for Sustainable Migration Governance in the Western Balkans 2023-2025 contains 21 key measures that were identified as critical to advance comprehensive, sustainable and solutions-oriented approaches to effectively manage migration in the Western Balkans. This Action Plan is in line with the objectives of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) and aims to support and complement existing Strategies and Actions Plans in the WB, including the EU accession pathway. While the level of progress towards achieving the key actions identified varies depending on local contexts; in principle, all the actions listed are identified as important steps to advance sustainable migration governance in the region.

# Actions proposed to strengthen cooperation to address smuggling of migrants and trafficking in human beings (Skopje Commitment 1)

The migration situation in the Western Balkans remains complex, testing institutional capacities, particularly in the context of mainstreaming protection and combatting smuggling of migrants and trafficking in human beings. Migrants and asylum seekers undertaking risky journeys along the Eastern Mediterranean Route are vulnerable to violence, exploitation and abuse – with increased risks for minors and women. As the Western Balkans continue to experience mixed migration flows, all efforts must be made towards leveraging risks and vulnerability analyses to improve identification of migrants in vulnerable situations and inform operational response.

# Action 1

Strengthen the protection capacities of migration authorities through use of data for risks analysis and screening, including sharing of practices on use of screening tools and route-based indicators.

# Action 2

Enhance use of digital tools for detection of smuggling of migrants and trafficking in human beings in mixed migration flows.

Effective prevention, prosecution and protection strategies can only be achieved through partnerships, including operational and judicial cooperation, as well as rights-based and victim-centered approaches. Institutions must have the tools, knowledge and resources to enable rapid action and exchange of information. Due to the transnational, poly criminal and ever more sophisticated nature of these crimes, steps towards enhancing cooperation mechanisms for smuggling and trafficking prosecution and victim-centered investigation have been identified.

## Action 3

Engage in capacity development for detection and investigation of smuggling of migrants and trafficking in human beings through rights-based, victim-centred and gender-sensitive approaches.

### Action 4

Enable rapid and direct exchange of information and coordination to facilitate referrals where applicable, in line with existing relevant obligations.

### Action 5

Identify sustainable solutions to overcome cultural and language barriers by improving cooperation within the region and communication with people on the move.

# Actions proposed to increase access to regular pathways to harness the potential of migration (Skopje Commitment 2)

Regular pathways can sustainably address challenges related to irregular movements and help harness the benefits of migration and human mobility. The potential benefits for the Western Balkans partners include more effective and selective processes through which the rights of the persons and the interest of the receiving community can both be served. While regulatory frameworks are in place to facilitate labour mobility and help employers attract and retain workers in key sectors, administrative barriers and gaps in migration statistics or labour market analysis continue to hinder workers recruitment in the region. In this context, adopting and implementing measures to address labour market needs through regular pathways can positively contribute to shift regional migration dynamics.

# Action 6

Increase key stakeholders' knowledge of labour migration schemes and ethical recruitment, including regularization.

### Action 7

Advance knowledge on labour gaps/shortages through available data and consultations with stakeholders to define measures to attract and retain workers.

# Action 8

Review regulatory frameworks and streamline procedures for employment of non-locals, including digitalization of obligatory permits procedures, with a view to facilitate recruitment and increase alignment with the EU acquis in the field of regular migration.

# Action 9

Promote skills mobility partnerships that contribute to address development and labour mobility priorities for the countries of origin and mobility destination by facilitating skills anticipation, development, and recognition.

## Action 10

Continue supporting pilot inclusion measures to fight discrimination and xenophobia in local communities.

Regular pathways are essential to provide alternatives to irregular migration, enhance the integrity of asylum and immigration systems, and protect migrants in situations of vulnerability. Despite the existence of regulatory provisions both at local and international level, few long-term solutions are currently accepted by stranded migrants in need of other forms of protection as an alternative to onwards movements towards Europe. **Advancing rights-based actions to expand access to regular pathways for vulnerable categories**, including unaccompanied or separated children, victims of trafficking or gender-based violence, will require effective and individualized case determination processes and optimized use of existing regulations.

# Action 11

Develop capacities and promote dialogue on migration between administrative and non-administrative actors to increase awareness of regular pathways for vulnerable categories.

### Action 12

Review regulatory provisions to expand availability and use of regular pathways for vulnerable categories, in alignment with EU and relevant conventions.

### Action 13

Step up use of pathways and case management to improve assistance to unaccompanied and separated children, including family reunification.

# Action 14

Ensure regulatory provisions, infrastructures and resources are available to provide alternatives to detention, especially for vulnerable groups, in line with international standards and EU practices.

# Actions proposed to support progress towards a holistic return management approach (Skopje Commitment 3)

As mixed migration movements become an enduring feature in the Western Balkans, cooperation to facilitate the return of migrants to their countries of origin emerges as a key policy area. In the Western Balkans, concrete steps have been taken to further operationalize return processes, and to discuss regionally coherent return systems and practices as applicable. However, **consolidating rights-based and process-driven systems and procedures for effective return management frameworks** implies further actions and cooperation between Western Balkans partners.

## Action 15

Work towards adopting and enforcing administrative frameworks for effective return, readmission and reintegration, aligned with EU and international standards.

### Action 16

Facilitate capacity-building for rights-based return, readmission and reintegration practices and procedures, learning and building on Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) practices such as individual counselling and cultural mediation.

# Action 17

Assess and adopt functional/interoperable digital solutions to facilitate effective return operations with countries of origin and the EU.

Effective return, readmission and reintegration systems are integral to sustainable migration governance. In the past few years, Western Balkans partners have reported several positive developments on return and readmission cooperation with countries of origin. However, returns continue to be complex to operationalize, requiring extensive cooperation with countries of origin, both at the political and technical level. Continued efforts towards **strengthening dialogue and cooperation with countries of origin** is therefore an important area of engagement for the Western Balkans to set-up effective return and readmission systems.

### Action 18

Launch an informal learning platform on the topics of return, readmission and reintegration to be used for exchange of knowledge and capacity development among Western Balkans and other relevant partners, as applicable.

### Action 19

Continue to foster cooperation on return management with key countries of origin and countries of transit and facilitate regional dialogues on return management and cooperation.

# Action 20

Strengthen the role of Western Balkans administrations with the aim to improve return and readmission cooperation with countries of origin and promote dialogue on regular migration pathways.

### Action 21

Broker overall cooperation for sustainable reintegration support to people in situations of vulnerability.

This Action Plan was accepted in June 2023 and presented at the third Sarajevo Migration Dialogue, co-hosted by the Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the EU, with facilitation by IOM.





