



# IOM STRATEGY IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

(2022–2025)

IOM is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. As an intergovernmental organization, IOM acts with its partners in the international community to: assist in meeting the operational challenges of migration; advance understanding of migration issues; encourage social and economic development through migration; and uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants.

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# IOM STRATEGY IN THE **WESTERN BALKANS** (2022–2025)



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## FOREWORD

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IOM is committed to empowering migrants and communities and addressing drivers of migration by advancing positive, sustainable, and innovative development outcomes that are responsive to regional migration trends, as well as harnessing the benefits of migration as a source of sustainable development. IOM also strengthens cooperative development and implementation of evidence-based and inclusive migration governance.

This document articulates IOM's role, objectives and impact in the Western Balkans, and presents a forward-looking strategy for IOM's engagement in the period 2022-2025. It provides an overview of the migration situation and identifies trends and challenges which are expected to shape the migration landscape in the years to come.

As recognized in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, human mobility is indivisible from sustainable development. As such, in the Western Balkans, IOM reaffirms its commitment to leave no one behind, by empowering migrants and communities, and advancing positive, sustainable, and innovative development outcomes that are responsive to regional migration trends.

The sub-regional strategy supports the 23 objectives of the Global Compact for Migration (GCM) whilst seeking a 360-degree approach to migration governance, through implementing the 10 GCM Guiding Principles including, inter alia, a whole-of-society approach to address the intrinsic link between development and migration.

Furthermore, it articulates and implements the global priorities as highlighted in the IOM's Strategic Vision 2019-2023, as well as the Regional Strategy for South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia 2022-2025. The 360-degree approach to migration governance will also be leveraged through consultative processes, such as the Prague and Budapest processes, as well as the Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative (MARRI).

Finally, the sub-regional strategy acknowledges and supports a series of important local, regional and global frameworks, including the United Nations Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNDCFs) and the UN Agenda on Peace and Social Cohesion, the Economic Reform Programmes, the Multi-annual Action Plan on a Regional Economic Area in the Western Balkans (MAP REA), the EU Action Plan for the Western Balkans and EU accession process, the South East Europe 2030 Strategy, and other thematic regional strategies and action plans in the areas of migration, mobility, labour, economic integration, gender equality, youth engagement, human security, environment and climate change, prevention of violent extremism and fight against transnational organized crime.

As a direct contribution to the Decade of Action to fast-track progress for reaching the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and implement the GCM, the sub-regional strategy aims to bring greater coherence and development impact to IOM's activities.

**Laura Lungarotti**

IOM Sub-regional Coordinator for the Western Balkans

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## IOM AT GLANCE

Established in 1951, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) is the UN Migration Agency, working closely with migrants and over 170 Member States to ensure that humane and orderly migration benefits to all. IOM acts with its partners in the international community to:

- Assist in meeting the growing operational challenges of migration management,
- Advance understanding of migration issues,
- Encourage social and economic development through migration, and
- Uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants.

IOM is the leading intergovernmental organization in the field of migration. Since joining the UN system in 2016, this role has been formally recognized, allowing IOM to act as the global leader on migration, which was enshrined through the adoption of the GCM in 2018, and with the establishment of the UN Network on Migration coordinated by IOM.

Today, IOM is an indispensable actor in the field of human mobility, supporting migrants across the world, and developing effective responses to changing and challenging migration dynamics. Through its 400 offices worldwide, IOM helps develop individual and community resilience, and build capacity within governments to manage all forms and impacts of mobility.

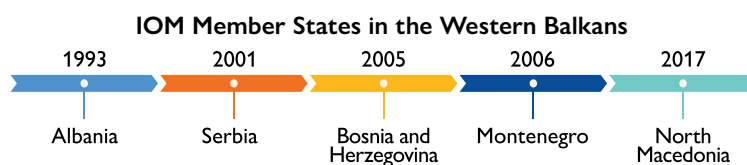


IOM provides humanitarian and lifesaving assistance to all migrants in need. © IOM Bosnia and Herzegovina

## IOM IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

IOM aims to support Member States and partners in the Western Balkans in ensuring well governed migration. As such, IOM supports the development and implementation of effective and interoperable migration governance systems, guided by the Western Balkans' accession process to the European Union (EU). In addition to supporting the rule of law through strong institutions and policies for sustainable migration management and inclusive societies, IOM promotes evidence-based policy and informed dialogues on migration and its potential for development.

IOM has been present in the Western Balkans since the early 1990s, with its first missions opened in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia in 1992. Initially focused on emergency assistance and reconstruction following the conflict in former Yugoslavia, IOM's work now includes a wide range of programmes supporting, but not limited to, migration policy and legislation, mobility and labour migration, social cohesion, reconciliation, prevention of violent extremism, immigration and border management, counter smuggling and counter trafficking, migrant protection and assistance, migration health, diaspora engagement, environment and climate change.



IOM has six missions in the Western Balkans, in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Kosovo<sup>1</sup>. The mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina provides sub-regional coordination support, in liaison with the Regional Office in Vienna, helping to address specific sub-regional migration issues and emerging trends, and maintaining relations with partners in the sub-region. In 2022, IOM implements 14 regional projects in the Western Balkans, with funding from the EU, Denmark, Italy, Norway, Germany, the Netherlands and the UK.



<sup>1</sup> All references to Kosovo\* shall be understood to be in the context of United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).



## 2. CONTEXT AND PRIORITIES

### Humanitarian Assistance and Protection

Priority 1: Promote long-term and protection-sensitive approach to the mixed migration response

### Resilience and Empowerment

Priority 2: Build sustainable mechanisms for social cohesion and reconciliation

Priority 3: Increase individual and community resilience to climate change and natural hazards

Priority 4: Leverage the potential of diasporas for sustainable development

### Human Mobility

Priority 5: Support effective, standardized and rights-based migration management systems

Priority 6: Combat migrant smuggling and human trafficking

Priority 7: Facilitate labour mobility and human development

### Migration Governance

Priority 8: Support effective migration governance

Priority 9: Contribute to evidence-based migration policy and dialogues

Priority 10: Increase public access to well-balanced information about migration



## 2.1 HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND PROTECTION

### Context

Migration flows in the Western Balkans started in 2015 with the opening of a humanitarian corridor to facilitate the movement of Syrians towards the EU. Following the closure of the corridor in 2016, mixed movements continued in the sub-region, with over 500,000 arrivals recorded by authorities in the region since the beginning of 2017. Comprised of a diverse group of people including asylum seekers, refugees and migrants in search of a better life, mixed migration flows along the Eastern Mediterranean Route represented over 30 per cent of irregular entries recorded into the EU in the second quarter of the year 2022<sup>2</sup>. Generally, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia are the two countries hosting the largest share of migrants in the Western Balkans, with over 90 per cent of the migrants present in the sub-region being accommodated in these two countries in July 2022.<sup>3</sup>

Since 2017, more than 500,000 arrivals have been recorded by authorities in the Western Balkans, including more than 125,000 in 2022.

Migrants travelling in the sub-region are primarily from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Syria and North Africa, with the key driving forces behind their movements including conflict, insecurity, as well as deep-rooted economic problems and lack of opportunities. Upon arrival in the Western Balkans, migrants and asylum seekers have usually been travelling for several months, and many have stayed in other transit countries, such as Greece and Turkey, for extended periods. Along their journey, they have often been exposed to violence, exploitation and abuse, as well as other protection risks. In 2022, the sub-region also experienced a gradual increase in the number of refugees from Ukraine, with over 20,000 Ukrainians estimated to be in the Western Balkans as of July 2022.

Based on data collected by IOM in 2021, 9 per cent of migrants in the Western Balkans are identified as vulnerable. This includes unaccompanied or separated children, pregnant women, victims of trafficking, LGBTQ and people with medical conditions.



IOM provides humanitarian assistance and promotes protection of children through capacity-building of relevant national institutions and long-term migration management strategies. © IOM Montenegro

<sup>2</sup> DTM Europe, Quarterly Regional Report, April to July 2022. [DTM Q4 2021 Mixed Migration Flows to Europe.pdf](#)

<sup>3</sup> IDEM. Also based on internal data from IOM Regional Monitoring Flow Surveys in the Western Balkans in 2022.

Since the beginning of the mixed movements in the Western Balkans, IOM has supported relevant authorities to establish and operate reception centres, provide protection-sensitive assistance to migrants in and outside formal reception facilities and implement Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) activities to collect data on mobility, flows, intentions and needs. Upon contacting IOM or other humanitarian partners, migrants and asylum seekers access basic assistance such as shelter, food and non-food items, as well as medical assistance. However, capacities to screen and assist migrants with specific protection needs remains limited. In certain areas of the Western Balkans, the space available and the capacities to screen identify and assist particularly vulnerable persons remain very limited.

In August 2022, close to 10,000 migrants are accommodated in reception centres in the sub-region.



IOM supports the functioning and expansion of many reception centres in the Western Balkans, such as the Registration and Temporary Accommodation Center Kapshtica in Albania. © IOM Albania

## Priority

**Promoting long-term and protection-sensitive approach to the mixed migration response** is a critical priority of IOM in the Western Balkans. Building upon the collaboration established with local authorities and a wide network of international and national partners, IOM will continue to promote access to rights-based and life-saving assistance.

Acknowledging the immediate needs and vulnerabilities of people on the move in the Western Balkans, IOM will continue to promote and provide protection-sensitive assistance including shelter, food and non-food items, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), medical and psychosocial support, and protection to vulnerable categories, in close coordination with relevant institutional partners.

IOM will work towards upholding international standards and human rights and dignity through its work and leadership in camp coordination and camp management (CCCM). In parallel, IOM will strive to foster a state-owned migration response by elaborating joint strategies with Member States and local partners to build capacities in migration management and preparedness, including technical support and tools for protection-sensitive and humanitarian border management.

Overall, throughout the Western Balkans, IOM will contribute to collect and disseminate data on migrants' needs, profiles, experience and intentions to inform migration policies and responses, and build institutional capacities to screen, register, refer and assist vulnerable persons within the mixed migration flows, including through the provision of information and interpretation services. Moreover, IOM will work towards strengthening inter-agency coordination and protection monitoring mechanisms, and uphold standards and principles of human rights for crisis-affected populations.

IOM contributes to build effective inter-governmental and inter-sectoral mechanisms for the coordination of the mixed migration response. This experience is fundamental to help other Member States in the sub-region initiate structural changes for the long-term migration governance systems needed following the emergency response.



IOM works with partners in the sub-region to strengthen protection-sensitive assistance and develop innovative mapping processes to improve case management. © IOM Serbia

## 2.2 RESILIENCE AND EMPOWERMENT

### Context

The Western Balkans are at the confluence of rich and diverse cultures, all of which have contributed to shape the region's complex history and trajectory. Thirty years after the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the sub-region is still grappling with unresolved war legacies, political tensions and divisive rhetoric based along ethnic and religious lines. The absence of positive narratives has impacted communities' resilience to radical influences. Coupled with social exclusion and high unemployment rates, the structural motivators, enabling factors and individual incentives for violent extremism and radicalization are present in the region, especially among disenfranchised youth from isolated and marginalized communities.

Between 2011 and 2021, four Western Balkans partners experienced significant increases in fragility, with top indicator trends related to factionalized elites, group grievance, state legitimacy, external intervention, refugees and IDPs, as well as human flight and brain drain.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> [Fragile States Index 2021 – Annual Report.](#)



In recent years, IOM has supported initiatives aimed at addressing drivers of instability, bringing reparations for victims of war time crimes, working with internally displaced persons (IDPs) to address issues related to access to property rights and personal identification documents, revitalizing local governance mechanisms, creating positive initiatives and narratives with youth and media partners, and preventing violent extremism through education and cultural awareness in marginalized communities. IOM also implemented social cohesion and rehabilitation projects in communities affected by the mixed migration flows.



Through Community Dialogues and Grants, IOM creates opportunities for youth to strengthen their skills and become agents of change in their communities, and active members of the society. © IOM Bosnia and Herzegovina

Drivers of migration and displacement in the region also include environmental degradation and natural hazards. For instance, more than 20 per cent of the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina is prone to flooding, with an estimated 260,000 people exposed to significant flood and landslide risks. In 2017, over 90,000 persons were displaced following historic floods. In Albania, the 2019 earthquake caused 51 casualties and the displacement of 17,000 people. In 2016, a storm with strong winds and flooding hit Skopje and the western parts of North Macedonia, leaving at least 21 people dead and dozens injured or missing. Displacement and loss of adequate shelter for a short and extended period represent a recurring risk. By supporting disaster risks reduction and preparedness, IOM helps address the adverse impacts of climate change in the sub-region.

The World Risk Index (WRI), calculates the vulnerability and exposure to natural hazards of over 170 countries. Three of the five most vulnerable countries in Europe are in the Western Balkans (i.e. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Moldova, Northern Macedonia, and Ukraine).

According to the UN, 4.7 million people originating from the Western Balkans live abroad, representing a quarter of the current population in the region<sup>5</sup>. Diaspora members have become critical development partners for the Western Balkans, leveraging their financial, human and social capital to contribute to knowledge transfer, innovation, trade and investments. According to the World Bank, the Western Balkans received 9.6 billion USD in remittances in 2020, with net inflows particularly significant for Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo\*.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> European Training Foundation, 2022. [Use it or lose it! How do migration, human capital and the labour market interact in the Western Balkans?](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Personal remittances received \(current US\\$\) - Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo\\*, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania | Data \(worldbank.org\)](#).

Despite the enormous potential of the diaspora to support the development of the Western Balkans and the work already realized by diasporas, much of the potential remains untapped or lacks sustainable policy design, notably because of the fragmented data and lack of comprehensive diaspora mapping.

Almost half of all Western Balkans citizens declare they would like to emigrate.<sup>7</sup> In 2020, Bosnia and Herzegovina had the largest share of emigrants as a share of its population in Europe.<sup>8</sup>



The Western Balkans have a tremendous development potential. IOM works to leverage the resources and expertise of the diaspora to contribute to the development of thriving businesses and local economies. © IOM Albania

## Priorities

**Building sustainable mechanisms for social cohesion and reconciliation** may take various shapes, but remains anchored in transitional justice mechanisms and the rule of law. In addition to building institutional capacities and promoting policy changes to ascertain access to rights for the most vulnerable, including Roma communities, IDPs, returnees and survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, IOM will empower migrants and communities in the Western Balkans to strengthen their resilience in situations of vulnerability, in particular, their ability to prevent, mitigate and adapt to risks without compromising long-term prospects for sustainable development, peace, security and human rights.

Reconciliation and social cohesion will be promoted through strong youth programming. IOM will empower and network local youth as agents of change to let them lead advocacy efforts and implement community initiatives, amplify positive narratives, and promote participation in democratic processes to strengthen trust in local institutions. IOM will seek to generate changes that benefit local communities and people on the move and create opportunities for dialogue and exchange on migration and diversity.

IOM will also strengthen institutional mechanisms and grass-roots initiatives to prevent extremism and radicalization and continue fostering critical thinking, conflict mediation and socialization skills. IOM will support institutions and professionals providing reintegration assistance to eligible former associates of violent extremist groups and their families who return to the Western Balkans, while also mobilizing and organizing positive influencers, engaging those at risk in meaningful community activities, and promoting socio-economic inclusion and livelihoods.

<sup>7</sup> [IOM Labour Mobility as a Factor of Development in South-East Europe, Regional Overview, 2020.](#)

<sup>8</sup> [IOM World Migration Report 2022.](#)

**Leveraging the potential of diasporas for sustainable development** aims to harness the human, economic, social and cultural capital of diaspora to contribute to the socio-economic development of the Western Balkans. Through the years, IOM has developed strong ties with key diaspora engagement institutions in the region, and actively supported socio-economic development through cooperation with the Western Balkans diaspora. As part of its sub-regional strategy, IOM will build upon its experience supporting institutional partners to improve the policy and operational frameworks for diaspora engagement, facilitate knowledge transfer in strategic areas, and work with partners to increase human capital flows and direct investment flows through diaspora investors platforms. Work in this area will focus on IOM's Global Diaspora Strategy and its "3Es" approach to enable, engage and empower transnational communities as agents for development.

IOM supported the launch of the platform [Connect Albania](#) – an online tool for the engagement of the Albanian Diaspora to act as Development Agents linking investors in Italy with stakeholders and investment opportunities in Albania.

**Increasing individual and community resilience to climate change and natural hazards** will also guide IOM's efforts, with the aim to implement joint approaches that consider and address the environmental drivers that compel people to move, accelerate climate action, reduce risks, build resilience, and enhance adaptive capacities. Focusing on preparedness, prevention and recovery, IOM will support local authorities and communities through technical and human capacities to address the complex challenges posed by human mobility in the context of environmental degradation, and work with partners to develop solutions that leverage the potential of migration for climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction.

IOM will also continue working with government, civic and community partners in the Western Balkans to increase resilience and preparedness to other shocks, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.



IOM supported health care institutions in locations hosting migrants and asylum seekers in the Western Balkans to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic through the provision of medical equipment. © IOM Bosnia and Herzegovina



## 2.3 HUMAN MOBILITY

### Context

Since the beginning of the mixed migration response, the Western Balkans have made great strides in developing institutional and operational capacities, adopting new frameworks for protection-sensitive border management, and coordinating within and beyond the sub-region, to offer long-term solutions adapted to migrants' individual circumstances. Migration management capacities were tested during the COVID-19 pandemic, when IOM increased its support to adapt the response and rapidly deploy preventative strategies in migrant reception centres, and increase access to health services and equipment for migrants and local communities.

Increased border controls and movement restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic have limited cross-border flows, opening a gap for migrant smuggling activities. Travelling through the Western Balkans presents many risks, and crossing into the EU often requires many attempts, making the journey longer and more perilous. Given its long-term presence in the region, IOM has extensive experience working on preventing and combating trafficking of human beings and smuggling of migrants. In addition to supporting the development of strategies and action plans to combat trafficking and smuggling, IOM has helped Western Balkans partners strengthen the capacities of law enforcement authorities to investigate suspected cases, facilitated cross-border cooperation and coordination, and supported identification of victims and direct assistance.

Through the GCM, IOM leads the way in enhancing the availability and flexibility of pathways for regular migration. 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.

Return management is a vital aspect of migration management, contributing to the integrity and credibility of asylum and migration policies and systems. Through the Assisted voluntary return and reintegration programs (AVRR), IOM assisted over 2,800 migrants with return from the Western Balkans to more than 30 countries of origin since 2016, tailoring reintegration assistance through pre-return counselling. In the past, IOM also assisted hundreds of persons returning to the Western Balkans.

Safe and regular mobility pathways are important for the Western Balkans, where net emigration rates remain high, notably in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo\*. Regulatory frameworks are in place to facilitate labour mobility and help employers attract and retain workers in key sectors, but the number of foreign workers accepted every year remain limited in the sub-region. While 10 per cent of the migrants originating from the Western Balkans stay within the Western Balkans, working most notably in Serbia and Montenegro, barriers to intra-regional labour migration persist, which are compounded by the lack of comprehensive migration statistics or dynamic labour market analysis, and the limited portability of rights.

### Priorities

#### **Supporting effective, standardized and rights-based migration management systems**

is paramount for IOM in the Western Balkans, to establish sustainable and long-term migration governance strategies. Five years after the start of the response to mixed movements in the Western Balkans, IOM remains committed to support partners to build sound management systems and offer safe pathways for migrants stranded in the region. Through its work in the sub-region, IOM will seek to support alignment of national legal frameworks with EU and international frameworks. IOM will also promote functional, effective and integrated border management systems through inter-agency, bilateral and regional cooperation and coordination.



IOM will continue to implement **return and reintegration programmes**, increasing its outreach and awareness raising efforts through field presence and digital communications. IOM will also support partners to strengthen cooperation with countries of origin and countries of transit to build partnerships and implement effective return migration policies.



IOM will encourage cooperation models for readmission and help operationalize solutions that integrate international human-rights standards and national commitments. IOM's work in this area will also include support to integration and inclusion of migrants returning to the Western Balkans and reintegration of IDPs.

**Combatting migrant smuggling and human trafficking** will remain at the forefront of IOM's regional coordination efforts. IOM will promote robust mechanisms to identify people in vulnerable situations within mixed migration flows and facilitate appropriate identification and referrals to ensure adequate protection. Support to national and regional strategic and operational cooperation, coordination, and technical capacities will aim to strengthen joint initiatives for detection, prosecution, and investigation of perpetrators of trafficking cases and build victim-centred approaches. IOM will increasingly focus its efforts on prevention with national research networks, practitioners and communities to address the risks of trafficking, including through effective digital and route-based prevention methods.

IOM facilitates regular meetings of the Heads of Border Police in the sub-region, fostering cooperation and exchange of expertise, as well as the development of interoperable systems. IOM also organizes simulations on trafficking in human beings (THB) cases with border practitioners.



Through awareness raising campaigns, IOM continues to address the risks of smuggling and trafficking. © IOM Montenegro

**Facilitating labour mobility and human development** is one of the most critical areas of engagement for IOM in the Western Balkans. Through its work with state institutions, IOM will continue to promote harmonized labour migration policies and systems to facilitate circular migration, by supporting progress towards achievement of the national roadmaps for migration statistics. Furthermore, IOM will promote coordination and harmonization of labour migration policies and systems to accelerate intra-regional mobility and contribute to migration policy dialogues by engaging key stakeholders on topics such as skills need forecasting, labor shortages, mobility procedures and fair and ethical recruitment. In addition, IOM will support and facilitate matching of prospective migrants' skills in countries of origin with existing and projected labour market needs in countries of destination.

## 2.4 MIGRATION GOVERNANCE

### Context

IOM supports its partners in the Western Balkans to achieve the 23 objectives of the GCM. These objectives in turn support progress towards the SDGs, which present a comprehensive, far-reaching and people-centered set of universal and transformative goals and targets, with migration as a cross-cutting theme of all objectives.

Each of the Western Balkans partners also elaborated strategic plans and objectives, around which IOM articulates its work to ensure alignment and effective partnerships. This pertains to a wide range of policy areas including migration and asylum, immigration and border management, fight against organized crimes, prevention of violent extremism, social inclusion and employment, labour migration, diaspora engagement, youth engagement, gender equality and any other policy revolving around reconciliation, diversity, inclusion, mobility, development, and migration.

While the path to EU accession entails alignment of migration management systems with EU standards, Western Balkans' jurisdictions and legislations remain fragmented, requiring concertation and political will to ascertain a common course of action. In many areas, such as labour migration, the lack of reliable or up-to-date statistics hinders informed policy decisions and gives way to misconceptions about migration and migrants.

## Priorities

**Supporting effective migration governance** through policy development, as well as strengthening interinstitutional and intergovernmental mechanisms for migration governance and migration mainstreaming, is fundamental to IOM's mandate and work as a part of the UN system. IOM will seek to strengthen migration governance through policy dialogues, inter-institutional coordination and regional capacity-building, while supporting the many processes that shape and regulate migration policies and international cooperation mechanisms. IOM will facilitate the development of action plans supporting the GCM and SDG and continue to facilitate alignment with EU acquis. IOM will also support global, regional, and national level dialogues on migration policy, and actively advocate for the respect, protection, and fulfilment of human rights.

**Contributing to evidence-based migration policy and dialogues** will also remain central to the work of IOM, in support of its Migration Data Strategy and the priorities of the sub-region. Through research, data and analysis, IOM will help shedding light on migration dynamics at the local, national and sub-regional level, notably through DTM activities. In parallel, IOM will continue to support the implementation of the five roadmaps on migration statistics and support the articulation and implementation of comprehensive migration data strategies. Lastly, IOM will also support partners' active participation in regional and global political forums to advance the GCM objectives.

In 2021, IOM launched new Flow Monitoring Surveys (FMS) to document the experiences, needs, profiles and intentions of migrants in transit in the Western Balkans. The FMS reports for the Western Balkans are available on the DTM Europe Portal.



IOM conducts regular Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) exercises to monitor migration flows and estimate the number of migrants outside of official reception centres. © IOM Bosnia and Herzegovina

**Increasing public access to well-balanced information about migration** and promoting dialogues on topics related to migration will help counter xenophobia and the negative perception of migration. Through a whole-of-society approach integrating the voices of migrants, youth, women and stakeholders from civil society, media, academia and the private sector, IOM will seek to amplify moderate and informed opinions to improve public perceptions of migration and public support of sound migration governance mechanisms.

### 3. ENVIRONMENT, GENDER, DIVERSITY AND YOUTH

IOM contributes to gender equality through an array of activities related to protection, reconciliation, resilience, inclusion and human development. In accordance with the Agenda 2030 and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, **IOM fosters the full, equal and meaningful participation of women and girls in its activities, to promote diversity and diverse identities, to address discrimination, and to mainstream gender across programming.** IOM also capitalizes on its extensive youth engagement experience and network to promote inclusion in youth-led activities.

IOM recognizes that a healthy environment is inherently linked to the safety, security and well-being of migrants and society and uses all available tools and resources to address the nexus between migration, environment and climate change. **In the Western Balkans, IOM supports partners in averting, minimizing and addressing disaster displacement, while developing mobility programmes aligned with global frameworks,** such as the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 and the GCM.



Migration, environment and climate change are intricately linked. IOM supports partners in the Western Balkans to assess the impacts of environmental degradation as a determinant of migration and mobility. © IOM North Macedonia



## 4. PARTNERS

Member States are the main partners of IOM in driving changes and achieving the results set out through the present Sub-regional Strategy. IOM also supports the principles of having a 360-degree approach to migration governance and whole-of-society approach to generate long-lasting changes. Within the various national contexts in the Western Balkans, IOM also works with a vast network of public, private and non-governmental partners, as well as local community partners, including youth and women associations, local peace committees, employers and business associations, human rights organizations and academic partners.

As a UN agency, IOM coordinates its action with other UN agencies and important development partners, such as DRC, ICRC, ILO, OSCE, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UN Women, WHO and the World Bank. IOM helped establish local UN Migration Network<sup>9</sup> to ensure effective, timely and coordinated support to partners and local authorities in implementing the GCM and other relevant policies. These platforms bring together all relevant UN stakeholders to strengthen collective commitment to improving cooperation on international migration and advancing the GCM. The Migration Networks also provide a platform for IOM to be convener and coordinator of migration initiatives with relevant partners, which translates into strengthened cooperation and coherence.

IOM has established close collaboration with the EU, the European Commission, the Parliament and the Council of Europe, and coordinates with various European agencies such as FRONTEX, EUROPOL and the EU Asylum Agency (EUAA). IOM also seeks to align and create synergies with the work of regional bodies such as the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) and MARRI.

## 5. WAY FORWARD

The strategy of IOM in the Western Balkans highlights the synergies and shared objectives of partners in the sub-region, with the aim to enable and create conditions for effective and coherent joint actions towards common goals. The document also outlines how IOM's sub-regional priorities support and align with the strategic objectives of Western Balkans partners, and other important regional and global frameworks.

The priorities aim to contribute to the Western Balkans' development agenda, by strengthening institutions and systems for long-term migration governance, addressing the drivers and structural factors that compel people to move, enhancing pathways for safe and regular migration, harnessing migrants' economic and social capital, upholding and protecting the rights of migrants and displaced populations, and promoting durable solutions for displaced populations and host communities.

<sup>9</sup> UN Migration Networks in Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Kosovo\*. Mixed Migration Working Group in Bosnia and Herzegovina.



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