

Director's welcome message



Dear Friends of the Prague Process,

Let me welcome you to the last Review before the summer holiday break for most of us. The Prague Process itself is not really going on holi-

days as many initiatives are on-going and – as you can see – we plan expert missions to Prague Process countries in Central Asia. Therefore, we are not afraid of having no materials for the next issue after the summer!

In this current issue, we would like to present to you a few recent activities, an interesting interview on a project that is thematically and geographically within our interest as well as the outlook towards the future of the Prague Process Targeted Initiative on behalf of one of its Leading States.

We will start with the vision of Mr Tomas Urubek, representative of the Czech Republic – Prague Process Founding state, on future of the Process. The following section would like to familiarize you with one of the most important bodies in the implementation structure of the Prague Process Action Plan 2012-2016 – the Core Group – and the concrete outcomes of its meeting in Warsaw in April. Further you can find an interview with Mr Oleg Zhdanov, UNHCR Regional Project Coordinator, responsible for the project "Asylum Systems Quality Initiative in Eastern Europe and South Caucasus" (QIEE). Mr Zhdanov answers to our questions about the project and results achieved in strengthening the asylum systems in the six EaP countries. To avoid overlapping with the Prague Process' Pilot Project 7, led by Sweden and Germany, we coordinate both initiatives to provide maximum benefits for the participating states. The National Contact Points' Meeting on Migration and Development in Chisinau was a very productive event, where we had the pleasure and opportunity to discuss this important policy area with external experts from academia but also the global leader on remittance transfers. The meeting shed some light on less known aspects of migration that we should be aware of in order to manage policies ever wiser. I would also like to draw your attention to the advances of two of the ongoing Pilot Projects, namely the so-called PP 5 on irregular migration and PP 6 on student mobility, and their recent workshops in Tbilisi and Moscow. In this issue we are also pleased to promote the freshly published Migration Profile of Ukraine and the above mentioned plans for expert missions.

I am delighted that our Review has developed into a forum where you can sketch new ideas on the future of the Prague Process. Looking forward to your opinions and reactions that could also be included in the next issue and wishing you a relaxing time to recharge your batteries for the forthcoming Prague Process events this autumn!

Sincerely yours,

Piotr Mierecki PP TI Director

In this issue:

- Director's welcome message
- Outlook of past and future activities in 2015
- Future expectations from the Prague Process – reflection by the Czech Republic
- What are the current tasks of the main Prague Process bodies?
- Interview with Mr Oleg Zhdanov, UNHCR
- Discussing Migration and Development: The 3rd Meeting of the National Contact Points
- Pilot project 5 Workshop in Tbilisi, 9-10 June 2015
- Pilot project 6 Workshop in Moscow, 23-24 June 2015
- Expert missions to Central Asia in Objective II
- Migration Profile of Ukraine 2010-2014

Planned activities within the Prague Process for the upcoming months

- 6-7 July: Senior Officials' Meeting, Budapest, Hungary
- **18-21 August:** Expert mission to Kazakhstan
- 16-18 September: Objective II, Study visit to Germany, Berlin
- 23-25 September: 1st PP7 Seminar, Tbilisi, Georgia

Past activities for the period April–June 2015

- **22 April:** 4th Core Group meeting, Warsaw, Poland
- 28-29 May: NCP meeting on Migration in Development, Chisinau, Moldova
- 9-10 June: 2nd PP5 Workshop on Illegal Migration, Tbilisi, Georgia
- 23-24 June: 2nd PP6 Workshop on Legal Migration/ Migration & Development, Moscow, Russia



Future expectations from the Prague Process

View of Mr Tomáš Urubek

During last six years, we managed to establish a leading migration dialogue, a truly comprehensive regional platform for building trust, emphasizing the importance of the migration partnerships between fifty partner states. The European Commission marked the Prague Process the key migration dialogue in our region. We are seeking joint solutions in this intergovernmental dialogue, where migration can be discussed on equal footing, which has a potential that should be utilised and further developed for the sake of mutual interests in these challenging times.

The importance of the Prague Process is growing with the ongoing migration challenges in our countries and beyond. With this regard, we need to further discuss the future of the Prague Process and the issues that we are facing. The question of the future will be a core issue of the Senior Officials Meeting in Prague in December this year. We have only one year to the Ministerial conference in Bratislava and we should clearly formulate our future priorities.

We have jointly established the Knowledge base, which is undergoing a revision process and should result in a tool that is beneficial for all users and provides with migration information of state ownership in easy accessible and comparable formats.

The international migration as a global agenda; nevertheless practical solutions are most effective when being implemented on regional and local levels. We already have invested huge effort in developing the Prague Process joint standards in form of guidelines and handbooks from pilot projects on irregular migration, legal migration, migration and development, and international protection. This year the Prague Process has another three ongoing pilot projects deepening the previous four. Furthermore, we will elaborate guidelines



Mr. Tomas Urubek, Head of Section for European and International Affairs, Department for Asylum and Migration Policy, MInistry of Interior of the Czech Republic

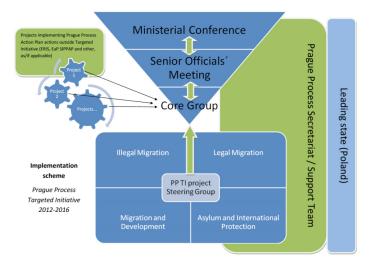
from the ERIS project on integration of labour migrants and EaP SIPPAP project on fight against irregular migration projects that will be presented at senior officials meeting in Budapest in July. The quality of these common standards and guidelines are unprecedented one and we should ensure their proper use. A Prague Process Training platform would be a suitable answer to this need, a useful tool for our work.

What are the current tasks of the main Prague Process bodies?

The Core Group (CG) is an important body in the implementation structure of the Prague Process, which was established with the adoption of the Action Plan 2012 – 2016. It is defined as a "group consisting of core partner States and the European Commission in order to assist in coordinating activities and in preparing for the Senior Officials´ Meetings. The composition of the Core Group reflects the consensus of the Parties reached at the Senior Officials´ Meeting , taking geographical balance into account". The CG thus meets and functions outside the projects implementing the Prague Process. Placed between the Project Steering Group of the Prague Process Targeted Initiative (PP TI) and the Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM), the decisive body of the Process, the CG deals simultaneously with both technical and political aspects of the Process. Its meetings are foreseen in the Road Map towards the Implementation of the 3rd Ministerial Conference (Bratislava, 6-7 October 2016).



The 4th CG meeting was hosted by the Polish Ministry of Interior in Warsaw on 22 April 2015. The CG, composed of Azerbaijan, the Czech Republic, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Germany, Hungary, Kosovo*, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Sweden, Turkey and ICMPD in its function of the Prague Process Secretariat, took stock of the Prague Process activities in the PP TI, the EaP SIPPAP and ERIS projects and discussed the agenda for the upcoming SOM in Budapest on 6-7 July 2015. The CG identified the ongoing process of the evaluation of the implementation of the Action Plan along with the ongoing revision of the concept of the Knowledge base as the key issues of interest. Both aspects have been incorporated to the agenda of the upcoming SOM. The leading state Poland together with the Secretariat has been working on the meeting documents for the SOM discussion. The position of the SOM on both key elements of the Prague Process will be crucial for the future direction of its implementation. Once the SOM decision is known, it will be possible to prepare more detailed specifications for CG discussion in Bratislava in November 2015 and for SOM decisions in Prague on 3-4 December 2015. The winter Prague should see the first concrete



discussions on the document to be submitted to Ministers in Bratislava next year.

Asylum Systems Quality Initiative in Eastern Europe and South Caucasus – Interview with Mr Oleg Zhdanov, UNHCR

Since the launch of the Prague Process and the Prague Process Targeted Initiative, the asylum component has been recognized as one of the most vivid and challenging. The Pilot Project 4 "Quality and Training in the Asylum Processes", implemented in the period August 2012 – April 2014 has proven its importance. It is now followed up by the Pilot Project 7, which foresees a three advanced seminars on asylum issues. The Prague Process has always been trying to coordinate with other relevant initiatives, which serve mutual goals. Today, we are glad to present you an interview with Mr Oleg Zhdanov, UNHCR Regional Project Coordinator, who unveiled the details of the Project "Asylum Systems Quality Initiative in Eastern Europe and South Caucasus" (QIEE).

Prague Process Team: Mr Zhdanov, could you provide us with a short description of the QIEE project and why it was needed in Eastern Europe?

Oleg Zhdanov: The two and a half year project, funded by the European Union and co-funded and implemented by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), was designed to improve the quality, fairness and efficiency of asylum decision-making and to establish operational quality assurance mechanisms in six countries in the EU's eastern neighbourhood: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. During 2013-2015 the participants benefited from active engagement with four EU Member States: Germany, Poland, Romania and Sweden. The European Asylum Sup-





port Office (EASO) also closely cooperated with UNHCR under this project. The initiative signalled a timely commitment to refugee protection in a region that is struggling to cope with a surge in asylum applications due to continuing conflicts in the Middle East and the situation in eastern Ukraine. Georgia, for instance, received 1,792 new applications in 2014 in comparison with 602 new applications in 2012. Furthermore, the number of asylum-seekers in Belarus increased eightfold within the same period.

> The Quality Initiative was never a "top down" project and cooperation and collaboration at different levels was apparent from the beginning. For the first time in the region, UNHCR-supervised consultants worked on a daily basis with national asylum authorities.

PP: What are the main factors that contributed to the success of the project?

O.Z.: A number of factors could be mentioned but the thought and planning that went into the outline of QIEE was instrumental to its overall success. The decision to build the Quality Initiative around three mutually reinforcing pillars proved to be a key. Pillar one, which is <u>quality assurance</u>, was dedicated to identifying gaps in asylum procedures and creating action plans to enhance strengths, bridge gaps and develop quality assurance tools to sustain improvements. Pillar two, that is <u>ca-</u> pacity building, focused on the EASO Training Curriculum, as well as other trainings and good practice advice from asylum procedures in the EU Member States. Finally, pillar three envisaged the creation of Refworld in Russian (www.refworld.org. ru), thereby extending the outreach of high quality Country of Origin Information (COI) translations to the participating countries as well as to other countries with Russian as a working language and provided policy documents and excellent training materials in Russian language.

The Quality Initiative was never a "top down" project and cooperation and collaboration at different levels was apparent from the beginning. For the first time in the region, UNHCRsupervised consultants worked on a daily basis with national asylum authorities. They were granted access to individual files, shadowed interviews and supported caseworkers. This has opened a possibility for a more non-confrontational, nonthreatening approach in resolving issues at a technical level. Participating countries eagerly engaged with the EU partner states and they also built fruitful cooperation through regional trainings, meetings and conferences.

PP: What kind of impact has the project achieved?

0.Z.: Among the different QIEE achievements we can highlight the following: creation of COI researchers or research units in national asylum authorities in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia and Moldova; translation of three EASO training modules and trainings delivered to participants from all six countries including "training for trainers"; development of checklists for interviews and assessments, standard operating procedures, internal instructions and guidelines. Moreover, legislative reforms were initiated or completed in all six countries. Since December 2013, more than 32,000 individual users accessed Refworld in Russian which already contains 10,000 documents in Russian, including a vast collection of reports, policy guidance, position papers, along with decisions of the European Court of Human Rights, European Union asylum regulations and relevant national legislation.

Improvements in the first instance asylum procedures of the six Eastern European states under the project have resulted in greater protection for asylum-seekers and refugees. We can see that applicants had more and better information about the procedure and their rights and responsibilities. Additionally, the use of COI improved and the analysis in the written assessments became stronger. There has been a marked increase in the acceptance rate of most of the participating countries. For instance, in Ukraine the current recognition rate increased to 37% comparing to 25% in 2013 and 12% in 2012.

The project was targeted to improve, through a regional approach, the quality of Refugee Status Determination. It directly supported the goals of various asylum and migration-related processes of relevance to the European Union and the target countries. As an example, QIEE achieved a great synergy and collaboration with the Pilot Project 4 "Quality and training in the asylum processes: the European Asylum Curriculum" of the Prague Process Targeted Initiative and the same is expected with regards to the Pilot Project 7, which is being launched this year.

PP: The project is wrapping up this summer. Will there be a continuation of the Quality Initiative?

0.Z.: At the project final conference in Kyiv in late May 2015, all six countries confirmed their interest to further develop the initiative. The EU Member States and EASO, while noting some operational constraints, also indicated their willingness to continue their support. UNHCR confirmed its commitment to the initiative's continuation so that achievements can be consolidated and even expanded through the proven methodology to other key actors like judges and border guards. However, given the scope of refugee emergencies in today's world, UN-HCR faces constraints in the resources it can devote to the East European region. With additional support from the EU and other donors, UNHCR would be in a position to make a more significant investment in the region over the next years, thus sustaining and even accelerating the momentum we have achieved together through the initial Quality Initiative project.

Thank you very much for you time, Mr Zhdanov!

Discussing Migration and Development: The 3rd Meeting of the National Contact Points was held in Chisinau on 28-29 May 2015

This meeting gathered representatives of 18 Prague Process states, various external experts and the EU Delegation. The opening speakers of the meeting underlined the importance of migration for trade and entrepreneurship, the national labour market and economic development in the whole. The good example of Moldova in successfully tackling M&D was also exemplified by some 80 initiatives implemented in cooperation with the EU Delegation in the migration area, as well as the budget support granted for the successful completion of the visa liberalization process.

After taking stock of the main policy documents and achievements in the M&D policy area, Ms. Malin Frankenhaeuser (IC-MPD) pointed to some newly established priorities, including human development, trade, agriculture or policy coherence and the mainstreaming of migration into development policies. Professor Ronald Skeldon (University of Sussex) thereafter provided a short overview of some of the social consequences resulting from migration. While differing national contexts would require different approaches, it could generally be assumed that most migrants are young adults and that migration decisions are mostly taken at the household level. The importance of migration for the evolvement of gender roles was also underlined.

The "Prague Process Guidelines on Managing Labour and Circular Migration", jointly developed by interested participating states in the period August 2012 – October 2014, were also shortly discussed. Several states underlined the importance of the developed guidelines for their own policy development.

Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia and Moldova presented their good practices on diaspora engagement. All three states shared the aim of finding a comprehensive approach by linking diaspora issues to other relevant policy fields. The various efforts undertaken reached from establishing effective



emigration policies, to the signing of bilateral agreements and the improvement of the national migration strategy. The three countries also presented a number of successful projects linked to their diasporas, already put into practice.

The global flow of remittances increased by four times from 127 Bio. U\$ in 2000 to nearly 600 Bio. U\$ in 2013. Within the Prague Process region remittance flows had similarly quadrupled from 47 Bio. to 170 Bio. U\$. General policy recommendations with regards to remittances could entail the simplification of all related administrative procedures, the reduction of transfer costs and provision of credits.

The second day of the meeting featured a presentation on M&D trends and emerging issues, including various rights such as access to health care and education or the need to focus on the local level. During a Tour de Table, the attending states shortly intervened on their national key priorities, recent policy developments, challenges and success stories in the field of M&D. Finally, Moldova gave a comprehensive overview of the lessons learnt in pursuing Policy Coherence on M&D.

Workshop of the Pilot Project 5 on fighting illegal migration – Tbilisi (Georgia), 9 and 10 June 2015

The second workshop of Pilot Project 5 was held in Tbilisi (Georgia) on 9 and 10 June 2015. The event was co-organised by Poland and Romania (Leaders of the Pilot Project 5) and Georgia.

During the workshop representatives of 14 countries and 2 international organisations (ICMPD and IOM) had a possibility to familiarise themselves with best practices regarding cooperation with diplomatic representations of third countries in

establishing and confirming identity of migrants staying without documents in Pilot Project 5 countries. Participants agreed that it is of vital importance to establish and maintain good contacts with diplomatic representations' (also informal ones) as effective collaboration contributes to an increase in the efficiency and implementation of return policy.

The practice of diplomatic representations in establishing and confirming identity of own citizens and in issuing documents



for them was presented. Along with best practices in this field. The means of establishing and updating databases collecting information on own nationals as well as on foreigners are essential in fostering the above-mentioned procedures.

Participants agreed that respect for human dignity and human rights of migrants should be a priority – this applies to ensuring respect for the rule of law as well as to the need to analyse on a case-by-case basis the individual situation of a migrant, including his/her medical conditions. It is not surprising that establishing and confirming the identity of minors staying without documents and those migrants who refuse to cooperate with the receiving authorities were scrutinized during the workshop.

Participants were also welcomed by the Migration Department and Accommodation centre of the Ministry of Interior of Georgia. They benefited from the presentation of Georgian experiences in establishing and confirming identity of migrants and applying detention and alternatives to detention of migrants who are illegally staying in Georgia.



Finally, other initiatives aiming at strengthening the capacities of the participating states were presented in order to ensure coherence among the various activities and to share best practices and lessons learned. Representatives of ICMPD and IOM were invited to make presentations on their respective ongoing initiatives such as the so-called ENIGMMA project, the outputs of which were outlined, as well as the facilitation of voluntary returns implemented by IOM , including support in obtaining return documents.

The 2nd Workshop of Pilot Project 6 on Legal Migration: "Enhancing the cross-border mobility of students" took place in Moscow on 23-24 June 2015

The meeting was hosted by the Federal Migration Service (FMS) of the Russian Federation and gathered representatives of eight states – Armenia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Portugal Russia and Turkey – as well as the EU Delegation in Moscow, IOM, various higher education institutions (HEI) and external experts.

The meeting was opened by the Director of the FMS, Mr. Konstantin Romodanovsky, who underlined that while most states are eager to facilitate incoming student migration, misuse and abuse thereof has to be countered efficiently. In Russia, where the demand for foreign specialists is substantial, students presently account for two percent of the overall immigration. The country has recently not only introduced reforms in order to enhance their labour market integration and naturalization, but also extended its cooperation with HEI across the country. The number of scholarships provided to incoming foreign students by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been increased significantly from 10.000 to 15.000 per year and shall soon be topped up to 20.000. This shall contribute to the competitiveness of the Russian higher education system, which represents a foreign policy objective. Moreover, the provision of Russian language and culture courses has been improved and examination thereof systemized and optimized. According to Mr. Romodanovsky, all these measures could serve as examples of good practices within the Pilot Project 6 (PP6). Meanwhile, further measures to counter brain drain and brain waste while enhancing brain circulation would still need to be identified.



After short interventions by the PP6 Leading States – the Czech Republic and Hungary – who expressed their appreciation of the possibility to explore the Russian experience in depth during these two days, Mr. Sven-Olov Carlsson, Deputy Head of the EU Delegation to Russia, underlined the important contribution of the Prague Process activities to both the EU-Russia dialogue on migration and implementation of the EU's Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (GAMM). Over the past ten years some 10.000 Russian students have been welcomed across the EU, turning Russia into the second most important source country for foreign students to the EU after India. Another 2.000 students from Russia are expected to take part in the 'Erasmus+ Programme' in the near future.

The Prague Process Secretariat then presented a short summary of the answers provided by the participating states to the PP6 questionnaire. The latter answers along with the various interventions by experts during the PP6 activities should serve as the basis for the elaboration of the envisaged PP6 Handbook, the draft structure of which was introduced by Hungary. The ambitious endeavor was well received by the participants. While some suggested also looking into the issue of vocational education, others recommended focusing on fewer aspects due to the limited time of the project. The consideration of multilateral agreements and co-called Copenhagen Process were also suggested.

The presentation of the Research Paper on international student mobility to Germany was followed by interventions on behalf of Armenia and Turkey who both provided a comprehensive overview of their national situation and policies in the same area. The following tour de table granted all participants the opportunity to state their experiences and present priorities on the topic.

The second session was dedicated to student mobility from and to Russia, discussed within three presentations on behalf of the Centre for Sociological Research under the Ministry of Education, Rossatrudnichestvo (Agency for CIS Affairs, Compatriots Living Abroad and international Humanitarian Cooperation) and the FMS' Department for Work with Foreigners. The three experts provided with detailed inputs regarding the volume of incoming and outgoing students, the related tendencies observed, the main policy approaches and legislation on visas, residence and work. The third session was reserved for HEI such as the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration and the Peoples' Friendship University who presented the numbers of foreign students, programmes offered to them and practical measures for managing these flows. The important cooperation with the FMS was underlined by both institutions. Finally, IOM gave a general overview of student mobility flows at the global level and the participating countries in particular. The main student receiving countries were then also introduced as policy examples when it comes to important aspects such as the granting of visas and residence permits, labour market access or family reunification.

The two-day meeting was rounded of by a study visit to the Higher School of Economics (HSE). Participants were welcomed by the International Department, which – after a general introduction of the institution – provided with a detailed account of the admission procedures for international students, the manifold services granted to the latter and main challenges encountered in terms of fulfilling the legal requirements for studies in Russia.

Participants had the chance to receive a deeper insight into the general trends and tendencies within the Russian higher education system and some relevant sociological aspects, presented by Ms. Zhanna Zayonchovskaya from the Institute for Economic Forecasting at the Russian Academy of Science. Her intervention was complemented by the presentation of a recent study by the Institute for Demography at the HSE. The meeting was concluded by final statements on behalf of the FMS and the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affair.

Objective 2: Prague Process invites the Republics of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan to host expert missions in August-September 2015

On 11 of March 2015, the High Level Security Dialogue (HLSD) between the European Union and Central Asia took place in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. One of the key outcomes of this important meeting was a joint decision of the representatives of participating states to reinforce their cooperation on migration. Such cooperation, among other, will be achieved via increased participation of the Central Asian states in the Prague Process. To follow up on this decision, the Prague Process Secretariat has been taking active steps with the obejctive to organise expert missions to the Republics of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. The aim of these missions, envisaged in August-September 2015, is to identify concrete areas of cooperation in line with the priorities of each state.

During the missions, a group of representatives of the European Union Member States, accompanied by ICMPD, would visit the state authorities involved in migration management.

Given the important role of the Central Asian states in the Prague Process region, special attention should be paid to the general migration data gathering and analysis thereof, as well as the actual migration management by the responsible state agencies. Thus the purpose of the mission is two-fold: First, it will provide a unique opportunity for the EU experts to collect data pertaining to migration, including data on migration flows and stocks, main destination countries, types of migration, recent developments in migration trends and tendencies in the states, etc. Second, the challenges and opportunities related to migration management in each country and broadly in the region will be discussed. The concrete agenda will be agreed upon prior to the actual mission to accommodate the interests of the responsible state agencies in the hosting states. Towards this goal, the questions of the invited experts will be exchanged in advance.





The information obtained in the course of the missions will be included into the migration profiles of these important states. The first drafts of the migration profiles light for Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have been prepared in the course of years 2014-2015 and presented to the respective state migration authorities for comments and/or endorsement. The migration profile light of Turkmenistan is currently being prepared by the Prague Process team based on the data available in the open sources. The expert missions will allow obtaining data for the migration profiles, which serve as key reference documents for accurate information on the migration situation in the region with the aim of meeting the objectives of the HLSD and reinforcing the cooperation in the region

as well as between the Central Asian states and the EU. In this vein, another important goal of the expert missions would be to strengthen cooperation with the existing regional platform, the Almaty Process.

Migration Profile of Ukraine 2010-2014



The Migration profile of Ukraine for 2010-2014, published in May 2015, presents analytical and statistical information about the current migration situation and trends in Ukraine. The Profile was developed in the framework of implementation of the EU Visa Liberalization Action Plan for Ukraine.

The Migration Profile was updated with the data for 2014 in cooperation with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, State Border Guard Service,

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Social Policy, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Culture, State Statistics Service, State Employment Service, National Bank, Security Service and other authorities, research institutions and public organisations. With the assistance of ICMPD it was translated in English.

The Migration profile is a study on major events in the field of migration and related areas for a certain period of time. Beyond its obvious importance for migration policy development, it can also be used as a tool for policy development in the demographic, social and financial areas, as well as the regulation of the labour or capital market. The document does not only present the current migration processes in the country, but also provides information on the circumstances which affect them. It addresses the socio-economic preconditions of migration in the country, migration policy, migration situation, the impact of migration and resulting challenges.

According to the Profile, Ukraine remains a country of transit for third country nationals on their way to Europe. The main challenges listed in the document feature the insufficient tools on combating irregular migration, inadequate control of migrants within the country, issues related to internally displaced persons, and incompleteness of the existing information on migration processes. Addressing these problems could contribute to optimizing the migration regulation in Ukraine and make the migration processes more transparent and predictable. Further recommendations for specialized central bodies of executive power include: International cooperation, in particular cooperation with the countries of destination regarding the social protection of labour migrants from Ukraine; conclusion of agreements on the implementation of circular migration schemes; joint combating of irregular migration and creation of conditions to facilitate regular migration and mobility.

The profile can be found at <u>http://dmsu.gov.ua/mihratsiinyi-profil</u>

In addition to the Profile, statistical data on migration related issues can be found on the website of the State Migration Service (SMS). The SMS also plans to publish annual newsletters on the activities of the Service.

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