

Director's welcome message



Dear Friends of the Prague Process, dear Readers,

I am privileged to welcome you to the new issue of the Prague Process Quarterly Review in 2017!

I hope the New Year brought new fresh ideas and new opportunities to your life and to the migration sphere we are faithfully serving!

The second half of 2016 was marked by the Prague Process' policy development, firstly preparing the ground for our Heads and Ministers to officially state their positions and ensure commitment at the 3rd Prague Process Ministerial Conference, while secondly opening the floor to discussing the future cooperation and a concrete vision and work plan for the period 2017-2021.

This issue of the Quarterly Review will thus provide an overview of the activities that framed the key event of 2016 - the 3rd Prague Process Ministerial Conference. Another important outcome was the Handbook on Identification of Irregular Migrants produced under Pilot Project 5, a short outline of which is presented in this issue. Finally, reflections from the Expert missions to the Central Asian

Republics of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan and the Closing Workshop of Objective 2 will shed light on the development of the Prague Process Knowledge Base.

For the Prague Process the New Year 2017 started with an important decision on the no-cost extension of the Prague Process Targeted Initiative project for another half a year until the end of June 2017. This important step allows facilitation of two additional expert-level activities, for the first time making an effective use of the already gained knowledge in the form of the produced Handbooks and Guidelines. In the coming month invitations to the upcoming Study visit to Austria and the Training Workshop in Prague will be distributed to our Prague Process partners. Both activities are being designed to address the priority areas of irregular migration and asylum tailored to the needs of the Prague Process region. We are hoping to meet you in Prague and Vienna in the nearest future!

As for now, I wish you an enjoyable reading and welcome your ideas on the next issue and your contributions with articles on the recent migration developments in your countries!

Faithfully yours,

Anna Tulej
PP TI Director

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Prague Process activities in 2017

- **10-12 April**, Study visit to Vienna, Austria
- **24-25 April**, Training workshop on irregular migration issues, Prague, Czech Republic
- **22/23 June** Closing Ceremony of PP TI, Brussels, Belgium

Activities implemented in the period July - December 2016

- **11-15 July**, Knowledge base expert mission to the Republic of Tajikistan
- **18-21 July**, Knowledge base expert mission to the Kyrgyz Republic
- **19 September**, Senior Officials' Meeting, Bratislava, Slovakia
- **20 September**, Prague Process 3rd Ministerial Conference, Bratislava, Slovakia
- **26 October**, Closing Workshop on the Knowledge base, Prague, Czech Republic
- **24-25 November**, Senior Officials' Meeting, Vilnius, Lithuania

POLICY

The Senior Officials' Meeting held in Berlin in October 2014 initiated the evaluation process on the results achieved under the Prague Process and by endorsing the Road Map towards the 3rd Ministerial Conference launched a new stage of joint cooperation. In the course of 2016 the Prague Process Senior Officials had an exceptional meeting schedule with 3 SOMs and the Ministerial Conference.



Senior Officials' Meeting in Bratislava

The final preparatory SOM for the 3rd Prague Process Ministerial Conference took place in Bratislava on 19 September 2016, gathering 79 participants from 38 states, the European Commission (DG Home), the Council of the European Union, European External Action Service (EEAS), Frontex, as well as ICMPD and UNHCR.

The event provided the last opportunity to discuss the content and wording of the Ministerial Declaration, the adoption of which represents both a great opportunity and responsibility in the migration policy field. Against the background of the ongoing 'migration crises' and the need for constant policy adjustments resulting from it, the endorsement of the Joint Declaration is very timely and shall sustain the successful cooperation within the region.

The European Commission reiterated the principles for good migration management, i.e. effective border management, effective use of the 'safe country' principle, resettlement, relocation and effective returns. The European Commission confirmed its political support as well as its readiness to respond adequately to the migration

needs in the regions covered by the Prague Process, and at the same time underlined that the manifold achievements accomplished in the framework of the Prague Process over the past seven years could serve as good examples for various other projects.

Poland, the leading state of the Prague Process, pointed to the aim of the Ministerial Declaration to confirm the joint commitment of states to further enhance their cooperation within

the Prague Process as a truly unique process, while also reminding them of the main challenge that the Prague Process Targeted Initiative project is coming to an end.

After a short introduction into the history and main stages of the document preparation, all participating states were invited to provide with their final comments and suggestions, which were reflected in the text of the Declaration.



Senior Officials Meeting Prague Process
19 September 2016, Bratislava, Slovakia



The 3rd Prague Process Ministerial Conference



On 20 September the 3rd Prague Process Ministerial Conference was held in Bratislava under the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the EU. The attending Ministers, Chairmen of migration services and high level officials reassured their commitment to the Process, addressed the most pressing migration

issues and expressed their views on how tomorrow's migration policies could be shaped in a positive way.

During their interventions they underlined that solutions to the challenges in the various migration related spheres such as border management, asylum,

return, irregular or legal migration should be elaborated collectively, as no single state could solve these issues alone. The positive contribution of the Prague Process to efficient migration management in the region, the success of the initiatives implemented to this day, as well as the expected future migration pressures and manifold challenges resulting from them, provided the reasoning for participating countries to confirm the validity of the Prague Process Action Plan and their commitment to its continued implementation. The Ministerial Conference resulted in the adoption of the Joint Declaration, which extends the mandate of the Process to the years 2017-2021 and ensures the continuation of the joint cooperation during this period.

The Declaration called for the Parties to set "specific development measures for the relevant priorities for the period 2017-2021" still in 2016 and to start preparations for the creation of the future Training and Analytical Centre (TAC), which has been supported by all the participating countries and partners, including the EEAS and EC.



Link to the Declaration: <https://www.pragueprocess.eu/en/documents/category/3-programme-key-documents?download=387:bratislava-ministerial-declaration>

Prague Process Senior Officials' Meeting in Vilnius

The final SOM within the Prague Process Targeted Initiative (PP TI), took place in Vilnius on 24-25 November 2016, gathering 46 participants from 25 states, the European Commission (DG Home), as well as ICMPD and UNHCR. As requested by the Bratislava Ministerial Declaration, this event marked the opening to the future cooperation and aimed at proposing a concrete vision and work plan for the period 2017-2021, while also endorsing all results achieved to date.

The leading states of the various pilot projects presented the concrete results achieved within the PP TI. The Secretariat reiterated on the 150 activities carried out in the 53 months of implementation and the 24 tangible outcomes produced, mainly involving the handbooks developed within the seven pilot projects and migration profiles (light) published in the Knowledge base. Important questions regarding the short- and longer-term future of the Prague Process were raised in a discussion paper, inviting states to consider their active involvement and potentially also financial support. The future cooperation should build upon the good practices and results already

developed, while also striving for further improvement, and focus on the thematic priorities established, including irregular migration, return, readmission and reintegration, as well as asylum and international protection.

The no-cost extension of the present PP TI project envisaged for the first six months of 2017, which was supported by all the states attending, shall make use of the savings available in the project budget and serve the organisation of one study visit to Vienna and one training workshop to be held in Prague. States also agreed that Senior Officials' Meetings and the preparatory Core Group meetings shall be organised on an annual basis.

The submission of the 'PP TI 2' project should take place earliest possible. The proposed Training and Analytical Centre (TAC) constitutes the key innovation for the next project phase. The Czech Republic shortly introduced the TAC concept, referring to the light management structure envisaged, the equal treatment of trainees and trainers of all nationalities, the development of an expert network and online platform for facilitated exchange. Tailor-made

workshops should ensure meeting the actual needs of participating states. The training curricula are to be based on the handbooks and other materials developed so far. Concrete policy recommendations should be generated through expert missions and study visits. Meanwhile, the envisaged Migration Observatory shall provide for reliable, harmonized, up-to-date data and thereby contribute to evidence-based policies in a timely manner.

With the implementation of an eventual PP TI 2 project not expected before 2018, the question was raised how to overcome the transition period when no funding on behalf of the EC will be available. States were invited to express whether and in what form they could support this transition in order not to lose the momentum.

DG Home acknowledged the excellent achievements of the Prague Process and confirmed its position of the past, stating that the EC continues its political support to the Bratislava Ministerial Declaration. The migration challenges faced since 2015 led to changes in the EU's environment and require new solutions for the future, including an improved

cooperation with partner countries. The EC supports a pragmatic approach in order to allow for the best possible use of the resources available.

ICMPD pointed out that the migration situation remains volatile at global level but also across the Prague Process region considering the ongoing demographic, socio-economic, security-related and

environmental developments. The migration flows within the region have become much more fluid and complex, with the military conflicts in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan exerting a huge impact. As the national policies among the Prague Process states continue to diverge significantly and new migration routes may appear, the need for constant exchange remains, also in view

of being prepared for surprises such as the one experienced in 2015. This need was also confirmed by the Ministerial Declaration of 2016. Moreover, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have fully mainstreamed migration into the international development agenda and the important role of migration dialogues in reaching the SDGs has been acknowledged by the EU.

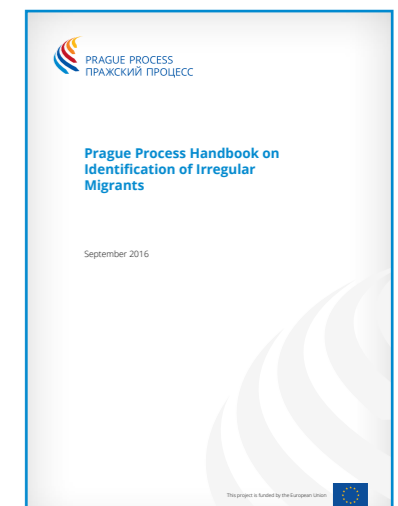


Prague Process Handbook on Identification of Irregular Migrants

The Prague Process Handbook on Identification of Irregular Migrants aims to provide policy-makers and practitioners with an overview of the challenges faced in establishing the identity of migrants, as well as possible ways to tackle them. The document results from the fruitful cooperation among the 21 states¹ that took part in PP5, which was implemented in the framework of the Prague Process Targeted Initiative in 2014-2016. The Handbook combines international practice with the national experience of the participating states, which have been facing different migration challenges. In view of their varying experience with regards to the identification of irregular migrants, the project provided a suitable platform to exchange know-how and discuss the national approaches and current practices in order to strengthen the common understanding.

The Handbook consists of three thematic sections: The first section provides for a short overview on the recent migratory flows (up to 2015) towards the EU, including the respective numbers and routes used, as well as a short reference to the problem of human smuggling. The second then briefly summarises the legal background to identification, paying special attention to the issue of birth certification, followed by a more thorough analysis of the role of readmission agreements. The final chapter is dedicated to some of the manifold operational aspects of identification, ranging from the practices of EU Member States to the methods applied and is thereby of more practical nature. The experience of the participating states is exemplified throughout the entire document. The

publication is complemented by a short bibliography, containing important reference documents for further reading.



¹ Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Kosovo*, Kyrgyzstan, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Turkey and Ukraine.

Expert missions to Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan

The two expert missions to the Central Asian Republics of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan were carried out in July 2016 with the purpose of exchanging expertise and collecting statistical data on migration for the update of the Migration Profile Light. The experts from the Ministries of Interior of Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary, accompanied by the representatives of the Prague Process Secretariat, had a chance to hold meetings with the state authorities responsible for migration management as well as with EU and international actors present in Bishkek and Dushanbe.

The mission to the Republic of Tajikistan started with meeting the international organisations in Dushanbe and confirmed that the situation with regard to the national economy and the labour market majorly affects the migration sphere in Tajikistan by encouraging Tajik citizens to seek employment abroad, thus putting the sphere of labour migration on the priority list of the country. The economic decline in the Russian Federation, being the main destination country for Tajik labour migrants, caused a significant decrease in the remittance

flow, comprising a major share of the Tajik households' income. In such circumstances Tajik labour emigrants are eager to explore alternative employment opportunities (also risky ones, such as subscribing to radical groups fighting in Syria and Iraq) in the neighbouring states. Acknowledging this situation, the government officials of Tajikistan are actively working on finding a suitable solution through negotiations with Russia regarding its stricter enforcement of migration legislation, which prevents many Tajik labour migrants from entering the territory of the RF. Moreover, they seek to further enhance capacity building and information sharing within the established and functioning training centres, increasing the chances for legal and safe employment abroad. Apart from cooperation with the Russian Federation, the government of Tajikistan tries to maintain a balance in its foreign policy through cooperation with various other actors such as the United States, China, Saudi Arabia, Persian Gulf states, and of course the European Union. These efforts mainly relate to the spheres of border security, infrastructure, safe return and reintegration and labour migration.

In the Kyrgyz Republic, where experts travelled to directly from Dushanbe, labour migration also plays a key role. Despite the notable decrease in the scale of labour emigration last year, this sphere remains a priority for Kyrgyz families and the State. In this relation, the issue of protecting migrants' rights in the receiving states becomes increasingly pronounced. As a result, the Resource Centre under the State Migration Service of the Kyrgyz Republic has made attempts to regulate the living conditions and rights of Kyrgyz workers abroad, the majority of whom are employed in Russia, Kazakhstan, Turkey, China and South Korea.

The biggest challenge for the migration management system of Kyrgyzstan consists in the development of the State Migration Policy 2030, the work on which has only been slowly progressing since the establishment of the State Migration Service under the government of the Kyrgyz Republic in November 2015. It is expected that the State Migration Policy 2030 shall foster the sphere of migration and development, and help to reduce the negative migration balance.

Against the background of these realities, the state authorities of both Republics greatly valued their participation in the Prague Process, which has provided important practical examples for policy development in their areas of interest. The expert missions thus helped to gather

the additional information needed for the production and update of the draft Migration Profiles Light and to identify the needs and main points of interest for future cooperation. Moreover, the mission to the Kyrgyz Republic served as a way to re-introduce the Prague

Process to the newly established State Migration Service. The exchange of comments on the draft Migration Profile Light will continue in order to update and supplement the data gathered and publish the final result on the Prague Process website.



Closing Workshop on the Prague Process Knowledge Base

The Closing Workshop of the Prague Process Objective 2 (Knowledge base) took place in Prague, Czech Republic, on 25 October 2016. The one-day workshop gathered representatives of 16 participating states, EUROMED Migration IV, UNHCR and ICMPD in its capacity of Prague Process Secretariat. The meeting was dedicated to the discussion of the current state of the Knowledge base as well as its future format of Training and Analytical Centre (TAC), which shall be composed of a Migration Observatory and a Training Academy.

The extensive experience gathered by the Knowledge base in terms of the collection, processing and dissemination of migration data, shall be further utilised to enhance the mutual understanding of the migration situation in partner states, including information on existing

migratory flows, priorities, problems and interests. The participating states were invited to provide their feedback to the Discussion paper, which raised important questions regarding the future framework of the TAC and its key components.

The morning session was opened by the Czech Republic, Poland and the Slovak EU Presidency. The session proceeded with a presentation of the overall structure of the Knowledge base as well as the database content, namely the EMP, MPL, infographics, and the mini i-Map on migration available on the Prague Process website. Thereafter, individual countries presented their experience in the drafting process of Migration Profiles, namely (in the order of appearance) Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia, Moldova, Kyrgyz Republic and Ukraine. The

afternoon session further elaborated on the experiences of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan in establishing their Migration Profiles within another policy dialog - the Budapest Process. The concept of the proposed Training and Analytical Centre, including the Migration Observatory, was introduced and the results of the Ministerial Conference presented. Finally, the restructuring of the i-Map as an online interactive shared platform hosting the Prague Process, the Budapest Process, the Rabat Process, EUROMED Migration IV and the former Mediterranean Transit Migration was discussed before allowing participants to share their vision on the TAC proposal. All participants confirmed their interest in having access to knowledge about migration in the participating states and regionally. In the framework of the Prague Process, this knowledge has been available

in the form of individual migration profiles. The online Knowledge base and the i-Map as a tool for data sharing and dissemination represent useful platforms for information exchange, intergovernmental dialog and policy decisions. Given the differences between the countries, the data in the Knowledge base is also a source of inspiration for improved migration management. The participants unilaterally supported the idea that the access to up-to-date data on migration is essential for evidence based policy making. Remaining key questions pertained to the next steps in the development of the already existing achievements in the new framework of the TAC.



The State Migration Service actively cooperates and carries out joint projects with international actors such as the International Organisation for Migration, European Union, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Commonwealth of Independent States or the International Centre for Migration Policy Development. The areas covered include legal migration, effective migration management, readmission, voluntary return and social protection of migrants. While expanding bilateral cooperation with different countries, cooperation in the framework of international migration dialogues such as the Prague Process, Budapest Process and Almaty Process is seen as equally important.

In the recent past Azerbaijan did not only host a number of international events in the area of migration but was also represented by the SMS at key events elsewhere. The signature of the "Cooperation Agreement between the State Migration Service of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the International Organisation for Migration on implementation of a Pilot Project on Assisted Voluntary Return of Migrants from Azerbaijan" has been recognised as a good example of joint action and mutual trust.

Over the past ten years the SMS has gained considerable trust among foreigners and stateless persons, as well as international organisations

whose representatives had a chance to get acquainted with the work of the Service. The latter stakeholders support the country's migration policy and highly value the experience of Azerbaijan in the migration sphere.

The Prague Process Secretariat at ICMPD congratulates the State Migration Service of the Republic of Azerbaijan on its 10th anniversary and wishes much success in addressing migration issues in the future! The Secretariat appreciates the long-lasting fruitful cooperation with the Service and looks forward to its continuation!

The State Migration Service of the Republic of Azerbaijan 10 year anniversary

Until 2007, different state bodies were responsible for overseeing migration processes in the Republic of Azerbaijan. In view of the growing importance of the migration management sphere, this model was no longer considered optimal. In order to raise its efficiency, on 19 March 2007 the State Migration Service of the Republic of Azerbaijan was established by Presidential Decree.

Being the main implementing body of the state migration policy, following a "one-stop-shop" approach, the State Migration Service (SMS) was equipped with the status of law-enforcement authority and entitled to register foreigners and stateless persons at the place of their stay and residence, extends the period of temporary stay, issue temporary and permanent residence and work permits, determine refugee status, address issues of citizenship and fight illegal migration.

Besides its Headquarter, the structure of the SMS features eight regional offices, several detention centres for illegal migrants, units at the international airports and other border crossing points, a training centre and medical institute.

Celebrating the 10th anniversary since its establishment, the SMS over this short period managed to strengthen state control over migration, improve the respective legal framework, broaden international cooperation and enhance capacity building. Upon its initiative, the main regulatory document – the national Migration Code – came into force on 1 August 2013.

Nowadays the SMS renders eleven different e-services to foreigners and stateless persons arriving to the country. A number of additional services are available at the "ASAN Service

centres", which ensures their efficiency, convenience and transparency. By means of the Unified Migration Information System (UMIS) the SMS keeps record of foreigners and stateless persons residing or temporarily staying in Azerbaijan. UMIS provides an excellent overview of migration dynamics in the country and thereby ensures implementation of all necessary measures in countering illegal migration and providing security.

In the period 2008-2016, 1.871 persons were admitted to and 58 persons restored the citizenship of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The verification of citizenship of over 100.000 persons resulted in 70.994 persons being recognised as citizens and receiving identity documents. Over the same period the stay of 19.725 persons was legalised, and 125.359 persons were assisted to voluntarily return to their countries of origin.



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