EDITORIAL

We celebrated! On June 10th, the Prague Process celebrated its 10th Anniversary by gathering upon the invitation of the Romanian Presidency at the Council of the EU in the impressive parliamentary building in Bucharest. The first decade of cooperation on migration in the Prague Process region has been overly fruitful. Various developments in and around the region brought migration to the top of the political agenda, highlighting the need for continuous cooperation and stronger partnerships among the participating states. Their particular needs are being identified on a regular basis and addressed within the dialogue platform, as well as through the various outputs and activities of the Migration Observatory and Training Academy. Both platforms strive to produce easily digestible information and to promote innovation in terms of policy-making and operational capacities.

This issue of the Quarterly review presents the key reflections from the 10th Anniversary Senior Officials’ meeting, the Study visit to the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees in Nuremberg, as well as from the recent EMN Conference on Cooperation with Third Countries in the Fight against Smuggling and Trafficking in Human Beings. It also looks at the results of the EU-China Summit and the so-called EU-China Mobility and Migration Dialogue. The article on the recently released EU Central Asia Strategy summarises the main priority areas and overall vision of the EU concerning its cooperation with the Central Asian Republics. Our regular ‘facts and figures’ section addresses the policy area of labour migration, identifying some persisting challenges that hamper labour mobility across the Prague Process region. Finally, this issue also introduces the newest publications released by the Migration Observatory.

Have a good read and joyful summer!

Looking ahead:
upcoming Prague Process activities
2019

24-26 September  TA Training Workshop on Legal and Labour Migration, Budva, Montenegro
23-24 October   D International Conference on Border Management, Yerevan, Armenia
15 November     D Lunch-time Lecture ‘Legal Mobility in the Prague Process region’, Brussels
October/November TA & MO Training Workshop on Data Gathering and Exchange, Vilnius, Lithuania
November/December TA Training Workshop on Strengthening the Protection of Nationals Abroad in Countries affected by Crises, location tbc

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The Prague Process turned 10!

On June 10th, the Prague Process celebrated its 10th Anniversary! Hosted by the Romanian Presidency of the Council of the EU, the Anniversary event gathered over 80 senior-level officials from 34 countries, the European Commission, Council of the EU and its current Presidency, EASO, Frontex, ICMPD and IOM at the impressive Parliament building in Bucharest. The event served to take stock of the past decade of cooperation and look into the future.

In their welcome notes, Mr. Cătălin Necula, State Secretary of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Romania, and Mr. Darius Urbonas, Vice Minister of Interior of Lithuania, reminded of the excellent work of the Prague Process and the manifold benefits it provides to the participating states. Ms. Riitta Koponen, representing the Ministry of Interior of Finland, introduced the priorities of the upcoming Finnish EU Presidency and encouraged to continue the cooperation within the Prague Process over the next decade.

In her Keynote speech, Professor Anna Krasteva reflected upon the key migration-related developments observed over the past decade, highlighting the most important megatrends and paradigms.

The three states that have been leading the Prague Process to date – the Czech Republic, Poland and Lithuania – reiterated on the initial idea to launch the Process, its implementation over the past ten years and vision for its further development. The main motivation to initiate the Process in 2009 was to close the gap between EU Member States and partner countries and establish a joint understanding and minimal standards in migration management at the regional level.

The European Commission underlined the importance of the professional links established as well as the need to preserve the cooperation regardless of whether there is an acute crisis. The main benefit of the Process is in the continuous cooperation and its dynamism. All sides appreciated the substantial results achieved by the Prague Process with its relatively small budget.

On June 11th, the annual Senior Officials’ Meeting allowed all states to express their views on the past decade and their future expectations from the Prague Process, as well as to discuss concrete initiatives aiming at possible synergies and operational cooperation in the various fields of migration.

The policy brief prepared at the occasion of the 10th Anniversary is available in English and Russian.
Study visit to the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees in Nuremberg

Since the very establishment of the Prague Process in 2009, Germany has been an active member to it. In the period 2012-2016, the country also led (together with Sweden) the two Pilot Projects on Asylum and International Protection. Due to the exceptional numbers of migrants and asylum seekers arriving to Germany in 2015-2016, the competent migration authorities had to limit their international cooperation and address the challenges faced within the country. Their efforts resulted in an overhaul of the strained asylum system and substantial investments in it. In order to learn more about the current state of play in the migration and asylum sphere and the lessons drawn from the recent crisis, a study visit to the Federal Officer for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) of Germany was organised on 9-11 April 2019.

Vice-President Andrea Schumacher welcomed the delegates of the 20 states attending the visit at the BAMF Headquarters. The dramatic increase in the number of asylum applications throughout 2015-2016 resulted in a substantial shortage of personnel and exposed the weaknesses within the existing asylum procedures. This led to the introduction of a set of standardised processes and IT applications, the opening of new branch offices and recruitment of new personnel. Following the public criticism of the BAMF handling of the crisis, the training of staff was strengthened through the opening of a training centre. As Ms Schumacher underlined, in spite of the challenges that the crisis brought, this increase in the human and financial resources eventually made the BAMF a stronger institution.

After the general overview of the BAMF tasks and competencies, as well as the recent reforms introduced, participants had a chance to visit the IT Lab and be acquainted with the new IT solutions enhancing the identification of asylum seekers. A comprehensive presentation on the various integration measures implemented by the BAMF completed the first day.

The second day touched upon the main migration policy areas: asylum, legal and irregular migration, resettlement and return. Participants made good use of the opportunity to ask additional questions on complex issues such as the appeal process within the asylum procedure, the role of consulates in the return process, or the modalities for recognition of foreign diploma and certificates.

The final day brought the group to the BAMF branch office in Zirndorf - the first reception centre and oldest BAMF office in the entire country. Some 70 employees perform the work with asylum applicants, carrying out the interviews and deciding on their status. The legal unit also represents the BAMF at court in case of appeals. The integration department supports the asylum seekers with their integration courses and in close cooperation with municipalities. Appropriate counselling is provided from the very beginning of the asylum process, which should not only equip the applicants with a better understanding of the procedure and the applicable legal provisions but also lead to an early identification of vulnerable persons and pre-assigning to the correct caseworkers responsible for decision-making. On top of the ongoing asylum applications, the BAMF also continues to review the remaining cases of the 850,000 applications filed between 2015 and 2017. The Study visit finished with a guided tour through the reception centre in Zirndorf.
EMN Conference on Cooperation with Third Countries in the Fight against Smuggling and Trafficking in Human Beings took place in Warsaw

The Prague Process Secretariat was invited to this event in order to present its actions, achievements and future plans in the area of anti-trafficking and smuggling.

Ms. Renata Szczęch, Deputy Minister, Ministry of the Interior and Administration of Poland, opened the conference by introducing the forthcoming updates of the Polish migration policy, which became necessary due to changes in the migration situation. These were mainly linked to the conflict in Ukraine, the labour shortages experienced by Poland and the overall aging of the Polish population. Other priority issues include visa policy, international protection, repatriation, citizenship, return and readmission.

Dr. Raphael Bossong from the German Institute for International and Security Affairs then assessed the external dimension of the EU migration policy, underlining that international cooperation may not be as sustainable as claimed at times. He called for the EU to overcome its internal migration policy discrepancies in order to remain credible and to seek new approaches in its external cooperation while also maintaining the ongoing initiatives, which have proven very beneficial at times. Finally, he also underlined the importance of establishing legal migration pathways in order to move forward.

The representative of the European Commission clarified that migration management rather than migration itself constitutes the main challenge, representing a complex policy mix. Conflicts, climate change and economic challenges are here to stay, as is migration. Therefore, we need to address the future challenges already now. He also emphasised that most migrants entering the EU do not come from the immediate EU neighbourhood, which rather represents a region of destination and the EU’s most important partner.

IOM Poland named climate change and demography as the two main drivers of migration. If managed well, migration can contribute to development. The Polish Ministry of Interior underlined that migration to the EU has been on the rise recently and that most countries of origin continue experiencing significant instability. Human smuggling has become the most profitable criminal business. Therefore, more measures are needed in cooperation with the EU neighbours, which has also proven the most effective approach of the past. The EU has developed various instruments to engage with partner countries bilaterally or within dialogues, which represent another success story. The important role of the Prague Process was highlighted in this respect. Poland remains very interested in the Eastern dimension.

The European Migration Network (EMN) aims to actively contribute to the fight against human trafficking. In this respect, there is a need to balance border management provisions with the applicable fundamental rights of migrants and asylum seekers. It highlighted that a lot is already being done in cooperation with partner countries, including the joint policing or joint return operations. Moreover, the readmission agreements, Mobility Partnerships and Association Agreements have also touched upon this particular challenge. The EMN underlined that Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine represent priority countries to further cooperate with.

A member of the Polish Border Guard reminded participants that human trafficking has been an issue since the 1990’s. Poland itself represents a country of origin, transit and destination of trafficking victims. At present, less than a hundred victims are identified per year. As trafficking mostly affects Ukrainian citizens, Poland is actively working with the Ukrainian consulates on these issues. As trafficking victims can receive a residence status in Poland, thousands of Ukrainian nationals have claimed that they are exploited.

A representative of the Hungarian Border Guards then summarised the national situation concerning human trafficking in Hungary. Because of the 2015 ‘migration crises’, the national policy changed in a way resulting in improved effectiveness and very little irregular migration. In 2017, 275 trafficking cases were detected in Hungary, which considers itself primarily a transit country but also a destination country for trafficking victims coming from...
Asia. Meanwhile, the cooperation with the destination countries of victims of Hungarian origin has been very good. As the actual perpetrators do not always attend the migrant smuggling, they are difficult to prosecute, whereas the smuggled migrants often become trafficking victims. Hungary is receiving short-term workers from Ukraine and Serbia mostly. Labour inspectors of the Ministry of Finance regularly investigate their labour conditions. A new strategy on THB issues will be issued in the near future. In terms of international cooperation, the agreement signed between Hungary and North Macedonia was highlighted as was the usefulness of the Liaison officers deployed abroad. Hungary expects the migration crises to continue and therefore recommends a strengthening of Europol as well as the establishing of legal migration channels.

A Georgian representative then presented the progress made in fighting human trafficking in Georgia. The country has fulfilled all its respective commitments as confirmed by the EU Progress Report on this issue. Recently, Georgia also signed cooperation agreements with Europol and Eurojust. The country would like to also deepen its cooperation with the EMN, especially when it comes to the most pressing challenges. It would like actively contribute to the network and not just benefit from it. As the country is doing excellent in international rankings concerning anti-trafficking, it is ready to share its respective expertise.

Frontex then introduced its international cooperation strategy, which aims to be coherent, of mutual interest, risk analyses driven, and sustainable. The new Frontex Regulation allows for broader engagement with third countries, even beyond the immediate neighbourhood. The Agency has concluded 18 working arrangements globally, including in the Prague Process region. It has also deployed Liaison officers to priority regions and partner countries. Various manuals on THB issues have been published, addressing elements such as risk profiles, training and various indicators. Other important areas of work include the risk analyses networks or awareness raising campaigns.

The secretariats of the Prague Process and the Budapest Process both introduced their work, highlighting the activities and outputs concerning trafficking issues. Further synergies between the Prague Process and the EMN shall be sought in the near future.

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**Labour mobility in the Prague Process region**

Today out of almost 260 million world international migrants, nearly 90 million originate from the Prague Process region. Most of the region’s migrants also stem from within the region, thus making the *intra-regional mobility the predominant form of migration in the region*. Opposite to the global trend, the face of international migration in the Prague Process is primarily female with the share of female migrants reaching over 52%.

Germany, Russia, France, Italy, Spain, Ukraine, Turkey and Kazakhstan host the lion’s share of all international migrants in the region. Meanwhile, Russia, Ukraine, the UK, Poland, Germany, Kazakhstan, Romania, Turkey, Italy are the top sending countries. Within the EU, there are 17 million movers, amongst whom 12.4 million are of working age and 1.4 million workers commuting across borders on a daily basis. Within the Eurasian Economic Union featuring a total population of 183 million people, Russia is by far the largest destination country for migrant workers, hosting between four and five million migrant workers. The greater part of Central Asian migrant workers go to Russia and - albeit to a much lesser part - to Kazakhstan. Meanwhile, migrant workers from Turkey and the Western Balkan states mostly opt for Germany, Austria, France and the UK. Since Poland simplified the access to its labour market for EaP nationals considerably, they increasingly move there. The growing role of China as a supplier of highly skilled labour force to the Central Asian Republics should also be noted. In fact, all five Central Asian Republics allocate a share of their labour quota and work permits to Chinese migrant workers who mostly work in the joint Chinese-CA ventures.

The main driver of migration in the region is *economic*. People are migrating in search of jobs, better economic opportunities and prospects, and particularly due to the inability to apply their skills in their home countries. In the Prague Process region, migrants are more likely to find employment than those persons remaining at home. However, only a small share of these migrants succeed in finding jobs in line with their qualifications, instead often ending up in *basic occupations*. This trend also applies to migrants from both the non-EU and EU countries, and in particular to migrants returning to the Western Balkans. For intra-EU movers manufacturing, wholesale, and retail
trade are the most important sectors of economic activity. Services, healthcare, construction and transport sectors are most popular among migrants from non-EU countries. At the same time, there are numerous high- and medium-skilled shortage occupations in the EU and Russia (mainly ICT and manufacturing).

The mismatch between the qualifications and occupations frequently results from discrepancies in education when the migrants simply do not possess degrees in the knowledge-intense fields with most acute labour shortages. In other cases, awarded degrees require proper certification in the countries of destination, which can be cumbersome and costly. That is why many migrant workers rather find employment through the social networks of their fellow compatriots in the destination countries instead of making use of their actual skills and education. Under such circumstances, the role of pre-departure courses, student mobility and educational migration becomes ever more important. Moreover, origin countries whose nationals opt for short-term (circular) migration require additional re-integration mechanisms, including on harmonisation and recognition of qualifications acquired abroad.

The so-called black lists issued by Russia represent another specific challenge to labour mobility in the region. Despite the amnesty issued for the most previously blacklisted EAEU nationals, many of them remain in the lists and cannot enter Russia. Other important challenges include the persisting administrative barriers, the inaccessibility of certain social benefits and their portability, the lacking trust in government institutions, xenophobia and migrant-phobia, the abuse of the migration system, violation of migrant rights and the lack of information and monitoring mechanisms.

The 21st EU-China Summit, held on 9 April in Brussels, brought together the Chinese Premier Li Keqiang and the leaders of the EU, represented by the European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker and the European Council President Donald Tusk. The Summit was devoted to the bilateral relations of the EU and China as well as to global economic governance. During the Summit, both sides committed to deepen the EU-China Strategic Partnership and were willing to adopt a new cooperation agenda beyond 2020 by the next Summit. Despite difficult negotiations, both parties agreed on a joint statement that sets out the direction for EU-China relations for the coming years.

The Statement covers cooperation in the areas of trade, technology and international relations. The EU and China expressed their joint support for multilateralism, respect for international law and a rules-based trading system. They recognised the responsibility to pursue policies that support an open, balanced and inclusive global economy, which benefits various actors, and encourage trade and investment. Both parties reaffirmed their engagement to reform the World Trade Organisation and intensify the discussions to strengthen international rules on industrial subsidies.

The complete statement can be found here:
https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/china_en/60836/joint%20statement%20of%20the%2021st%20EU-China%20summit
On 17 June, the European Council approved the new strategy “The EU and Central Asia: New Opportunities for a Stronger Partnership” whereby the EU is redefining its policies towards the Central Asian region after more than one decade, taking into account recent developments and new opportunities. Through its Belt and Road Initiative, China has become a major player in the region. The regional tensions have eased under the new president of Uzbekistan and his foreign policy. At the same time, the Central Asian Republics have become more interested in engaging with Afghanistan. Importantly, the EU has successfully concluded the Enhanced Partnership Cooperation Agreement with Kazakhstan, while continuing the respective negotiations with Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. Nevertheless, the key issues identified in the first EU-Central Asia Strategy of 2007 remain highly relevant.

The EU adopted the first strategy for the five Central Asian countries in 2007. The strategy defined priorities for the diplomatic activity and development aid. The main aim was to achieve peace, democracy and prosperity in the region. This included responding to security threats, human rights protection, promoting economic development, developing transport and energy links as well as ensuring environmental protection. However, the progress has been uneven among the Central Asian Republics.

The new Strategy focuses on three interconnected and mutually reinforcing priorities: Partnering for Resilience, Partnering for Prosperity and Working Better Together. The EU recognises the need for a tailor-made approach in engaging with the Central Asian countries. The key priorities include support to economic modernisation, including actions on strengthening capacities to overcome internal and external shocks, promotion of sustainable connectivity and investment in youth, while also promoting democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

The document also addresses cooperation on Border Management, Migration and Mobility as well as an extension of the regional cooperation efforts to Afghanistan. Furthermore, cooperation in the areas of fight against organised crime, migrant smuggling, trafficking in human beings and trafficking in illicit drugs should be strengthened. The ultimate goal is to improve the migration and mobility management in Central Asia with the focus on irregular migration. This shall be achieved by addressing the root causes of irregular migration through promoting vocational training, better working conditions at home, supporting legal channels for migration and establishing assistance systems for victims of trafficking in human beings and persons in need of international protection. The EU encourages Central Asian states to develop own national migration policies, and to cooperate in the relevant regional and multilateral fora.

The EU’s High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Federica Mogherini and the Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development Neven Mimica formally presented the EU-Central Asia Strategy at the 15th EU-Central Asia Ministerial meeting on July 7th in Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic.

The full Strategy is available here:

[eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/joint_communication_-_the_eu_and_central_asia_-_new_opportunities_for_a_stronger_partnership.pdf]
Analytical report by Dmitry Poletaev

“Addressing the Challenges of Labour Migration within the EAEU”

The Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) is based on the Treaty signed by the leaders of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia on 29 May 2014, which came into force on 1 January 2015. Armenia and Kyrgyzstan joined the EAEU in 2015. The EAEU represents an integrated single market of 183 million people characterized by the free movement of goods, capital, services and people as well as common policies in various spheres. Nevertheless, the labour market integration among the five Member States is far from complete and the significant labour migration amongst them remains hampered by various factors analysed in this report. The main aim of the report is to assess the efficiency of labour migration and its management within the EAEU and to identify the respective opportunities, risks and challenges for migrant workers.

The resulting policy recommendations propose a simplification of the administrative procedures for migrant workers, the introduction of a monitoring system, the harmonization of the national pension systems as well as an improved access to medical services for migrant workers and their families whose fundamental rights need to be properly protected. The establishing of a dedicated financial instrument and a vocational training program would represent further important steps. In the long term, the establishment of concrete strategic objectives of EAEU integration would be paramount.


Policy Brief by Nermin Oruc and Danica Santic

“Highly-skilled Return Migrants to the Western Balkans: should we count (on) them?”

The diaspora sends a considerable amount of remittances to the Western Balkan (WB) countries. The total figure of approximately seven billion EUR a year (Petreski et al, 2017) over the past 15 years has had a largely positive effect on development in the countries of origin. However, the importance of remittance transfers is widely recognised, the development potential of the diaspora in terms of investments, transfer of knowledge, tourism and other potential benefits has been largely ignored. In particular, there is a need to better assess the potential of return migration, including the specific skills brought back and repatriated savings, often used to start a new business upon return. A first step towards designing appropriate policies to attract highly-skilled emigrants to return would be the collection of data about their potential and the obstacles they face.

This Policy Brief examines the return migration of highly skilled people, as well as the inadequacy of policies for mobilisation of their potential for development of their countries of origin. The gaps in institutional support to this group and administrative obstacles are discussed, as well as the important issue of data availability.

Analytical report by Zoran Drangovski

“Lessons learned from the 2015-2016 migration situation in the Western Balkan region”

The Balkan migration route was one of the main routes for irregular entry into Europe during the unprecedented inflow of refugees and migrants between May 2015 and March 2016. The media called it “the biggest movement of refugees and migrants in the region since the aftermath of World War II”.

In spite of the EU-Turkey Statement of March 2016 and the subsequent closure of the “humanitarian corridor” through the Balkans, leading to reduced numbers of people on the move, the key importance of this route and the pressing need to improve migration policies in the Balkan region persists. Even more so, the continuous illegal pushbacks of people who entered irregularly and restrictions on access to asylum procedures remain common throughout the region.

This report analyses the responses of three countries along the Balkan route (North Macedonia, Serbia and Croatia), as well as the lessons learned in the areas of entry and registration of new arrivals, migration management and transit of people on the move.


Policy brief by Radim Zak, Alexander Maleev and Irina Lysak

“The 10th Anniversary of the Prague Process”

The Prague Process is a mature state-led inter-governmental dialogue on migration. It gathers state authorities dealing with migration in a divergent Eurasian continent covering all European Union Member States, the Schengen Area states, Western Balkan countries, Eastern Partnership states, Central Asian republics, Russia and Turkey. This is an area stretching from Lisbon in the West to Vladivostok in the East and from Murmansk in the North to Valetta in the South. The 50 participating states of the Prague Process, with an overall population of almost one billion people, are overly diverse in terms of their size, geography, history, economy, exposure to migration and resulting policies. In 2009, they nevertheless agreed on establishing a joint migration policy dialogue based on its voluntary, informal and non-binding character, equal footing, mutual trust and genuine partnerships.

This brief analyses the last decade’s achievements and developments in the Prague Process region and looks into the future priorities of this regional migration governance platform.

Interesting reads

Demographic Scenarios for the EU

After several decades of population growth, the EU’s population is currently ageing. Similar to North America and East Asia, the EU is becoming a longer-living, lower-fertility, and higher-educated society. Facing this new demographic frontier naturally prompts the questions: Who will live and work in Europe in the future? How many and with what skills? This report examines the key factors that will shape European demographics over the coming decades. By examining not only the role of migration, fertility and mortality, but also education levels and labour force participation rates, a more comprehensive view of the future can be outlined than conventional demographic projections would allow for. The first sections of this report focus on the demographic challenges inside the EU, such as population ageing, a shrinking labour force, more non-working people being dependent on working people, and showing the impact of high levels of emigration in some EU Member States. With these challenges in mind and with a view towards 2060, the report builds scenarios to understand the long-term effects of changes in key trends and assesses whether undesirable consequences can be limited or counteracted. As the EU and its demographics do not exist in isolation, the following sections explore the relevant trends for world demographics and for migration flows.


The Dynamics of Regional Migration Governance

This book analyses the dynamics of regional migration governance and accounts for why, how and with what effects states cooperate with each other in diverse forms of regional grouping on aspects of international migration, displacement and mobility. The book develops a framework for analysis of comparative regional migration governance to support a distinct and truly global approach accounting for developments in Africa, Asia-Pacific, Central Asia, Europe, the Middle East, North America and South America and the many and varying forms that regional arrangements can take in these regions.

Read the first chapter here: http://migrationpolicycentre.eu/docs/Geddes_Chapter_1.pdf?utm_source=MPC+Newsletter&utm_campaign=8ce44de450-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_07_05_12_21&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_5739ea1f8b-8ce44de450-40560425