

Prague Process Targeted Initiative: thematic areas

Information paper 2013

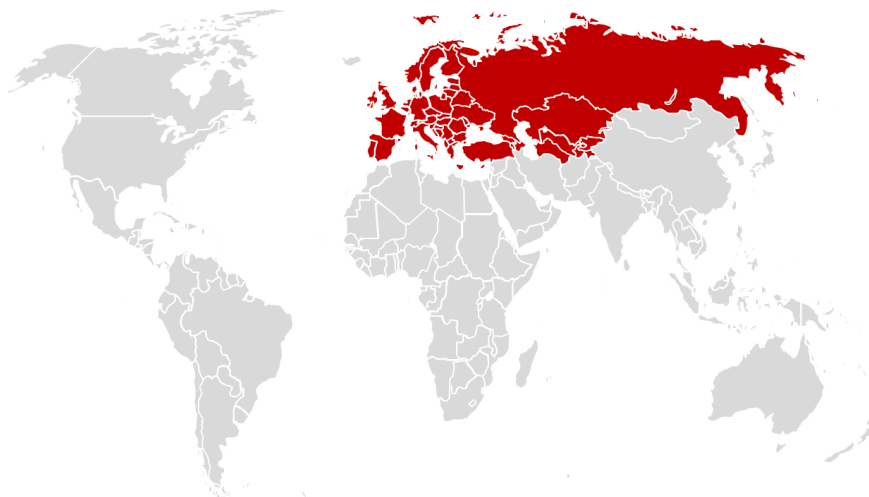
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Introduction

Prague Process

The Prague Process is a political initiative that emerged out of the “Building Migration Partnerships” (BMP) Ministerial Conference, which took place in Prague on 28 April 2009. At this conference, the participating states¹ adopted the Joint Declaration on principles and initiatives for promoting close migration partnerships. Moreover, the participating states agreed to do so through a comprehensive, balanced and pragmatic approach that respects the human rights of



migrants and their family members, as well as of refugees. The text of the BMP Joint Declaration was prepared by participating states with the active participation of several EU bodies and international organisations. Specifically, the Joint Declaration established the following five areas as a basis for cooperation and the last, sixth area was added after the endorsement of the Prague Process Action Plan 2012–2016 in Poznan in November 2011:

- ❖ preventing and fighting illegal migration;
- ❖ integration of legally residing migrants;
- ❖ readmission, voluntary return and sustainable reintegration;
- ❖ migration, mobility and development;
- ❖ legal migration with a special emphasis on labour migration;
- ❖ asylum and international protection.

The main aim of the Prague Process has been to promote migration partnerships between states of the European Union/Schengen area, Western Balkans, Eastern Partnership, Central Asia, Russia and Turkey, in line with the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (GAMM), which constitutes the overarching framework for the external dimension of EU migration policy. The Process is led by Poland, while the Core Group, comprised of 19 states², the European

¹ Participating states (50 in total): Albania, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kosovo (UNSCR 1244/1999), Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Malta, Moldova, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Uzbekistan + the EC. Leading state: Poland. Secretariat: ICMPD. The map has an indicative nature.

² State as of November 2012

Commission and ICMPD, supports the Senior Officials' Meetings. The Senior Officials' Meeting constitutes the decision making body of the Prague Process.

The Prague Process methodology is based on two pillars. It combines policy dialogue at ministerial level with concrete policy development at expert level and the implementation of concrete initiatives in the framework of its Declaration and Action Plan. This approach ensures that the political dialogue does not decouple from the practical experience made when "working on the ground". It also guarantees that the findings of concrete projects are relevant to a larger group of states than merely the project partners as they are translated in general guidelines and concepts that are available for all Prague Process Participating States.

The Prague Process is – with the exception of the important role of the European Union – state-driven. It is steered by ministries responsible for migration. Its declared intention is to keep the dialogue open for cooperation on the six above-listed topics among responsible state agencies. Since the dialogue emphasizes an operational approach, practical know-how and joint standards' development are of special relevance in this respect.

Prague Process Targeted Initiative

The Prague Process Action Plan 2012–2016 adopted during the "Building Migration Partnerships in Action" Ministerial Conference in Poznan on 4 November 2011 outlines 22 concrete activities in 6 thematic areas to be implemented during that period. The preparatory meetings for the Action Plan resulted in extending the thematic scope of the Process's agenda to the area of asylum and international protection, which evolved into an independent area of further cooperation. From August 2012 to January 2016, Poland and six other leading states are implementing the EU-funded initiative "Support for the Implementation of the Prague Process and its Action Plan", also known as the "Prague Process Targeted Initiative" (PP TI). This initiative is led by Poland together with the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and Sweden, who also take the lead in the pilot projects of PP TI. In addition to the PP TI project, Poland also supports the Prague Process financially on an ad-hoc basis and organises/hosts Core Group meetings. ICMPD serves as the Prague Process Secretariat and the Support Team of the Prague Process Targeted Initiative.

The "Prague Process Targeted Initiative" aims to enhance cooperation in the area of migration and asylum between the participating states through the implementation of the Process and its Action Plan. The website www.pragueprocess.eu serves as the main source of information on the Prague Process and its Targeted Initiative.

In addition to the PP TI, there are several other projects, such as ERIS ("European–Russian Integration Standards" led by the Czech Republic) and EaP SIPPAP ("Eastern Partnership Support to the Implementation of the Prague Process Action Plan" led by Hungary), implemented under the umbrella of the Prague Process. These projects are based on the Action Plan but implemented outside of the PP TI. They follow the Prague Process's principles of equality and mutual interests, as well as its voluntary nature. It is foreseen that the findings, results and lessons learned of these and other related projects will feed into the Prague Process knowledge base, among other via presentations during relevant PP meetings.

Thematic areas of PP TI

Prague Process Knowledge Base and i-Map

The gathering, analysis and provision of migration related information was considered a main task of the Prague Process already in its development phase. Based on the conviction that sound decision making requires a sound knowledge base, the Prague Declaration defined the elaboration of migration profiles and the development of an IT-based information exchange tool as two objectives of the first phase of the dialogue (2009–2012). Today, the Knowledge Base of the Prague Process contains a total of 16 migration profiles and visualisations of other relevant information, available on the Prague Process website (www.pragueprocess.eu) and the Prague Process section of the i-Map (<https://www.imap-migration.org>).



The Extended Migration Profiles³ elaborated in the framework of the Building Migration Partnerships Initiative went beyond a narrow analysis of migration realities and addressed a number of development related aspects as well, such as the “socio-economic context of migration”, “diasporas”, “remittances”, “economy/economic climate”, “labour market analysis”, or “human capital”. Notably, the

results of the profiles directly found their way in the further programming of the dialogue. The Prague Process Action Plan is almost exclusively based on priorities formulated by States in their respective migration profiles.

While continuous attention to updating and developing Extended Migration Profiles remains, the PP TI has taken into account the feedback received from the Prague Process participating states and has proposed a concept of the Migration Profile Light (MPL). In comparison to the Extended Migration Profile, which from its name indicates that the information goes beyond pure migration related information, the Migration Profile Light should be a handy tool with a limited number of pages clearly indicating the areas of interest. The Migration Profile Light should aim at gathering key facts, figures, priorities and challenges. This should allow for easy annual updatability and a standardised data for all countries involved.

In January 2013, the partner countries present in Florence at the Expert Workshop on Migration Profiles agreed to continue working on their respective Migration Profiles by using the proposed concept of Migration Profile Light. The participating beneficiary countries agreed to work with the Migration Profile Light concept in addition to the Migration Profile concept applied during the Building Migration Partnerships initiative and the one developed within a EU-funded project in Moldova. Germany volunteered to develop the pilot Migration Profile Light and shared its experience with the preparation of the document. The PP TI team was tasked to prepare the final version of the German profile in English

³Albania (endorsed 2010), Armenia (2011), Azerbaijan (2010), Bosnia and Herzegovina (2010), Czech Republic (2010), Georgia (2011), Hungary (2011), Kazakhstan (2010), Kyrgyzstan (2011), Poland (2010), Romania (2010), Slovakia (2010), Tajikistan (2010), Ukraine (2011). Belarus, Russia, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan worked on their Extended Migration Profiles but the final documents have not been shared with other Prague Process participating states.

and Russian and distribute it together with guidelines on how to develop such document during the first half of 2013. The work on the Migration Profile Light is seen as complementary to the existing methodology and the result of its introduction will be assessable in 2014. The joint event organised by the Prague Process together with the European University Institute in Florence (EUI/CARIM East) has shown no overlap in the work and methods of work.

One of the PP TI goals is to establish the Knowledge Base as a useful tool consisting of state-owned migration profiles with standard and comparable data categories. While primarily aiming at the seven leading states of PP TI and the PP TI non-EU participating states⁴, the interest of the Prague Process is to collect national MPs for all 50 Prague Process participating states, believing that this will lead to mutual understanding of the migration situation in partner states, existing migratory flows, priorities, problems and interests. The MPL should serve as an informative but also policy making tool. In case of need, methodological and expert support is planned to contribute to the development of MPL in states with limited experience with such exercise. However, ownership and responsibility of the content in terms of data provided in this Migration Profile resides solely with the country elaborating the report.

A study visit in the framework of PP TI related to data gathering and analysis for the purpose of the Knowledge Base was organised in Vienna in September 2013. During this visit representatives of the CIS countries got acquainted with the work of analytical units of Prague Process partner states such as the Austrian Central Service for Combating Human Smuggling and Trafficking, the Analytical Centre for Border Protection and Migration from Czech Republic and the Joint Centre for Illegal Migration Analysis and Policy from Germany. The main topic of the study visit was the elaboration of Migration Profiles of Prague Process participating states. The meetings took place at the Federal Ministry of Interior of Austria (BM.I), ICMPD and at the United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC). One of the main results of the study visit was the agreement reached among the CIS participating countries on the updated work plan for developing Migration Profiles Light.

An expert mission of the Specific Objective 2 was organised in October 2013 to Belarus. It was conducted by experts from Finland, Hungary and Romania assisted by ICMPD. The experts shared their experience and gained insightful information on the Belarusian migration management system. The first part of the expert mission was hosted by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. During the second half the experts met a number of international and non-governmental organisations working in Belarus.

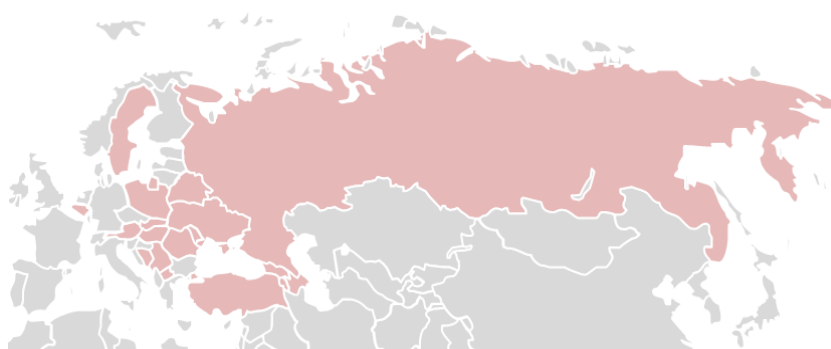
In addition to these meetings, a data analysis providing for an overview of migration flows from Eastern Partnership countries, Central Asia and Russia to the EU and EFTA in a form of a poster was developed during 2013. The poster in English and Russian is available on the Prague Process website and was distributed to all PP states.

The Prague Process has the mandate from both the EC and the participating states to continue working on the development of Migration Profiles. As agreed with other EU-funded projects (such as the CARIM East), the information is to be shared in order to avoid possible double work as well as to not overburden the state authorities with similar requests from different projects.

⁴ Participating states of the Objective 2 – Knowledge base. The map above has an indicative nature.

Illegal migration

The main objective of the Pilot Project on Illegal Migration (PP1) implemented within the framework of the Prague Process Targeted Initiative is to strengthen capacities of countries participating in the Prague Process in the field of combating illegal immigration through the transfer of knowledge on the process of concluding readmission agreements, as well as through sharing of experience in organising returns of migrants. The Project offers unique opportunity to the participating countries to exchange information and share experience in the framework of a series of workshops and a study visit to a EU country.



The implementation of the Project has been enabling participants to gather sufficient knowledge to prepare a handbook on best practices in concluding readmission agreements and Prague Process guidelines on concluding readmission agreements and organising migrants' returns.

The Project is led by Poland with the support of Slovakia and Romania. In total 21 states⁵ participate in the Pilot and their efforts are being supported by IOM, Frontex as well as external experts.

Background and preliminary findings

Over the last two decades readmission has gained a prominent role in the development of national immigration control systems of countries of origin, transit and destination, as well as in the international cooperation on migration. Readmission is the process through which individuals who are not allowed to stay on the territory of a country are expelled or removed. It can be applicable to different categories of individuals, including unauthorized migrants, rejected asylum-seekers or stateless persons. Returns originated through readmission procedures can be executed in a coercive or voluntary manner.

Cooperation at bilateral level with countries to which readmitted or removed persons are to be relocated is essential for the success of the task and is equally related to both domestic and foreign affairs. In practice, state-to-state cooperation is very frequently characterized by a disturbed reciprocity, mainly due to the following factors:

- ❖ costs and benefits resulting from the readmission agreements or treaties are not symmetric for the two contracting parties;
- ❖ the two contracting parties may not share the same interests in pursuing cooperation;
- ❖ the two contracting parties may not face the same domestic, regional, and international implications of both illegal migration flows and cooperation on readmission.

⁵ Participating states of the Pilot Project 1. The map has an indicative nature.

It can be argued that, taking into account the above-mentioned factors, for contracting states which implement readmission agreements or treaties, the impact thereof can often be asymmetrical. Additionally, the process of concluding of such agreements or treaties may pose certain challenges to both negotiating sides as it may lead to requests for compensation and increasing demands from countries of origin to have more developed readmission contracts. Negotiations can be highly time and money consuming. Last but not least, the execution of readmission may be influenced by diverse structural, institutional and legal capacities of both parties for dealing with the removal of unauthorised aliens⁶.

Despite the afore-mentioned variables, the number of bilateral agreements linked to readmission has considerably increased since the 1990s. The states participating in the Pilot Project 1 have been debating on how to make this tool more efficient and balanced.

The experience in readmission of the states participating in the Pilot varies a lot. Nine of them have already concluded a readmission agreement with the EU (the Russian Federation, Ukraine, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Moldova, Georgia as well as Armenia and Turkey – in the course of the Project implementation) and can thus share with the others the experience in negotiating such an agreement. The majority of project participants are transit countries and face similar challenges deriving from this status. When it comes to the implementation of readmission agreements, participating states pointed out that effective cooperation with countries of origin seems to be the most important issue and should deserve some special attention during the project implementation.

Following to the Pilot's kick-off meeting held in Lvov in November 2012, two expert-level workshops and a study visit were organised in 2013. The main objective of the first expert-level meeting organized in Warsaw in March 2013 was to share experience and good practices related to the legal aspects of readmission agreements, negotiations of such agreements and implementing protocols as well as cooperation on readmission and return between state and non-state agents. The second expert-level workshop was organized in Bratislava in September 2013 and its main focus was on combating human smuggling and assessing the impact of this phenomenon on readmission and returns. The workshop agendas and debates were informed by background notes on the current state of play concerning readmission and return policies as well as human smuggling provided by the states participating in the Pilot. In addition to the workshops, in June 2013 a group of representatives of 10 states participating in the Project took part in the study visit to Poland focused on the exchange of practices and experiences in the field of readmission and returns, including expulsion by land and air. Practical cooperation between various actors (state as well as non-state ones) in return policy, including voluntary and forced returns of migrants of different profiles, was also discussed during the visit.

Legal migration

One of the main motives for migration between Prague Process states is to obtain work abroad. Labour migration is thereby linking the countries of the economic peripheries to the more developed centres of the European Union, the Russian Federation or Kazakhstan, characterized by higher income levels and a constant demand for foreign labour force. Meanwhile, other countries are turning from emigration into immigration and transit countries, gradually adapting their legislation to these changing realities.

⁶ For more information please consult e.g. Jean-Pierre Cassarino (ed.), *Unbalanced Reciprocities: Cooperation on Readmission in the Euro-Mediterranean Area*, Washington: The Middle East Institute, 2010.

The purpose of the PP TI Pilot Project on Legal Migration (PP2) is to share experiences and best practices in organizing labour migration among the Prague Process states⁷. The overall intention is to bring closer countries of origin and destination with a view to discussing common interests as well as identifying practical difficulties.



Background

Labour migration refers to the cross-border movement of people for the main purpose of employment or work in a foreign country. According to ILO estimates, 50% of international migrants are economically active. Almost 50% of these migrant workers are women, who are increasingly migrating on their own as primary income owners. In Europe, labour migration constitutes only a fraction of permanent migration flows, with some countries showing higher percentages of family related and humanitarian immigration. Moreover, labour migration often takes place in the form of seasonal and temporary labour migration, not included in data on permanent flows.

For both sending and receiving countries, labour migration forms part of strategies to address economic, social and demographic concerns. Many origin countries have an interest in sending people abroad to increase private transfers (remittances) and to lower unemployment rates. Meanwhile, receiving countries perceive labour migration as a possible mechanism to respond to their respective labour market shortages or the impact of demographic decline and population ageing on the economy.

International cooperation can play a fundamental role in promoting and expanding well-managed labour migration. Whereas there is no international global regime on labour migration, various international and regional human rights instruments protect the fundamental rights of all human beings regardless of their nationality and legal status. Moreover, some international instruments (i.e. ILO Conventions) provide more specific standards protecting the rights of migrant workers.

Regional integration processes facilitate intra-regional labour mobility. They may range from extensive free movement of persons to more limited provisions. These regional cooperation initiatives rarely include countries with strong income disparities. Within the EU, the volumes of admission for economic immigrants remain an exclusive competence of Member States. Harmonisation at EU level is limited to the entry and residence conditions of certain specific categories of third country nationals. As part of the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility, labour (legal) migration is discussed within regional consultative processes, or bilaterally, within association or so-called 'Mobility Partnership' agreements.

Bilateral agreements can ensure more transparency, better protection of migrants and their working conditions and a higher return rate. They can be tailored to the specific supply and demand of the countries involved and either take the form of 'legally binding' treaties or less formal Memoranda of Understanding, or even very informal practical arrangements.

⁷ Participating states of the Pilot Project 2. The map has an indicative nature.

The national admission policies of destination countries vary a lot but generally tend to be based on their respective labour market needs. Work permits are usually time-limited and renewable. A permanent residence status can be obtained after several years, thus securing free access to employment. Most countries restrict foreigners' access to job offers that cannot be filled by national workers; others use quota systems to determine the number of entries for a certain time period. Employers often denounce the length and uncertainty of the bureaucratic procedures characterising all work permit systems. Meanwhile, the approaches to labour emigration by countries of origin can also vary substantially. Some countries still have a pure 'laissez faire' attitude while others explicitly set up rules and standards. Active market promotion and the protection of nationals abroad represent common priority areas.

Efforts to attract highly skilled migrants can provoke labour shortages in key sectors of origin countries ('brain drain'). A comprehensive response strategy may entail circularity schemes, ethical recruitment, the mapping of domestic labour needs and stronger synergies between migration and education policies, or incentives for return migration. Pre-departure trainings and language courses are useful to bridge potential skills' mismatch and allow labour migrants to make full use of their skills in the country of destination. A system of recognition of diplomas and qualifications between major countries of origin and destination would mitigate the brain waste phenomenon.

The most basic problem faced by an employer seeking foreign labour is how to identify potential employees outside the country. There are two formal ways of labour matching. The first is to recruit abroad, which requires some kind of institutional arrangement between the two countries (preferably also involving employers). The second way is to allow candidates into the country to look for work ('job search' visas). However, if not properly supported, neither approach can compete with the recruitment through informal or irregular networks.

Most migrant workers are unaware of the practical, legal, social and economic consequences of their migration project and thereby vulnerable to abuse. Problems include excessive intermediation fees, poor working conditions, lack of social security coverage and entitlement to benefits, denial of rights, discrimination and social exclusion. Therefore, appropriate information regarding the recruitment process and the rights and duties in the destination country as well as the available protection mechanisms should be provided to candidates. Such assistance can be deployed in terms of pre-departure and accompanying measures throughout the whole process. Pre-departure training and orientation is often also part of the selection process, focusing primarily on basic language proficiency and the main rules and practises of the country of destination. The costs of training can be borne by public authorities or by the employers. Enforcement of clear minimum labour and human rights standards for the protection of workers is necessary to prevent the exploitation of migrants. Monitoring and inspection are necessary to detect forced labour and ensure minimal decent working conditions, in particular in areas such as agriculture, construction, domestic work and other sectors relying on irregular employment.

The Joint Kick-off Meeting of Pilot Projects 2 and 3 took place in Budapest in September 2012. The two-day meeting gathered 30 participants from the participating states, various international organisations as well as external experts and aimed at giving a short overview of the pilot projects, introducing some good practices in the field of labour and circular migration and allowing the participating states to intervene and present their views and expectations on these matters. The 2nd Joint PP2 and PP3 expert-level workshop was held in Prague in February 2013. Building on the Kick-off Meeting, this event offered participants some more in-depth expertise on various specific issues linked to labour and circular migration (including portability issues, assistance given to incoming migrants, challenges faced in setting up circular migration schemes etc.). The questionnaire developed for participating states was finalised and disseminated to

them, resulting in the reception of valuable information by the competent national authorities. The latter information shall serve as the foundation for the envisaged Handbook and policy recommendations.

2013 also saw the implementation of the first successful expert mission to Belarus, organised jointly under Pilot Project 2 and Specific Objective 2 (Knowledge Base) and hosted excellently by the Department of Citizenship and Migration of the Ministry of Interior of Belarus. Finally, the 1st National Contact Points' Meeting, held in Tbilisi in October 2013 was dedicated to the issue of Labour Migration, gathering numerous state authorities, external experts and civil society representatives.

Migration and development



Circular migration has played a prominent role in the debate on migration and development. However, the ambitions and rhetoric linked to the concept have rarely been matched by the implementation of concrete actions and schemes.

There still is no clear and concrete notion of what circular migration actually means.

While various definitions co-exist at present, the development component is certainly of defining importance. Going beyond the concept of temporary or seasonal migration, circular migration should be renewable, legal, respectful of migrant's rights and managed in a way to optimize labour markets at both ends. It should endow migrants with new skills and provide for skills transfer while also supporting an investment-oriented use of their remittances and savings. The established transnational networks should be mobilized for the benefit of their origin country. Finally, addressing brain drain and reintegration are other important components.

The Prague Process provides a unique platform to collect and analyse data on existing or envisaged practices in the field of circular migration. The respective analyses will be summarised in a handbook providing an overview of good practices and policy recommendations for policy makers in receiving and sending countries.

Challenges faced and preliminary findings

The overall interest in implementing circular migration is high among the 16 participating states, figuring among the explicit policy priorities of some source countries. The primary aim of the latter is to ensure a better protection of their citizens abroad while also preventing brain drain and brain waste. Circular migration schemes seem an appropriate strategy to achieve these aims. Meanwhile, host countries aim to tackle existing labour shortages and the socio-economic challenges linked to ageing through better regulated, short-term employment abroad. Consequently, circular migration could represent an instrument to prevent irregular entries, limit the informal economy and avoid long-term or permanent immigration. However, the negative political and economic environment deriving from the ongoing economic crises and the high unemployment rates in some countries may limit the political will to implement circular migration, both in terms of limited schemes and enhanced overall mobility.

Despite of their strong interest, none of the 16 states participating in the pilot⁸ has yet developed specific legislation on circular migration or an explicit definition thereof. Nevertheless, some countries have already initiated pilot programmes and circular migration schemes (i.e. for students, health workers, engineers) with partner countries through bilateral agreements. Others promote repeated temporary employment closely resembling circular migration. In fact, cross-border circularity has been a reality across the Prague Process regions (CIS, Eastern Partnership, Western Balkans, EU MS) for a long time already, although not always explicitly linked to development concerns. Nevertheless, most countries have begun incorporating the notion of Migration and Development in their respective policy documents.

In view of the high expectations linked to circular migration, measures aimed at rewarding the contribution of circular migrants to development should be considered much stronger. Moreover, these expectations are not reflected in the limited number of migrants involved in the pilot schemes established so far. These schemes require important financial and logistic resources in order to provide for fair wages, insurance coverage, housing, the itinerary or formation costs of the migrant workers and, if possible, a re-entry premium. These costs need to be divided accurately between the source and host countries and the private and public sector. In view of these costs, the facilitation of spontaneous and wider cross-border mobility may in fact represent a more efficient, cheap and constructive approach to live up to the stated ambitions.

Opinions also differ on whether circular migration should be targeted at highly or low-skilled migrants, employees of shortage sectors (i.e. nurses and doctors) or rather at students, researchers and professors. Should the concept serve the supply of cheap labour force, tackle brain drain or transform labour migrants into genuine development actors? Unfortunately, circular migration schemes tend to be overly inflexible when it comes to the selection and recruitment procedure, contract duration, recognition of qualifications etc. Differing interpretations of the concrete skills needed for a job and the lack of up to date databases of the candidates and jobs available represent a major challenge. Structured access to job offers remains the exception. The limited consultation of the private sector by the national authorities further decreases the motivation of employers to get involved. Moreover, a demand driven approach based on the national labour market needs and private sector interests at both ends might represent a less contested and more successful strategy to implementing circular migration considering the manifold challenges faced in attempting to reconcile the security concerns of host countries with the development hopes of origin countries. More attention should, however, not only be paid to interested employers and the private sector, but also to the personal interests of the individual migrants themselves.

The latter consideration also relates to the most suitable duration of circular migration cycles. A sufficient adaptation and learning period abroad should be foreseen in view of the employers' interest and investment and the desired human capital development. Temporary work contracts should not only enable migrants to recover the financial costs of migration but also accumulate the human and financial capital to be mobilized upon their return. The development impact of circular migrants will also depend on the size of the returning population, their social pertinence, whether they migrate and return to rural/urban areas, the quality, quantity and specificity of the skills acquired, and the existence of policies enhancing investment opportunities and start-ups.

Finally, there is a significant lack of data and evidence regarding the actual development impact of circular migrants and whether the alleged 'triple-win' scenario can indeed be achieved. Little is known on the human capital accumulated, the

⁸ *Participating states of the Pilot Project 3. The map on previous page has an indicative nature.*

savings generated or the investments effectuated by return migrants. Consequently, it is very hard to establish lessons learnt or good practices from past experiences. In order to ensure a successful implementation of circular migration schemes and certain sustainability over time, constant follow-up and evaluation is needed. Such evidence would require longitudinal studies (over time) rather than mere statistical data.

Following the two Expert-Level Workshops organised jointly with Pilot Project 2 (see above), a third PP3 Workshop was organised in Tbilisi in October 2013. The meeting entailed presentations on good practices established across the participating states as well as an overview of preliminary findings regarding circular migration, resulting from the answers received from the national authorities to the questionnaire developed under Pilot Project 3.

Asylum and international protection

The pilot project 4: "Quality and training in the asylum processes: The European Asylum Curriculum"⁹ (PP4), is led by Sweden (Swedish Migration Board) with the support of Germany (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees) in close cooperation with the EASO and UNHCR. EASO has an active role in the design of the project. It monitors and facilitates the



implementation of the EAC Inclusion module and supports the design of country specific training plans. The Pilot Project aims at exploring the possibility of a broader implementation of EASO's training program in the interested Prague Process states¹⁰. The primary target group of the project encompasses asylum case officers and asylum decision makers in seven partner countries (Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Turkey and Ukraine).

Background and preliminary findings

Asylum is one of those areas in the field of migration which is regularly on the political agenda and broadly debated in public. Several incidents that happened in 2013 put asylum also in this year in the centre of the political as well as public attention, such as the tragic drowning in the Mediterranean of approximately 300 asylum seekers and migrants from different African countries at the shores of the island of Lampedusa in October 2013 and the ongoing crisis in Syria. Among other important developments, 2013 saw the finalisation of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) by the adoption of the recast asylum legislation. As to the main migratory flows, there was a substantial increase of the use of the migratory route via the Western Balkans to the European Union increasing the challenges of Western Balkan countries to cope with the situation. In Prague Process countries there was a significant increase of asylum seekers mainly from Syria in Sweden, UK, Germany and Turkey. Within EU countries Sweden and Germany host two-thirds of all

⁹ *The European Asylum Curriculum is a common vocational training programme for primarily case officers and decision-makers working in the asylum process. The training programme is implemented and developed under the lead of EASO. The Curriculum contributes to enhance the capacity and quality of the European asylum process as well as to strengthen practical cooperation between the European Asylum Immigration services. The EAC offers a practical and interactive approach to training with a balanced combination of training in knowledge (theory related to international European legal instruments) and skills (the necessary practical competence for a case office).*

¹⁰ *Participating states of the Pilot Project 4. The map has an indicative nature.*

refugees from Syria. Among non-EU countries, Turkey hosts the largest number of refugees from Syria. According to Turkey officials, the number of refugees from Syria is more than 600 000. As to the former CIS countries, although the total number of asylum seekers is not that big, their number increased several times, for example in Georgia (from 70 to 1000 cases per year). The number of asylum seekers (especially from Syria) also increased in Armenia, Belarus and Russia.

As a response to the increased number of asylum seekers, the Eastern partnership countries as well as Turkey and Kyrgyzstan expressed interest to develop their asylum training systems and improve the quality of the asylum processes with the support of the EU partner states having extensive experience in asylum procedures. This interest materialised in the implementation of the Pilot Project 4. Following to the Pilot's kick-off meeting held in Stockholm in October 2012, national trainers of seven partner countries selected by relevant country authorities were provided with a training of trainers on the EAC Inclusion Module. The trained national trainers provided trainings in the respective partner countries on the EAC Inclusion Module. Study visits of selected asylum case workers from the participating countries to EU states to study the EU asylum system and procedures were organised. The project is exploring further the training needs in participating partner countries, reflecting on the role of training in the work of quality and standards, whether and how training could be handled in a more long-term sustainable manner. The participating partner EU states will consider and recommend how information and best practices could be shared and exchanged among the countries. The EAC concept is used as a model/instrument for capacity building in non-EU countries. The EAC concept, which foresees the training of national experts in the role as trainers, is based on ownership and sustainability as key elements. The concept is implemented mainly by national trainers which makes it possible for the partner countries to organise the training independently and repeatedly. EASO updates the content regularly, thereby ensuring that the training material will always be of highest relevance. This increases the possibility to see more sustainable results and have a more long-term planning compared to ad-hoc training led by experts with limited or no knowledge about the national context.

With the perspective of the end of PP4 in March 2014 and with the aim to ensure continuity in the work done, PP4 has started to closely cooperate and coordinate its activities with another EU-funded project, the Asylum Systems Quality Initiative in Eastern Europe and Southern Caucasus (QIEE) led by UNHCR. The final conference of PP4 is also planned to be organised back-to-back with the QIEE mid-term meeting in Nuremberg, Germany, on 19-20 March (PP4) and 20-21 March (QIEE).

Conclusions

The Prague Process is a relatively young intergovernmental process on migration with a great potential. It has existed since April 2009 when the countries agreed on working together towards joint interests in the area of migration. In the years 2009–2010 the 50 countries jointly shared their views on migration, described their migration landscape and formulated their priorities and the path towards addressing them in the Prague Process Action Plan in November 2011. To translate the ministerial document into practise, the implementation of selected priorities of the Action Plan started in August 2012 through the Prague Process Targeted Initiative, which will last till January 2016, as well as projects labelled as the “Prague Process Umbrella” projects, starting in 2013. The year 2013 saw a number of activities, workshops, expert missions, study visits and trainings under the pilot projects of PP TI and under the objective establishing the Prague Process Knowledge Base. There has been progress on both practical and policy levels when experts jointly worked on formulating the Prague Process standards in the given four areas addressed by PP TI and when decision makers discussed and agreed upon next steps on Senior Official level and Ministerial level in the coming years.

The year 2013 saw the process of working towards objectives. The year 2014 will be the year when the results of the work of the active states will be finalised, agreed among the participating states in the respective pilot projects and presented to Senior Officials to consider them as standards applicable to all Prague Process participating states. The year 2014 will also see new Migration Profiles Light and updated Extended Migration Profiles, the basis of the Knowledge Base aiming at being a useful tool for policy makers, decision makers and researchers, who could make use of state-owned, up-to-date and comparable descriptions of migration realities of partner states.

The Prague Process is a state-led intergovernmental dialogue and the states will set its future direction through the Senior Officials' Meeting in Berlin in October 2014 but also at the 3rd Ministerial Conference in 2016. It does have its place among other existing processes and it should serve its owners in the way they jointly shape it.



PRAGUE PROCESS
ПРАЖСКИЙ ПРОЦЕСС

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