



ICMPD
International Centre for
Migration Policy Development

Vienna Migration Conference 2020

Schengen, asylum reform and Europe's
migration diplomacy:
Has COVID-19 changed everything?

Content

Introduction	03
Panel Speakers	10
Introducing VMC2020: A year of seismic change	12
The Krastev-Selmayr debate	18
High-Level Political Session	26
Senior Panel I: Schengen and EU asylum	36
Senior Panel II: Migration partnerships in action	48
Focus Sessions	61
Agenda	

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Vienna Migration Conference 2020

16–19 NOVEMBER 2020

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Has COVID-19 changed everything?

Introduction

Vienna Migration Conference 2020

The Vienna Migration Conference 2020 took place in a unique and dramatic year. The systemic shock of the COVID-19 pandemic on migration and mobility worldwide — as well as a renewed focus on security issues — absorbed the attention and energies of policymakers. Meanwhile, international cooperation on these matters became more difficult than ever. The year also saw the arrival of the Von der Leyen Commission and its bold new ideas for the reform of European border and refugee policy.

ICMPD responded to this challenging situation with an innovative 5th edition of the Vienna Migration Conference broadcast live under restricted conditions from a special studio in Vienna and bolstered by a richly varied series of contributions from ICMPD duty stations around the world. The online viewership ranged from 1,300 to 2,300 a day and saw people tune in from locations as diverse as Stockholm, Kabul, Lagos or Praia. The conference was also notable for the increased participation of Germany, holder of the EU Council presidency at the time and ICMPD's newest Member State.

The VMC2020 opened on 16 November with a discussion on the impact of the pandemic on migration and mobility with ministers from Switzerland, the 2020 ICMPD Steering Group Chair, and from Portugal, the next holder of the EU Council presidency. Then followed a keynote debate between renowned author Ivan Krastev and former Secretary General of the European Commission, Martin Selmayr, on the implications of COVID-19 for the world, Europe and migration.

Over the following three days of the conference, ministers, senior officials and experts from Turkey, Central Asia, Africa, the Middle East, the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe came together under ICMPD's banner for a series of in-depth exchanges on everything from the multi-faceted impact of the pandemic to the prospects for reforming the EU's asylum rules and for strengthening Schengen.

Daily focus sessions highlighted a broad range of voices and allowed participants to delve deeper into priority topics. These included the reasons for divergent border management responses to COVID-19; the challenges in overcoming logistical problems inherent in the return of irregular migrants; the inspiring work being done by communities in countries like Spain to facilitate refugee resettlement; and the rising role of cities in migration policy. A high-level political panel featured lively exchanges

Europe will not fail over migration, but less ideology and more pragmatism are needed to pave the way forward.

Michael Spindelegger

Director General

International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD)



that helped to clarify the current geo-political context. This was complemented by two senior panels, which looked at strategies for achieving progress in EU asylum and Schengen and at ways of advancing international migration partnerships in the context of post-COVID economic reconstruction.

Director General Michael Spindelegger opened the VMC2020 and welcomed the participants to the first virtual version of the Vienna Migration Conference. The VMC is the flagship event of ICMPD's annual calendar. It concludes one year of policy work and looks ahead to the next year, including the challenges, priorities and opportunities for migration policymaking in Europe and abroad. 2020 was a special year in this regard, too. The COVID-19 pandemic had its grip on the world and the corresponding containment measures rendered a physical event impossible. Thus, Mr Spindelegger reassured the audience that in autumn 2021, the VMC family will come together in person again and celebrate a grand reunion in the city of Vienna. At the VMC2019, health issues did not feature prominently as a topic, neither on the agenda nor during the discussions. One year later, 50 million people worldwide were infected with COVID-19, and over 1.2 million had died. Health systems remain under terrible pressure and the economic impact is severe, putting many migrants in a particularly vulnerable situation. Sectors like tourism and travel are in serious trouble. The Schengen Area is partly closed. Numbers on irregular arrivals and asylum applications have at least moderately decreased in comparison to previous years. Against this backdrop, one might question whether it is still relevant to debate migration and mobility issues at a time of lockdown and mobility restrictions. As the widely ranging reactions during the preparation of the conference have shown, this debate seems more relevant, more urgent and perhaps also more difficult than ever before. In view of the encouraging feedback received throughout the year, ICMPD decided to stick to its annual conference tradition and proceed with the first online version of the Vienna Migration Conference. Over the four days of the conference, ICMPD's main stakeholders, top professionals from governments, international organisations, the media, and civil society were invited to gather online and fulfil the main purpose of the VMC, namely to debate, to exchange views and to take stock of what has happened during a year of seismic change in the world, in Europe but also in migration policy.

The overriding themes of this year's VMC were Schengen, asylum reform and Europe's migration diplomacy. In September, the European Commission had presented the New Pact on Migration and Asylum aimed at reforming the European migration and refugee policies. Germany, as holder of the EU Council presidency, worked very hard to reach political agreement by the end of the year. The VMC took stock of the progress made and the issues still awaiting consensus among EU Member States. It discussed the impact of the pandemic and looked at Europe's policy challenges past, present and future. The Conference took a geopolitical journey, as ministers, senior officials and experts from around the world exchanged their views on the

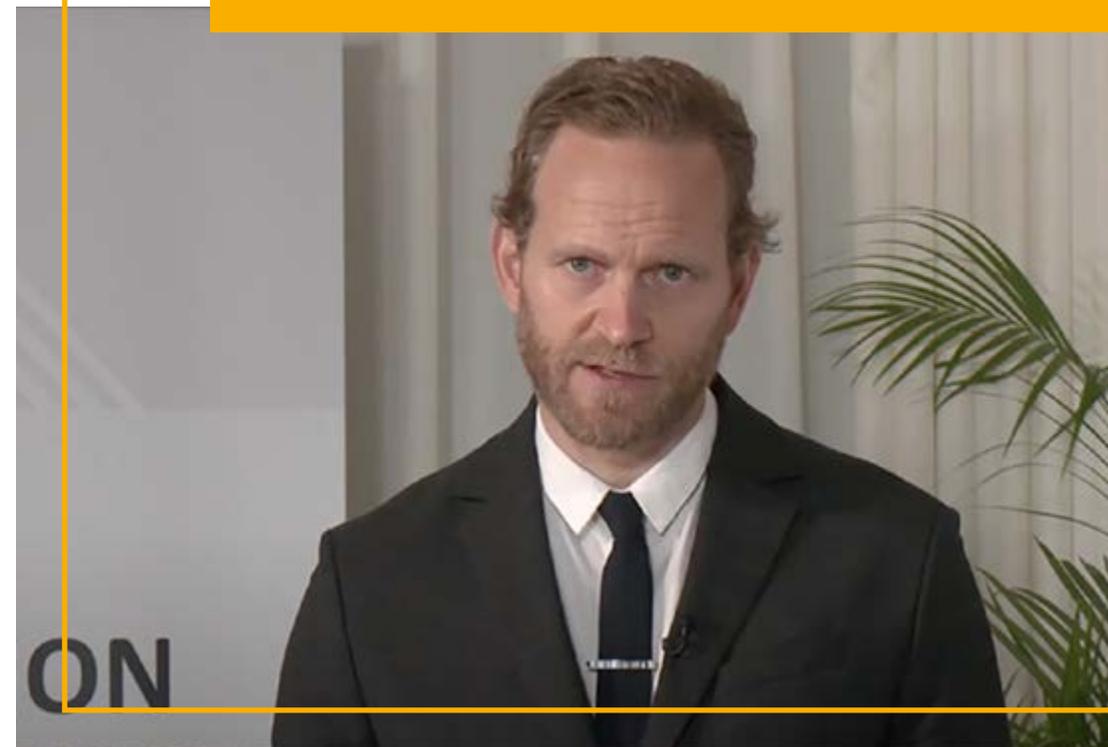
current migration challenges and on where more common ground might be found for addressing these challenges in a spirit of true partnership. There are three main takeaways from these discussions. First, despite the feeling that the pandemic has stopped the world from making progress, an incredible amount of work was in fact done in migration policy circles, from adapting border controls to facing new challenges and threats, from deepening discussions on refugee resettlement and legal pathways to collaborating on post COVID-19 economic reconstruction. Second, regarding reform of the EU's borders and refugee rules, the time for polite exchanges is clearly coming to an end and the tough work of finding real and binding compromise must begin. Despite the inevitable challenges ahead, the Conference confirmed that this work will be carried out in a more constructive atmosphere than at any other time in the past five years. Where ICMPD can be helpful, the organisation will stand ready to facilitate dialogue among all partners and encourage the development of mutual understanding where it is needed to achieve progress. Europe will not fail at reforming migration, but less ideology and more pragmatism are needed to pave the way forward. Third, the Conference heard the expectations that neighbours and partners outside Europe have of the EU. We have a shared migration challenge and a shared responsibility to address it. There is much consensus to build upon, also between sending and receiving countries on how to best respond to the challenges and seize the opportunities that are linked to international migration. At the next Vienna Migration Conference in autumn 2021, we hope to discuss successful international cooperation in the worldwide roll-out of the COVID-19 vaccines. And finally, we hope to be able to discuss the great progress on EU asylum reform under the Portuguese and Slovenian EU Council presidencies. And we hope to be toasting great strides forward in migration diplomacy between Europe and its neighbours and partners.

In his welcoming remarks, **Lukas Gehrke, Deputy Director General and Director of Policy, Research and Strategy**, recalled that 2020 marks the fifth time the annual Vienna Migration Conference has been held. In these short five years, that the VMC has become a prime occasion and meeting point for a broad range of migration stakeholders, politicians, public officials, civil society, the private sector, the media, thinkers and doers. Today, it is a platform for top-level debate on migration in Europe and beyond. It provides an indispensable opportunity to take stock of the latest developments in migration and to delve deeply into the most relevant issues affecting migration and mobility, both from a policy standpoint and an operational one. 2020 was a seismic year of change, with months of challenges from the devastating pandemic; it may turn out to be a transformative year. After intensive preparations, the European Commission has tabled the New Pact on Migration and Asylum as an outline of its reform plan for the EU's asylum and migration systems. The VMC2020 therefore devoted parts of its programme to the key aspects of the New Pact, including fast-track procedures at the external borders and the prospects of making the EU's return policy more effective. We looked at the state of Schengen and explored the

2020 is a seismic year of change. Challenged by months of a devastating pandemic, it may also turn into a transformative year.

Lukas Gehrke

Deputy Director General & Director of Policy, Research and Strategy, International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD)





external dimension of migration, international cooperation and partnerships. We discussed labour migration and Talent Partnerships, technology and migration, and many other topics. At the VMC2019, we had discussed possible ways out of the gridlock besetting migration policymaking. In 2020, the Conference explored whether the keys to unlocking this gridlock have now been found - in other words, whether the wide-ranging proposals on the table will lead Europe and its partners out of what is widely perceived as a crisis, or whether Europe will drift further apart over the issue of migration, as some pundits augur. Much of 2020 was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, the COVID-19 crisis was a red thread throughout the discussions over the four days of the conference. The discussions explored how the pandemic impacted migration dynamics, how it influenced the policy debate, and what all of this implies for international cooperation and partnership.

Mr Henrik Ankerstjerne | Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry for Immigration and Integration, Denmark

Ms Jessica Bither | Migration Fellow & Senior Program Officer, Europe Program, The German Marshall Fund of the United States

Mr Eduardo Cabrita | Minister, Ministry of Home Affairs, Portugal

H.E. Amira El Fadil | Commissioner for Social Affairs, African Union Commission

Ms Malin Frankenhaeuser | Head of Policy, Directorate of Policy, Research and Strategy, ICMPD

Mr Lukas Gehrke | Deputy Director General & Director of Policy, Research and Strategy, ICMPD

Mr Ralph Genetzke | Director, Head of Brussels Mission, ICMPD

Ms Nina Gregori | Executive Director, European Asylum Support Office

Ms Karin Keller-Sutter | Federal Councillor, Federal Department of Justice and Police, Switzerland

Mr Markos Karavias | Head, Asylum Service, Ministry of Migration and Asylum, Hellenic Republic

Mr Yavuz Selim Kiran | Deputy Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Turkey

Mr Ivan Krastev | Chairman, Centre for Liberal Strategies

Mr Stephan Mayer | Parliamentary State Secretary to the Federal Minister of the Interior, Building and Community, Germany

Mr Martijn Pluim | Director, Migration Dialogues and Cooperation, ICMPD

Mr Maciej Popowski | Acting Director-General, Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, European Commission

Hon. Ahmed Munirus Saleheen | Secretary, Ministry of Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment, Bangladesh

Ms Andrea Schumacher | Vice-President, Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Germany

Mr Martin Selmayr | Head of the Representation, Representation of the European Commission in Austria

Mr Michael Spindelegger | Director General, ICMPD

Mr Olivér Várhelyi | Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement, European Commission

Mr Ulrich Weinbrenner | Director General, Directorate-General of Migration, Refugees and Return Policy, Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community, Germany

Introducing VMC2020: A year of seismic change

After the formal opening of the Vienna Migration Conference 2020, this high-level session introduced and framed the debates at the VMC2020, reflecting on the changes that the COVID-19 pandemic has brought to Europe and European migration. As COVID-19 rages worldwide, the EU and Schengen area have striven to strike a balance between openness and the need to keep European economies afloat with the imperative to protect public health. Thus far, the Union has made only slow progress towards a new internal and external modus operandi to deliver on its migration priorities. Against this backdrop, the panel discussed whether the EU could draw inspiration from Switzerland as another multi-lingual polity that has successfully reformed national asylum policies, settled the question of the free movement of people, and developed excellent diplomatic ties with third countries on migration.

At the beginning of her remarks, **Karin Keller-Sutter, Federal Councillor of the Swiss Federal Department of Justice and Police**, recalled what a difficult decision it had been for the Swiss government to close the national borders and to impose a general lockdown during the first phase of the pandemic. But the COVID-19 crisis has also shown how much the citizens of Switzerland and Europe value freedom of movement as a symbol of their individual freedom. This freedom, however, is closely linked to a properly functioning Schengen and European asylum system. As an associated member of Schengen and Dublin, Switzerland very much welcomes the strategic directions of the New Pact on Migration and Asylum. Everyone knows that thus far, Europe has succeeded neither in building a crisis-proof asylum system nor in achieving a fair distribution of responsibility. For this reason alone, Switzerland welcomes the package as a serious attempt to change this situation. The Commission's proposals take up many issues of importance, such as fair but fast asylum procedures at the external borders, a reinforcement of the protection of these borders and measures to support Dublin states under particular pressure. The question of solidarity is tricky and consensus is hard to find, but Switzerland is ready to play a constructive role in this process and to support the efforts of the European Commission and the EU Council presidency. In many ways, the current EU debate mirrors the debate Switzerland had several years ago, a debate that was the starting point of the current Swiss asylum system. At that time, there were huge tensions between border cantons and cities vis-à-vis other cantons who received fewer asylum claims. Achieving a sustainable solution was challenging. Today, asylum claims reaching the Swiss federal government are distributed proportionally according to the size of each canton. Key elements in building this system were accelerated asylum procedures on the one hand, and long-term partnerships with third countries on the other. Consequently, Switzerland welcomes the New Pact's commitment towards a sharper focus on migration partnerships with non-European countries. This would surely benefit the equally difficult area of return and the building of migration partnerships with countries outside Europe. Meanwhile, Switzerland has an extensive history of these types of partnerships and considers them successful tools. They follow four



On economic development, on climate issues and also on migration, we should look to Africa, and especially to the Mediterranean countries, as our main partners.

Eduardo Cabrita
Minister, Ministry of Home Affairs, Portugal



It is essential that migration partnerships promote the positive effects that migration can have, but also constructively address the challenges. The goal of a migration partnership must be defined on a long-term basis - patience is needed to achieve real results.

Karin Keller-Sutter
Federal Councillor, Federal Department of Justice and Police,
Switzerland

main goals: They try to recognize and integrate the interests of all partners to guarantee mutual benefits. They aim to ensure coherent migration policy towards the partner country. They try to promote the positive effects of migration and to address challenges constructively. Finally, they emphasise stability and good governance in the partner country. Thus, it is important to define goals on a long-term basis and to be patient about when migration partnerships actually achieve results. Ms Keller-Sutter concluded by pointing out that migration partnerships would be more efficient if they were based on better European cooperation. Together, the European Union and the associated member states of Schengen and Dublin could have more impact and offer more opportunities to their partners. A more common approach would be very helpful and effective.

With Portugal set to take over the rotating EU Council presidency for the first half of 2021, a period in which the focus will still have to be on European and global responses to the pandemic and the multi-faceted crisis it is causing. On migration, **Eduardo Cabrita, Minister of Home Affairs of Portugal**, emphasised that the Portuguese presidency will try to address not only the short-term but also the long-term challenges and opportunities. In view of demographic ageing, the presidency will place much importance on an agenda of legal migration that prepares Europe for receiving, in an orderly and legal way, the migrants that its labour markets will need in the future. Turning to the New Pact, Minister Cabrita emphasized the role of the new pillar on cooperation with the neighbours outside the European Union. The external dimension of the migration issue has risen to new prominence and the Portuguese presidency intends to work very closely with countries like Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria and Mauritania on local development, on Talent Partnerships but also on their capacity to prevent illegal migration. The relationship with Africa is a chief priority, and Portugal is very happy that a broad consensus has been reached in Europe in the meantime to recognize Africa as a main partner, not only in terms of migration but also in terms of cooperation on economic development, on trade and on climate issues. Europe should look to Africa and particularly to the Mediterranean countries as main partners in many policy areas. The discussions on the New Pact, however, made it obvious again that there are certain topics on which EU Member States find it much more difficult to reach consensus. One of the biggest challenges pertains to the protection of the external borders. Therefore, the Portuguese presidency will monitor the further development of Frontex very closely and will support the agency by giving it resources of its own. As regards the issues of solidarity and responsibility, the presidency will openly discuss these difficult questions with different groups of countries such as the Mediterranean countries and the Visegrad countries, and will try to build common ground for ultimately reaching a common position. This might be the most difficult task ahead, but everyone in Europe knows that migration must be treated as a common issue. The lessons from 2015 and 2016 must not be forgotten. Enormous problems arose in those years because a common answer was not

sought. Now there is a completely different situation: There are conundrums such as the situations on the Canary and Greek Aegean islands, but the inflows of irregular migrants cannot be compared with the situation five years ago in terms of size. That is why Europe should prepare in time, try to work together and find common ground that is as broad as possible.

The Krastev-Selmayr debate: Survive and thrive? How COVID-19 is changing the world, Europe and migration

In December 2019, a new EU leadership took office with a mandate to break the political gridlock over Europe's reform of the common migration and asylum policies. The COVID-19 pandemic added a new dimension to an already difficult debate. Europeans experienced first-hand how quickly countries can turn inwards, close borders and restrict mobility when faced with a new threat. COVID-19 has revealed again how fragile Schengen is and how difficult it is for governments who are part of the system to coordinate during a rapidly unfolding crisis. **Malin Frankenhaeuser, Head of Policy at ICMPD**, opened the discussion with some fundamental questions: Is the COVID-19 crisis a catalyst to come together, as seen from the agreement of the EU plans for economic reconstruction, as a next-generation EU? Or is it a reminder of the limitations to European integration? Does it confirm that at the end of the day states feel that they must look after their own citizens first and that EU structures are either too slow or too limited to play a leading role, whether the issue be borders or public health? All these are linked to the even bigger question of whether Europe's integration project, which has express ambitions to use today's crisis to create a new type of Union, will ultimately be able to weather the COVID-19 storm.

Ivan Krastev, Chairman of the Centre for Liberal Strategies, expects COVID-19 to leave deep marks in the collective memory of Europeans. Many of them will experience the pandemic as the greatest social experiment of their lifetime. Far from being over, the crisis has revealed but also amplified several trends that were there before, such as the increasing interdependence of global supply chains against the background of the growing global competition between China and the United States. In Europe, the crisis was not the hour of political populists but also did not advance intra-European and international cooperation as much as one could have expected. As a truly global crisis, COVID-19 can only be tackled with global responses. In reality, most governments, including those in the European Union, decided to go it alone, at least in the first phase of the crisis. The pandemic closed more borders, more quickly, in Europe than the migration crisis did. In many ways, Member States' responses have looked like a return to second coming of the particularism experienced through the three previous crises in Europe over the last 20 years: the financial crisis, the migration crisis and the terrorism crisis. What has been different with COVID-19, though, is that European citizens seem to trust their governments much more to solve this crisis than was the case for instance with the migration crisis. Will European governments be able to use this increased trust of their citizens to drive forward a common European migration policy? Some European consensus has undoubtedly been built over the last five years, for instance on the need to strengthen the EU's external borders. In 2015 there was no common immigration policy because there were too many differences among Member States on the direction such a policy should take. Today, most of these differences have diminished, but there is still no common policy and there is not likely to be one anytime soon. Mr Krastev explained this paradox with a simple fact: Within the broad range of views and positions that existed in 2015,



There is a certain hypocrisy that should be spelled out more clearly. Official discourse has it that we are open to refugees, but we are not open to economic migrants. And the opposite is true: We are open to economic migrants, but we are not much interested in refugees.

Ivan Krastev
Chairman, Centre for Liberal Strategies



COVID-19 has added a new dimension to an already difficult debate. We have all experienced first-hand how quickly countries can turn inwards, close borders and restrict mobility when faced with a new threat. COVID-19 has revealed again how fragile Schengen is and how difficult it is for Schengen governments to coordinate in a rapidly unfolding crisis.

Malin Frankenhaeuser
Head of Policy, Directorate of Policy, Research and Strategy, ICMPD

The agreement between the European Union and Turkey that was concluded in 2015 and finalised in 2016 was an absolutely decisive step in managing the migration crisis. Cooperation with third countries who are in the frontline on migration matters must be part of the solution.

Martin Selmayr

Head of the Representation, Representation of the European Commission in Austria



the migration crisis helped governments on all points of the spectrum to develop a political identity that has brought electoral gains ever since. Governments now fear that agreeing to a European compromise would be seen as a betrayal of national interests and would be punished by voters. It will take more time before migration loses some of its symbolic political value, which in turn would give European governments more leeway to come out of the trenches and find compromise. This process will also require a more honest debate on the kinds of migration Europeans really do accept. In this regard, Mr Krastev identified a certain hypocrisy, which in his view should be spelled out more clearly. Official discourse has it that Europe is open to refugees but not to economic migrants. In reality, the opposite is the case: Europeans would be open to economic migrants but have little interest in refugees.

Martin Selmayr, Head of the Representation of the European Commission in Austria,

agreed that the COVID-19 pandemic has created a situation that fully deserves to be termed an existential crisis, individually and collectively, socially and economically. The pandemic has called into question a whole model of society. It threatens the economic well-being of an entire continent but also reminds Europeans that their lives are subject to a high degree of interdependency, inside and outside of Europe. It showed quickly that a closing of borders within the Union is not an answer and has indeed detrimental effects on European economies. But it also showed that the EU managed to agree on a financial rescue package within three months, a common response that took more than three years to accomplish during the financial crisis of 2008. This is a cause for confidence that Europe as a continent will emerge from this crisis better and more unified than before, and perhaps also more aware of the fact that Europeans depend on each other in times of tranquillity as much as in times of crisis. From a political standpoint, the first phase of the crisis was the hour of national governments, of experts, rather than of populists or of anti-EU currents. But this was also because of the quick decision among EU leaders to take a common approach in responding to the crisis and not allow the impression to take root that some Member States would be left alone with their problems, as they had been during the financial and the migration crises of 2008 and 2015, respectively. It remains to be seen whether this spirit will prevail during later phases of the crisis, but also whether it will help in reaching potential agreement on the proposals laid down in the New Pact. According to Mr Selmayr, these proposals are certain to have a good chance of succeeding because they form a comprehensive and well-debated package. Moreover, they are based on many of the successful instruments and policies that were introduced by the EU in the aftermath of the migration crisis in 2015, such as the strengthening of the external borders or the use of foreign policy and relationships with third countries as instruments to organise and manage migration. The latter found its most vivid expression in the so-called EU – Turkey Statement from March 2016 that has become a role model for cooperation with neighbours and partners in other geographic contexts. Solidarity and relocation will remain an issue, but Mr Selmayr pointed out that even

on this hotly disputed question, Member States had managed to agree on a relocation quota of 100,000 people in June 2015. This fact should serve as a reminder that EU Member States can arrive at a compromise even when the odds are clearly against it, a conclusion that will hopefully also apply to the further discussions of the Pact.

CONCLUSIONS

- All speakers agreed that the migration year 2020 was shaped by two all-important factors: the global COVID-19 pandemic, which brought a stress test to Europe's internal and external borders, and the proposed New Pact on Migration and Asylum, which sets forth bold ideas for the future of European migration policy. These factors will continue to shape developments again in 2021.
- The first wave of the pandemic resulted in the defeat of political populism and increased the demand for more European cooperation, even among those who are usually more sceptical. Europe seemed to learn lessons much faster during the pandemic than it had in previous crises, as evidenced by more open intra-EU border policies during the second wave of COVID-19.
- In the migration debate, tensions over solidarity and responsibility are not exclusive to the EU. A federal state like Switzerland has had to deal with this issue as well. The current EU debate mirrors the debate in Switzerland several years ago, when cantons and cities that had to shoulder a heavier burden requested relief from those that received fewer asylum claims. Achieving a sustainable solution was a major challenge, but by agreeing a sophisticated system of burden-sharing, the Swiss federal government today distributes any incoming asylum claims proportionally according to the size of each canton. Key elements in building this system were accelerated asylum procedures on the one hand, and long-term partnerships with third countries on the other.
- Panellists agreed that a truly common migration and return policy would be more effective than the current one. They voiced their hope that the proposed New Pact will lead to a more resilient common approach among EU, Schengen and Dublin states, which, in turn, can have a greater impact and offer more possibilities for migration partnerships.

- Any new approach to EU migration policy must be consistent with EU values, and while migration is a permanent challenge, it also poses an opportunity for ageing societies. Special attention needs to be paid to legal migration, which will require renewed efforts in the external dimension of migration policy, especially with (North) African countries.
- Building partnerships with third countries is intrinsically linked to supporting their local development policies and investing in skills development in order to, in turn, prevent irregular migration.
- Finally, panellists identified a certain hypocrisy, namely official discourse stating that Europe is open to refugees but not open to economic migration, when in reality the opposite is the case and Europeans would be open to economic migrants but are less open to refugees. Thus, there might be the potential to change this discourse through the increased visibility of migrant contributions in key sectors and lower numbers of arrivals in the aftermath of the pandemic.

Give and Take – the geo-political context for migration

High-Level Political Session

Creating and maintaining effective international cooperation frameworks and migration diplomacy is a central aspect of a comprehensive migration management system. The New Pact stipulates a new resolve towards partnership and cooperation with several countries of origin and transit. Also, Germany, holder of the EU Council presidency at the time of the VMC2020, emphasised the external dimension of migration. The High-Level Political Session explored these priorities and discussed the extent to which short and long-term objectives in this area will improve policy outcomes. A functioning migration system also requires an effective external policy dimension that is informed by and responsive to the geo-political context in which it operates. Consequently, any external-facing migration policy demands flexibility and must be tailor-made to fit the country in question. For European countries, this necessitates a nuanced understanding of conditions in countries of origin and transit, including the socio-economic, political and legal environment. It also requires the political will to engage in the long term in mutually satisfying and reciprocal partnerships.

In his statement, **Stephan Mayer, Parliamentary State Secretary to the German Federal Minister of the Interior, Building and Community**, stressed that strengthening the external dimension of EU migration policy must be one of the priority tasks for the future. The New Pact strongly emphasizes external relations and so do Member States in the Council. Migration is key to the EU's relations with third countries, and good relations with third countries are key to avoiding an overburdening of the Common European Asylum System. The only way to build these good relations is by way of partnerships. North Africa, the Western Balkans, Turkey, Southern Africa and countries along the so-called Silk Route are amongst Germany's priorities, together with the countries along the Mediterranean and the Atlantic routes. Germany is very well aware that no other country on the globe is bearing as heavy a burden hosting refugees as Turkey is. The support to Turkey and the Syrian refugees residing on its territory will certainly remain a priority in the future. Migration partnerships and cooperation platforms should be tailored to needs and mutual interests, but the European Union will always have to focus its efforts on the prevention of irregular migration and the fight against migrant smuggling. Return is another immensely important yet particularly delicate point of migration diplomacy. More successful return procedures will have an important impact on the functionality as well as the credibility of the future EU asylum system. This involves, on the one hand, the existing challenge of returning third-country nationals irregularly staying in the EU who are not eligible for protection and on the other hand, the future challenge of returning persons who have been denied protection in the accelerated border procedure being proposed by the Commission. The growing scope and complexity of the aspired future approach on return is also why the German presidency welcomes the Commission's proposal on an EU return coordinator. His or her task would be to better coordinate the return policy of Member States, the Commission and the responsible agencies, to



Stressing return policies will not succeed if the other side of the coin is ignored, namely, offering initiatives to third countries. Therefore, we want to push forward the discussion on further developing the EU framework on legal migration and on talent partnerships.

Stephan Mayer

Parliamentary State Secretary to the Federal Minister of the Interior, Building and Community, Germany



The international community must realize that trying to stop migrants in transit countries is not a workable solution. To solve migratory flows in a sustainable way, we must help the source countries. The international community should assist them in developing their capacity to address the problems.

Mr Yavuz Selim Kiran

Deputy Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Turkey

provide technical support within the EU and to coordinate return measures, building on the experience gained by Member States. But emphasizing return alone, State Secretary Mayer stressed, will not be sufficient unless the EU and the Member States offer initiatives that are in the interest of partner countries outside Europe. Therefore, Germany wants to push forward the discussion in the Council on further developing the EU framework on legal migration. The proposed launch of Talent Partnerships with key partners, starting in the EU's neighbourhood, the Western Balkans, and in North Africa, should be enhanced by capacity building in areas such as labour market or skills management, vocational education and training, integration of returning migrants and diaspora mobilisation. A comprehensive approach like this would meet all partners' interests and thus promote cooperation in other more delicate areas of migration management as well.

Today, one in every 30 people across the world is a migrant, and the number of displaced persons is growing every year. Located at the crossroads of major migration routes from the Middle East, Africa and Asia to Europe, Turkey has become the largest refugee hosting country in the world, providing protection to almost four million refugees and asylum-seekers. In his remarks, **Yavuz Selim Kiran, Deputy Minister of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs**, stressed that the COVID-19 pandemic has increased Turkey's financial and administrative burdens but has not slowed migration towards the country. There is a real threat of another migration crisis, which would overburden the migration system. Thus, the international community should realize that trying to stop migrants in transit countries is not a workable solution. To solve the migration challenge in a sustainable way, help must go to the source countries. The international community should assist them in developing their capacity to address the underlying causes of displacement and irregular migration. An active engagement in the peaceful settlement of disputes and an assumption of joint responsibility in providing assistance are paramount in this regard. Turkey is doing its part as the world's biggest donor of humanitarian aid in proportion to national income. However, no single country can cope with the crisis alone. Migration is a global issue and requires effective international cooperation. As a second major point, Deputy Minister Kiran emphasised the need to facilitate safe and dignified return, ideally in the form of voluntary return as the most durable solution for refugees and host communities. Turkey sees the safe return of Syrians to their home as an absolute priority and calls upon the international community to engage more actively in this process. Finally, protecting the lives and dignity of migrants and refugees is essential. It is fundamental to human dignity and a common task for the whole international community. The current migration challenges might put states in difficult situations, but this should not be used as an excuse to turn a blind eye to human tragedy. Deputy Minister Kiran concluded that Turkey has implemented its part of the 18 March Statement from 2016 with the utmost sensitivity, leading to a 92 percent reduction in illegal crossings towards the European Union. Now it expects the EU to fulfil its commitments regarding

financial assistance, the start of voluntary humanitarian aid missions, the modernisation of the customs union, the revitalisation of the accession negotiations, and support for the safe, voluntary and dignified return of Syrians to their home country.

H.E. Amira El Fadil, Commissioner for Social Affairs of the African Union Commission, opened her statement with an overview of the COVID-19 situation in Africa. The pandemic poses an enormous and unprecedented challenge to the whole world, and Africa as a continent is no exception. While the continent accounts for the fewest fatalities from the disease, the rising number of cases is a cause for great concern. As African countries continue their struggle to contain the virus, the devastating socio-economic impact of the pandemic grows every day. The loss of jobs is estimated at around 19 million and forecasts project a decline in GDP in most African countries, putting 30 million people in danger of falling back into poverty. COVID-19 comes at a time when Africa is already dealing with the impact of other pre-existing crises and vulnerabilities, including conflicts, impacts of climate change and fragility in the Sahel region. The pandemic presents yet another shock that will weigh on the already struggling economies of most African Union Member States. With Africa already hosting millions of refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants on the move, the situation could easily deteriorate into a protracted humanitarian disaster. Swift and affordable access to COVID-19 vaccines will be absolutely essential to avoid such a situation and to ensure quick economic recovery. Commissioner El Fadil called upon the international community and the European Union to make sure that Africa is not left behind in the distribution of vaccines. The speed of economic recovery in the aftermath of the pandemic will have its impact on migration within and from the African continent as well. It needs to be emphasized that 80 percent of African mobility is within the continent. But there is an urgent need to find better solutions for the remaining 20 percent that leave the continent and much too often fall victim to exploitation, face violations of their human rights or lose their lives while trying to cross the deserts or the Mediterranean Sea. The African Union and the EU have a broad range of dialogues and mechanisms in place to jointly address this issue. During the development of the new European Union strategy for Africa, many consultations and meetings were held to share and discuss priorities with regard to migration between Africa and Europe. In all of this, there needs to be an understanding of the African perspectives and priorities when it comes to migration. Addressing the root causes of migration must be a major topic. Without addressing the root causes and without answering the question of why young Africans are fleeing Africa to look for better opportunities abroad, the issue of irregular migration cannot be solved. The answer to this question is development. One must look at migration issues through the lens of what Africa needs to develop within its economies, to create more jobs at home, to break the barriers within the continent and to ensure the free movement of goods, services and people, all objectives that the African Union is already pursuing. European partners can do a lot to support this process by attracting more investment to Africa, by enhancing the skills of young Africans



Our partners, the European Union Commission, can support us in attracting more investment, giving more skills to Africans, and creating more opportunities within the continent. I know this is a long-term strategy, but it will yield a sustainable result on the issue of migration for both of us, for the EU and Africa.

H.E. Amira El Fadil

Commissioner for Social Affairs, African Union Commission

and by creating more opportunities within the continent. This development will take some time and it will require a long-term strategy, but it will give both Africa and the EU a much more sustainable result when it comes to migration.

The New Pact on Migration and Asylum and the migratory pressure on the EU borders demonstrate how clearly the internal and external dimensions of migration are inter-linked. **Olivér Várhelyi, Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement of the European Commission**, stressed this inter-linkage as the reason for putting the EU's neighbourhood and enlargement countries as core areas for action under the New Pact. He argued that all North African countries are countries of transit and destination, and some also of origin, facing several challenges in terms of managing migration and forced displacement. Broader political and economic challenges such as the civil war in Libya and the economic crisis in Tunisia exacerbate the situation. Prolonged displacement has become a long-term reality in the Middle East. Apart from Jordan and Lebanon, as hosting countries, relations with Turkey are particularly crucial because of the geopolitical role the country plays, including its support to refugees. In the Western Balkans, national systems have improved considerably over the last decade but still fall short in light of the current migratory flows. The COVID-19 pandemic amplified these challenges and the EU has redirected over four billion euros to the Western Balkans and neighbours in the East and the South to help them respond to the health crisis and to mitigate the broader impact of the pandemic. However, the challenges posed by COVID-19 are far from over. Its socio-economic impact has intensified some drivers of displacement and irregular migration. It will be essential to focus on creating resilient economic opportunities in partner countries, not just working on tackling irregular migration. The New Pact for Migration and Asylum goes precisely in this direction. The use of dedicated investment packages that can create growth and jobs in the neighbourhood is a powerful way to promote win-win solutions, in the interest of both the EU and its neighbours. Actions to fight migrant smuggling more efficiently also need to be stepped up. A joint anti-smuggling conference for North Africa started this process, bringing together the European Commission, relevant EU Member States, Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia. The conference will be followed by further new initiatives. Finally, improving cooperation on readmissions is also a key element of stronger partnerships. More efficient returns accompanied by appropriate reintegration efforts will remove incentives for smugglers and make illegal migration less attractive. On all the above issues, the EU will work in open, frank and constant dialogue with its partners and neighbours.



It is essential that we focus on creating diversified and more resilient economic opportunities in partner countries, not just work to tackle irregular migration.

We need to link EU migration and asylum policy to economic investment in our neighbourhood.

Olivér Várhelyi

Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement,
European Commission

CONCLUSIONS

- The panellists widely agreed on the need to intensify migration diplomacy through tailored partnerships and to support third countries through the New Pact's proposed Talent Partnerships. The New Pact on Migration and Asylum strongly emphasizes external relations and so do Member States in the Council. Migration is key to the EU's relations with third countries and good relations with third countries are key to avoiding an overburdening of the Common European Asylum System.
- Turkey is one of the key partners of the EU in addressing the joint challenges of displacement and irregular migration. The country's achievements as the largest host of refugees globally were broadly acknowledged, but so too were the numerous challenges the country is facing particularly in times of pandemic. In this regard, Turkey reminded the EU about the commitments set forth in the 2016 EU-Turkey statement: increased monetary assistance, a modernised customs union and visa liberalisation.
- African countries must prepare for major negative impacts from the pandemic on their socio-economic situation: job losses on a large scale, with knock-on effects for the labour market and increased poverty. In addressing irregular migration, more attention needs to be paid to the root causes as well as to African perspectives and priorities on the matter. Cooperation on development and job creation is considered the main priority, and existing dialogues and mechanisms can play a major role in achieving this goal.
- The EU has provided a great deal of support to neighbours and partners to help them respond to the health crisis and mitigate the socio-economic impact of the pandemic. To tackle irregular migration, the focus must be on diversified and more resilient economic support to partner countries. Finally, combatting irregular migration, boosting economies, stabilising democracies, and supporting new democracies should be tackled holistically and as interlinked issues.

Schengen and EU asylum – strategies for progress

Senior Panel I

Schengen is at the heart of the European project, yet the elements of a Common European Asylum System remain hotly contested. EU Member States have, often unilaterally, reintroduced border controls because of concerns about migration flows, security and most recently the COVID-19 pandemic. Recurrent issues in the Schengen debate are the deficiencies of the Dublin system and the associated risks of secondary movements in the EU – both of which the New Pact on Migration and Asylum aims to address. The panel discussed this latest proposal to break the gridlock in European migration policymaking, addressing these interlinked challenges as well as prospects for EU migration policy to move forward.

Ralph Genetzke, Director and Head of ICMPC's Brussels Mission, introduced the panellists and underlined that the stakes are high in terms of the work on the New Pact, especially the discussion on what is usually referred to as the internal dimension of the EU migration and asylum policy. The topic is a very broad one but the panel wanted to focus on two of the most burning questions, namely, the functioning of the Schengen area and the reform of the EU asylum system. Not least because of the mobility restrictions imposed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Schengen and free movement have become symbols of something that Europeans want to preserve even in difficult times. The many challenges and unresolved issues related to the functioning of the EU asylum system have dominated and at the same time hampered the European debate for years. The discussions on the New Pact have given new impetus to the debate but also tabled several proposals on new or reformed instruments that should help to break this gridlock. Now, the questions are these: Where do we stand with this debate? What will be the way forward in the near future but also in the years to come? And finally, are there new elements in the New Pact that really have potential to unblock the stalled discussions and pave the way for a more common and undisputed European approach?

In his remarks, **Ulrich Weinbrenner, Director General for Migration, Refugees and Return Policy at the German Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community**, gave an overview of the state-of-play on the New Pact negotiations from the perspective of the German EU Council presidency. He acknowledged the intense and thorough discussions the Commission had undertaken with the Member States and other players before the proposals were made available on the twenty-third of September. As a matter of fact, the COVID-19 related restrictions had made it impossible to conduct regular face-to-face meetings and discussions, which is a vital element for reaching compromise among the Member States in a diverse and disputed policy area like migration. Taking these limitations into account, one can be very satisfied with the outcome so far. A main priority for the German presidency was to drive forward the talks at the working group level and on the concrete legal proposals. In all of this, it has not come as a surprise that Member States have more or less stuck to the positions that were well known before the Commission's proposals were put on the table.



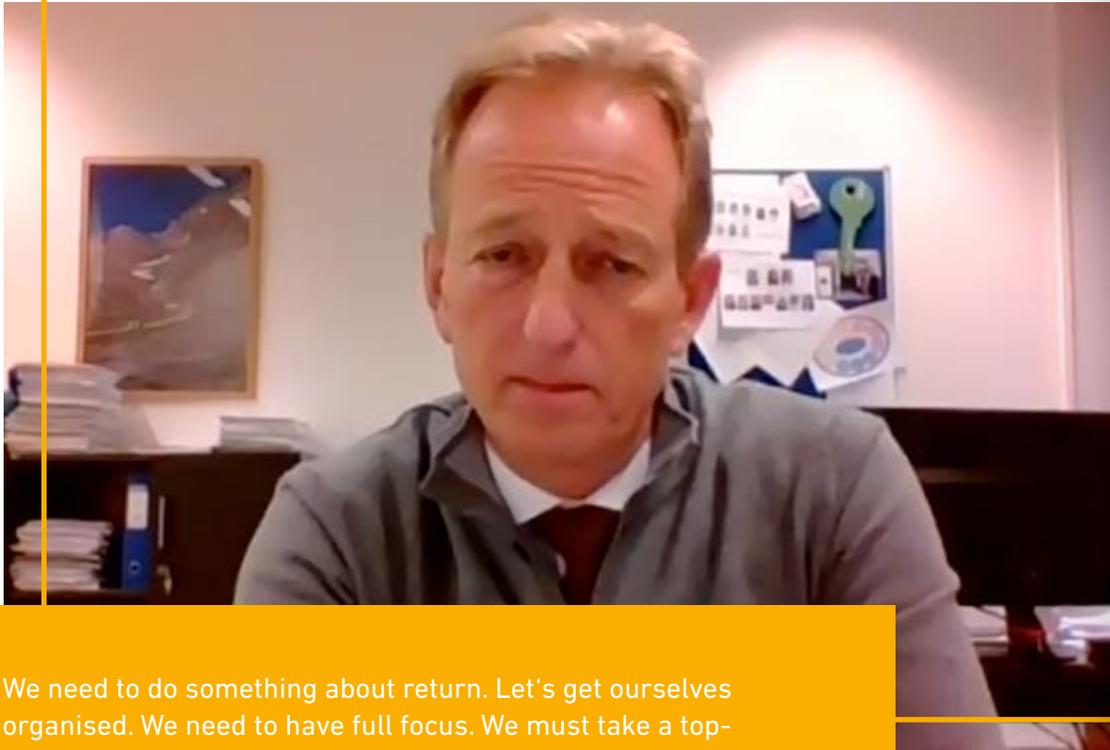
Schengen has become a symbol of something in Europe that we want to preserve. I think there is a common agreement, there is a common understanding around that.

Ralph Genetzke
Director, Head of Brussels Mission, ICMPD



There is a broad consensus among Member States that solidarity must be delivered. The migration challenge and the asylum challenge cannot be left to only a few Member States to address, they are a matter all Member States must deal with together. That in itself would be an achievement. Nevertheless, the main question is this: In what form should solidarity be delivered by the Member States?

Ulrich Weinbrenner
Director General, Directorate-General of Migration, Refugees and Return Policy, Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community, Germany



We need to do something about return. Let's get ourselves organised. We need to have full focus. We must take a top-down management approach to this issue. We must have full coordination at the Commission level and also at national level. We need to have a budget so we can set in motion the right projects to ease negotiations, and we need the right method.

Henrik Ankerstjerne

Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry for Immigration and Integration, Denmark

But on a positive note, it is also obvious that the dialogue is truly constructive and that all Member States are willing to find a solution based on the Commission's proposals. What was the main aim of the German presidency? The aim was to reach as much consensus as possible on the common state-of-play paper based on the Commission's proposals and the discussions with Member States. This process should set the stage for further negotiations on the subject under the next EU Council presidencies: the Portuguese and Slovenian presidencies in 2021, and then the French presidency in 2022. At this stage, it seems worthwhile to compromise as much as possible and to identify as concretely as possible the different positions. Thus, it must be clear to all that this is a challenging task. There are different views on the so-called border procedure, there is the issue of secondary movements of asylum applicants, there is the issue of solidarity. As regards the latter, there is a broad consensus among Member States that solidarity must be delivered. The migration challenge and the asylum challenge cannot be left to only a few Member States to address; these are something that all Member States must deal with. The main question is the form in which solidarity should be delivered by the Member States. This is a very sensitive question politically and there is reasonable doubt as to whether all Member States will ultimately agree on full solidarity. Finally, Mr Weinbrenner concluded, the EU will only find a solution if a considerably large group of Member States is willing to accept migrants in their country, be it to process applications, to integrate those who have been granted asylum or, as in the proposed return sponsorships, to take up the challenge of returning people to their country of origin.

Henrik Ankerstjerne, Deputy Permanent Secretary of the Danish Ministry for Immigration and Integration, agreed that a major achievement of the New Pact is that it really tackles the almost impossible task of reconciling all the views of all Member States and that it is widely regarded as a serious attempt to achieve this goal. He expects, however, that it will require extensive additional discussions at the ministerial level, at the strategic level and at the working level before the proposals can evolve into a commonly accepted compromise. Solidarity and relocation will remain the main issues, and Mr Ankerstjerne provided a perspective on solidarity that might not always be part of the discussion. For Denmark, solidarity is first and foremost about aiding a country under pressure and about assisting in a way that actually helps to reduce that pressure. The type of solidarity that should be given full priority is solidarity that would lead to a reduction in the irregular movements or the flows towards the country under pressure. Against this backdrop, relocation within the EU might not be the first thing to consider, but instead cooperation with the countries along an irregular migration route and perhaps first of all the countries neighbouring a displacement situation. Experience shows that as soon as states or the international community start to engage with the countries neighbouring a displacement crisis, the numbers of irregular arrivals start to drop. Consequently, this is where the Europeans should have their focus. As regards the external dimension, there always must be a breakdown according to

The heart of the matter, which we are all aware of and which has been at the heart of the discussion for years, is this balance that needs to be struck between responsibility and solidarity, as the frontline Member States will always underline.

Markos Karavias

Head of the Asylum Service of the Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum



geographical regions and to current issues. Every state must identify the regions from which irregular migrants and asylum seekers are moving to its territory, including transit countries, and it is these regions and countries where actual improvements must take place. In those countries and regions one must look at livelihoods, at the real reasons for people traveling, at the possibility of leading a relatively normal life and at the perspectives for the future. Many refugees in first countries of asylum have only limited access to such possibilities. This is what fuels secondary movements. In transit countries, one must look at the issues of trafficking and people smuggling. One needs to help the local authorities in tackling those issues. And one must help with the infrastructure for asylum processing and return processing. In sum, border management, return, asylum and the fight against people smuggling are the four areas in which the EU must become much better at locating the needs and gaps in transit countries and much better at identifying the partners that need to be operating in the vicinity of Europe. In all of this, Mr Ankerstjerne concluded, the European agencies already play a very important role but should play a much bigger role in the future. There should be no further hold-ups on agreeing to the asylum agency. This would be one of the most important contributions to solidarity, and especially to those countries most in need. There can be no argument for not pushing forward this particular issue. As a final point, he emphasised that any common asylum system in Europe needs to have a common strategy and a common set of rules to prevent any abuse of the system. There are many nationalities among the asylum seekers in the EU whose recognition rates are particularly low. Accelerated procedures, also at the external borders, would help a great deal in disincentivising applications from nationalities with low chances of obtaining a positive decision.

The perspectives of a frontline Member State were brought into the discussion by **Markos Karavias, Head of the Asylum Service at the Ministry of Migration and Asylum of the Hellenic Republic**. Thus, Mr Karavias confirmed that he also tends to be optimistic about the New Pact and feels that the Commission has indeed listened to what frontline Member States had to say. The gridlock that has characterised the intra-EU discussions on moving forward with a common migration and asylum policy over the last five years persists, however, the extensive and in-depth discussions on the dysfunctionalities of the current system are addressed in the Commission proposal to a certain extent. The only way to finally break the gridlock will be to keep the negotiations going. Another positive aspect is that the New Pact is comprehensive. In a way, it is a set of interlocking instruments that deal with asylum and migration end-to-end. And at the same time, states are provided with a good overall picture of what they might be called upon to deliver. This is important because it allows states to calibrate their negotiating position. The crux of the matter, which everyone is aware of and which has been at the heart of the discussion for years, is the balance that needs to be struck between responsibility and solidarity. The frontline Member States will always emphasise this and view this issue as the driver of the onward negotiations on

the New Pact. From Greece's perspective, the key aim is that the proposed processes and procedures unfold in a manner that guarantees swift and fair procedures, the resilience of the European asylum system and the safeguarding of fundamental rights. When it comes to the proposed pre-screening of asylum applicants and the border procedures, the key factors to be considered are the size and composition of flows on the one hand and the issue of return on the other. Overcrowding must be avoided. The impact on the EU – Turkey Statement must be assessed. Under the current reading of the statement, if asylum seekers are moved from the islands, which would be possible under the accelerated procedure proposed by the New Pact, they cannot be returned to Turkey. Finally, both the screening and the border procedures make sense only if the return of rejected applicants is a real option. Much work remains to be done, but at the same time, Mr Karavias pointed out many areas where there is consensus on the way ahead as well: The need for the asylum system to be fair, the need for the asylum system to be resilient, the need to guarantee fundamental rights, the need to engage with countries of origin and transit, the need to investigate returns and the significance of illegal migration. The current phase, however, is the peculiar stage at which everyone focuses during negotiations on the bits they disagree with. This is normal and should not discourage further talks, particularly because the proposals are so comprehensive. There is a new focus on existing practices such as the border procedures, and then there are novel mechanisms such as the EU return sponsorship, and then there is the perennial issue of a mechanism for solidarity on the table. The negotiations are taking place at various speeds and levels, both at the technical and the political levels. What is important is that despite disagreements, despite the different geographical situations, despite the embedded or even entrenched positions, Member States are at the negotiating table. That is the key takeaway at this moment in time.

Nina Gregori, Executive Director of the European Asylum Support Office, reiterated five elements that she considers crucial in the New Pact the Commission proposed. These elements might also answer the question of how the New Pact would make a difference and where it would alter the existing Common European Asylum System and the mechanisms for its implementation. The first of these five elements is the new emphasis on the external dimension. The new aspect here is that the use of the already existing tools will be raised to a whole new level in terms of political weight and in terms of envisaged resources. This is considered crucial also from the perspective of EASO, as enhanced cooperation with third countries is fundamental to progress in any other area as well. The second element is the management of the external borders. Two main proposals are important in this regard: the one on the so-called screening regulation and the one on the common border procedure. Screening and border procedures akin to those in the proposals are used in some Member States but not commonly by all of them yet. This is an element that can and should not only enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the border procedure and the asylum

I would say that a main element is the newly proposed crisis regulation. I think this was something that was really missing in the old system. We did have the old Temporary Protection Directive, but it was weak. We did not include in it the elements that are needed to address the crisis resilience at European Union level. And this is something that is important.

Nina Gregori

Executive Director, European Asylum Support Office



procedure as such but also link these procedures to return at the same time. The third element is the asylum and migration management regulation. The proposals include elements that go beyond the Dublin regulation but can facilitate the management of migration as a whole. The fourth and very important element pertains to the proposals on the new mechanism for solidarity and should be viewed as a very positive thing. The new quality here is that no one questions anymore whether solidarity should be in place. The debate now is about the way in which it should be shown. The fifth and equally important element is the proposed new crisis regulation. According to Ms. Gregori, this aspect was missing in the old system. There is the long-standing Temporary Protection Directive, but it proved a weak instrument that had not included several aspects that are needed for addressing crisis and ensuring resilience at European Union level. This is something that will be key to addressing the challenges of the future. Finally, Ms Gregori expressed her hope that the new European Asylum Agency regulation would be adopted as soon as possible. The role of EASO is to support the implementation of the Common European Asylum System operationally. Well-functioning operations on the ground, the quality of asylum decisions and the coherence of asylum procedures among Member States are absolutely necessary to make the system work, and the new regulation will allow several important steps to be taken so that this role can be performed even more effectively.

CONCLUSIONS

- ➔ The panellists looked at concrete strategies for progress on Schengen and on EU asylum at a time when Member States were in the process of defining their positions ahead of final negotiations on the New Pact. In this context, all speakers were quick to address negotiation dynamics, emphasising the positive attitude they had observed towards the negotiation process.
- ➔ Ultimately, the EU will only find a solution if a considerably large group of Member States is willing to accept migrants in their country, be it to process applications, to integrate those who have been granted asylum or, as in the proposed return sponsorships, to take up the challenge of returning people to their country of origin.
- ➔ The discussion first revolved around the New Pact's proposed border screenings and fast-track asylum procedures, which have already been introduced by some countries. The proposed screening regulation and common border procedure were considered appropriate instruments to enhance the efficiency of both border and asylum procedures.
- ➔ Caution is required, however, as the size and composition of flows and irregular arrivals will determine whether fast-track procedures are feasible – and these flows and arrivals vary greatly among Member States. Here, the fast-tracking of nationalities with low recognition rates might play a key role.
- ➔ Asylum and return procedures should be examined in a comprehensive manner and be supported by effective cooperation with third countries, particularly in the field of return. Here, the New Pact proposes using tools in the external dimension that already exist but are not yet used to their full potential.
- ➔ Another important element of the New Pact is the proposed new regulation on dealing with crises, an aspect mostly missing in the existing system. The long-standing Temporary Protection Directive proved largely ineffective, as it had not included several aspects that are needed for addressing crisis and ensuring resilience at the European Union level. A well-functioning crisis response mechanism will be crucial in view of expected future migration challenges.

Migration partnerships in action – finding a joint way forward

Senior Panel II

Implementing the external dimension of the New Pact on Migration and Asylum will be as important as managing the external borders and internal solidarity. As successful migration partnerships are central to pursuing a whole-of-route approach to migration, efforts to deepen and consolidate dialogues with and between partners are fundamental to strengthening migration management capacity and migration governance. The panel examined how genuine migration partnerships could be leveraged and promoted through a process of finding common interests in cooperation – and, importantly, how this could be done in actual practice. Panellists discussed the interlinkages between different migration interests and priorities whilst exploring concrete ways of identifying common objectives necessary to develop balanced and tailor-made partnerships.

Jessica Bither, Migration Fellow & Senior Program Officer at the German Marshall Fund of the United States, welcomed the panellists and pointed out that discussing the external dimension of the EU migration policy seemed to be a common thread through both the New Pact and the previous sessions of the VMC2020. The issue of partnerships came up in several ways during the conference and many hopes and expectations are tied to working on the external dimension. In the New Pact, partnership is a crucial component in many of the respective packages, from return to resettlement policies, but also in the new Talent Partnerships. In the search for common ground on the internal dimension of the EU migration policy within Europe and among the Member States, the discussion clearly keeps coming back to the external dimension as well. In many ways, all the crucial nodes for progress, from stepped-up border procedures to discussions on internal relocation, always hinge upon the success of cooperating with third countries. In that sense, migration partnerships represent a topic that is very timely and also very complicated. The purpose of the panel was to discuss at least some of the main questions in this regard: What are the key ingredients needed to successfully drive these partnerships forward? How can partnerships be forged even when relations between partners are quite contentious? How can a constant dialogue be ensured between partners? And finally, how can partnerships be promoted against the backdrop of a post-COVID-19 world, whose exact shape and direction is still unknown?

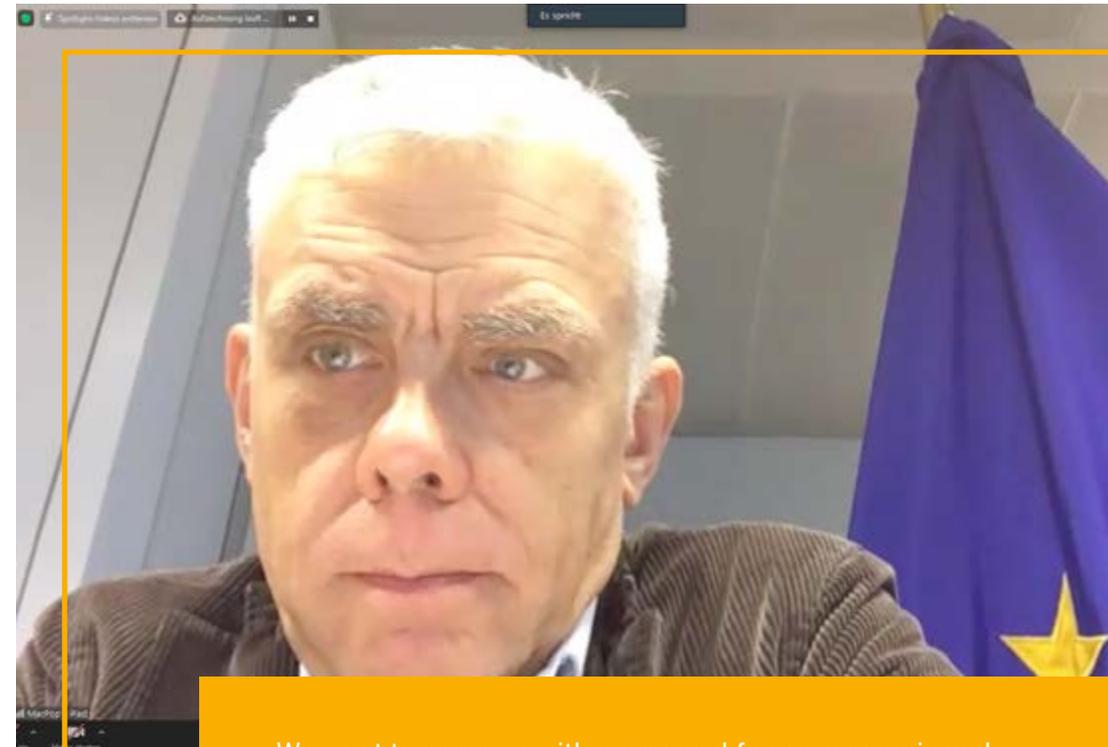
The New Pact builds on the concept of comprehensive partnerships, which should be tailor-made but also address the needs and interests of all partners. **Maciej Popowski, Acting Director-General of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations**, pointed out that this is certainly a lesson learned from previous experience. It is not that the EU imposed things in the past, but the perception was that perhaps it was not attentive enough to the needs and priorities of its partners, and now the wish is to change that perception. In reality, the EU always tried to tailor its support to the situation at hand. A good example is Morocco, where after the peak of arrivals from Morocco to Europe in 2018, the Commission



I think it became very clear that even when talking about finding common ground within Europe and within Member States, we kept going back to the external dimension because all the crucial nodes, from increased border procedures to discussions on relocation internally, always hinged again upon the success of cooperating with third states.

Jessica Bither

Migration Fellow & Senior Program Officer, Europe Program,
The German Marshall Fund of the United States



We want to come up with a proposal for an economic and investment plan for the South, which will be a centrepiece of a communication on renewed engagement with the Southern Neighbourhood. It will be broader than migration. It will be a policy framework for our relationship and all work strands therein, but of course we will still deal with all aspects of migration.

Maciej Popowski

Acting Director-General, Directorate-General for Neighbourhood
and Enlargement Negotiations, European Commission



That is one of the lessons we learned from 2015. It is very important to address hopelessness and the lack of perspective among migrants in countries of origin and in transit countries.

Andrea Schumacher

Vice-President, Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Germany

quickly put together a package of 140 million euros. Most of this funding went directly to the national budget, so that the Ministry of Interior had the means to quickly fund the emerging additional needs. This approach was much appreciated and paved the way to deeper cooperation in other areas. Tailor-made approaches are a good basis to build on. But they require targeted action in different sectors with an emphasis on greater economic investment in the neighbourhood to boost job creation, particularly for young people, and to generate economic growth. On this basis, the EU wants to present a proposal for an economic and investment plan for the South in 2021, which will be a centrepiece of a communication on renewed engagement with the Southern Neighbourhood. It will lay down a broader policy framework for the relationship with the South and all work strands therein, but of course it will deal with all aspects of migration as well. The concept of Talent Partnerships will feature prominently; there is the need to improve cooperation on returns and readmission, to step up efforts on the reintegration of migrants, and to crack down on migrant smuggling networks. The work on international protection will continue as it has since 2015. At the same time, there will be particular emphasis on improving migration governance and management in partner countries. All of this is to be achieved through better, more direct engagement and through open and frank dialogue in a partnership of equals. An open dialogue must counter the perception that the EU wants to make cooperation contingent on migration, because migration is part of a bigger picture. The relationship is much broader than that. The Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) will certainly play a role in the rollout of the New Pact once agreed, because of its external chapter, and then focus on the neighbourhood. The engagement with North Africa and the Middle East will be presented in greater detail in the February 2021 communication. But DG NEAR will also continue the work with Turkey and the support to refugees in Turkey. And there is a hook in the draft Pact on Migration and Asylum with the announcement that this cooperation and support will continue, even though the current arrangements for the Facility for Refugees in Turkey would normally come to an end in 2021. But everybody knows that it is not the time to stop this cooperation, because this huge population of more than four million Syrians continues to be hosted in the country. The Turkish authorities have legitimate expectations that the European Union will continue its support.

Andrea Schumacher, Vice-President of the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, shed light on another crucial aspect of migration partnerships, namely concrete and practical cooperation in the form of joint initiatives, programmes and projects that benefit people in vulnerable situations, be they refugees, migrants or individuals in dire straits. A major lesson learned from the 2015 migration crisis is the need to address hopelessness and the lack of perspective among migrants in countries of origin and in transit countries. All efforts must aim at concretely improving the living conditions of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants and at creating perspectives in their home countries or countries of residence. This is why the

economic and investment plan presented by DG NEAR is such an important initiative. It would help to create exactly the perspectives needed in countries of origin and transit. There is great hope that the New Pact will contribute to creating a win-win situation that strengthens the migration authorities and asylum systems in partner countries and at the same time improves the conditions for migrants on the ground. In this regard, Ms Schumacher provided several examples of projects the Federal Office is implementing together with national and international partners, many of them involving ICMPD as the implementing organisation. In Armenia, the Federal Office is assisting with the construction of a temporary accommodation centre. In Azerbaijan it is providing reintegration support to Azerbaijani returnees. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, a new project has started that is designed to build capacities for the reception, accommodation and reintegration of senior citizens returning under the readmission agreement. There is engagement in the so-called External Dimension Network aimed at establishing a database to improve coordination and communication among EU Member States at the working level. This is quite important to avoid a duplication of efforts. In the framework of the Intergovernmental Consultations on Migration, Asylum and Refugees (IGC), there is a new emphasis on integration at the city level with an eye to learning from experiences and good practices from other world regions, such as Canada. This has already found expression in a project planned together with different partners in Greece. It targets unaccompanied minors in the asylum procedure. The project is based on a municipal partnership between Nuremberg, home to the Federal Office premises, and Kavala as the partner city of Nuremberg. And this is a starting point for what may become a long-term project for intercultural exchange between unaccompanied asylum seekers and local minors in selected Greek municipalities. Ms Schumacher concluded that these projects are small in terms of setup and target group, but that the Federal Office sees them as effective in delivering on the broader policy objectives formulated by the New Pact.

With an estimated 11 million citizens working abroad, Bangladesh is one of the world's major labour-migrant-sending countries. The COVID-19 pandemic affected many Bangladeshi workers abroad but also their families, whose livelihoods depend on migrant remittances. Consequently, **Hon. Ahmed Munirus Saleheen, Secretary at the Ministry of Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment of Bangladesh**, stressed that in 2020 much of the work of the Bangladeshi authorities had to focus on ensuring the overall welfare of migrant workers, both at home and abroad. The second priority was to ensure that overseas employment and the inflow of remittances were not too drastically affected. These objectives also prompted additional efforts in further promoting skills development to maintain the employability of people who go abroad and in ensuring that labour migrants go through proper regular channels. The third priority was the socioeconomic reintegration of people who come back from different countries after having worked in them. Thus far, existing programmes have perhaps not been sufficient, but the COVID-19 situation has taught the responsible authorities

to reinvigorate and reinforce the idea of socioeconomic reintegration. The focus is on vocational training, on economic support and on soft loans so that returnees can invest in activities that generate self-employment. International cooperation is a fourth major priority. Thus far, most of the support involves providing awareness-raising programmes to allow people to take informed decisions, because this is perhaps one area that needs improvement. One area of collaboration with the development partners entails making people aware and at the same time making migration the subject of a positive narrative rather than a negative one. To sustain migration as a development tool, Bangladesh and its partners must make sure that migration is quality migration, is responsible migration, is ethical migration and is safe and orderly migration. In all these matters, Bangladesh appreciates the support it receives from its partners, be they international development partners, European countries, or local civil societies.

Martijn Pluim, Director of Migration Dialogues & Cooperation at ICMPD, sees the New Pact following three main objectives: First, it seeks to protect people in need and to stop forced migration. Second, it seeks to promote the return and reintegration of people who do not qualify for international protection. And third, it seeks to attract talent and labour migration in a regular and orderly way. To achieve these objectives, it has formulated instruments at three levels. The first level pertains to internal solidarity; the second, to border procedures; and the third, to a heavy emphasis on external cooperation and external partnerships. Making this emphasis such an integral part of the European Migration Pact is an acknowledgement of the need for this cooperation. Perhaps in the past, symbolic action was the approach taken to certain topics rather than real engagement. This time, the New Pact strongly recognizes the differences between individual countries the EU is dealing with. There are of course common principles that the EU has, common objectives in terms of cooperation with third countries. However, these third countries vary greatly in terms of their respective history, also in terms of their history of cooperation with Europe, their migration relationship with Europe, their demographic and political situation, and their administrative systems. Therefore, a very targeted approach is needed. It is reassuring to see how heavily the New Pact emphasises this fact in its core documents. Another important aspect is the question of leverage. Experience shows, according to Mr Pluim, that threats towards partner countries do not advance the agenda. It is much more important to analyse and understand the real reasons behind an alleged lack of cooperation, especially in the contested area of return and readmission. And this is related to a third point, perhaps the most important aspect, and that is the question of how to achieve mature and very diverse partnerships with partner countries. Here, too, the New Pact contains many instruments. Mature partnerships, of course, must enable European interests to be addressed and clearly communicated to partner countries. But at the same time, they must involve carefully listening to the interests of the partner country. How can these interests be reconciled in promoting labour mobility, in matching skills and talent? How can other partners be brought into a partnership which is bilateral?

In order to sustain the issue of migration as a tool for development, Bangladesh and its partners must make sure that migration is quality migration, is responsible migration, is ethical migration, is safe and orderly migration.

Ahmed Munirus Saleheen

Secretary at the Ministry of Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment, Bangladesh



All the partner countries are so diverse in terms of history, their history of cooperation, the migration aspect, the demographic situation, the political situation and the administrative systems. Therefore, a very targeted approach is needed, and I am very happy to see how strongly the New Pact emphasizes this need in the core documents.

Martijn Pluim

Director, Migration Dialogues & Cooperation, ICMPD



What approach should be taken to working with municipalities or with the private sector? Answering these questions is essential to ensuring that the package of co-operation becomes diverse, becomes a complete package and becomes embedded in a wider partnership. And that is the path Europe must follow if it wants to bring about deeper and more sustainable cooperation on migration with its partners.

CONCLUSIONS

- ➔ The New Pact places particular emphasis on migration partnerships. This tool is not new, but the Commission's approach is to pay even more attention to the partner countries' needs and priorities and to embed partnerships even more firmly in a broader set of relations like trade, development and economic cooperation.
- ➔ Tailor-made approaches are a good basis to build on, but they require targeted action in different sectors with an emphasis on greater economic investment to boost job creation, particularly for young people, and to generate growth.
- ➔ A main priority is to improve the livelihoods of migrants along the routes whilst recognising the importance of working via cooperation networks and aligning efforts among Member States to avoid duplication.
- ➔ From the perspective of the country of origin, labour migration contributes significantly to the country's economy and, by way of migrant remittances, to many families' livelihoods. To sustain migration as a tool for development, all partners must make sure that migration is quality migration, is responsible migration, is ethical migration and is safe and orderly migration.
- ➔ Finally, discussants agreed that there is much more room for cooperation than has been explored in the past, underlining that dialogues are an important part of the cooperation toolbox. They provide informal and trustworthy settings for stakeholders to understand and share each other's priorities and good practices on an equal footing, enabling networking and enhancing common understanding.

Focus Sessions

FOCUS SESSION 1

RETURN - REMEDY TO EU MIGRATION GRIDLOCK?

FOCUS SESSION 2

WESTERN BALKANS -
COOPERATION FOR A NEW MIGRATION REALITY?

FOCUS SESSION 3

LOCAL IS THE NEW GLOBAL -
WHAT CITIES CAN DO FOR MIGRANTS THAT COUNTRIES CANNOT

FOCUS SESSION 4

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN MIGRATION MANAGEMENT -
A REAL ASSET OR JUST A TREND?

FOCUS SESSION 5

MIGRATION ON THE POLICY AGENDA -
WHO IS TALKING WITH MIGRANTS IN THE SILK ROUTES?

FOCUS SESSION 6

COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP -
WHAT POTENTIAL FOR SCALING UP RESETTLEMENT IN EUROPE?

FOCUS SESSION 7

PREVENTING A DOMINO EFFECT -
BORDER MANAGEMENT IN EXTERNAL SHOCKS

FOCUS SESSION 8

MAKING LABOUR MOBILITY WORK FOR ALL -
PERSPECTIVES FROM THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP

FOCUS SESSION 9

ACCELERATED ASYLUM PROCEDURES - FEASIBLE, DESIRABLE, REASONABLE?

FOCUS SESSION 10

DURABLE MIGRATION COOPERATION BETWEEN EU AND TURKEY -
WHAT ARE THE EXPECTATIONS?

FOCUS SESSION 11

PARTNERSHIPS RELOADED? THE NEW EU TALENT PARTNERSHIPS

FOCUS SESSION 1

RETURN - REMEDY TO EU MIGRATION GRIDLOCK?

The first Focus Session addressed the topic of Return, where Ms Louise Ersbøll, Head of the Return and Readmission Division at the Ministry of Immigration and Integration of Denmark, and Mr Michael Kegels, Director of Operations at the Fedasil in Belgium, talked return policy with ICMPD's Sergo Mananashvili. The New Pact on Migration and Asylum highlights the need to strengthen the efficiency of returns through the creation of an EU-wide return system. Both Ms Ersbøll and Mr Kegels welcomed the proposed measures, such as Member State capacity building and knowledge sharing, including from European Return and Reintegration Network (ERRIN) pilot projects. The proposed EU Return Coordinator is also seen as crucial for streamlining the internal dimension of return policy. However, there are many open questions around the proposal of return sponsorship, including around the safeguarding of principles of international protection. Streamlined asylum procedures and specialised civilian return authorities were seen as crucial for an effectively functioning system. At the same time, countries should take a holistic approach to the return process, including high-quality Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) programmes. Both speakers cautioned that Frontex has not yet conducted AVRR programmes and needs to invest in its capacities in this area. Despite a tough road ahead, a harmonised EU approach is a promising way forward.

PARTICIPANTS FOCUS SESSION 1 | VMC 2020

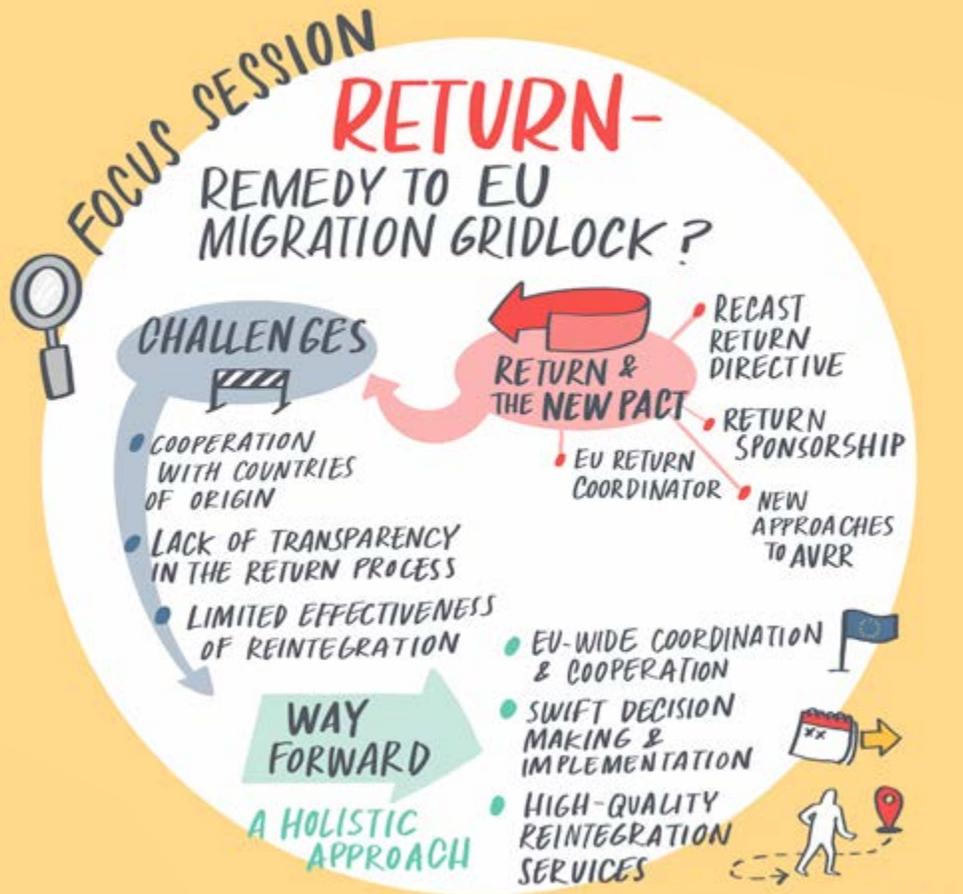
Speakers:

Mr Michael Kegels | Director of Operations, Federal agency for the reception of asylum seekers, Belgium

Ms Louise Ersbøll | Head of Division, Return and Readmission, Ministry of Immigration and Integration, Denmark

Moderator:

Mr Sergo Mananashvili | Senior Advisor, Migration Dialogues and Cooperation, ICMPD



DAY 2

VISUALS BY *visuality*

FOCUS SESSION 2

WESTERN BALKANS - COOPERATION FOR A NEW MIGRATION REALITY?

Current migration challenges in the Western Balkans were the focus of the second session. Mr Marijan Baotić, Assistant Minister in the Sector for Asylum, Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), outlined the country's struggles with the number of irregular migrants, insufficient hosting capacity, difficulty in identifying migrants who lack documentation, and the impacts of COVID-19 on top of all existing challenges. Although the number of arrivals has recently decreased, onward movement towards the EU has also lessened. Thus, BiH currently needs to host more migrants for a longer period. Looking towards the future, BiH continues to seek cooperation with countries of origin and EU authorities at its borders: "As a Western Balkan country, we have to and will continue to cooperate with other countries in the region and seek more active participation of EU authorities at the borders." Lastly, the successful integration of migrants and a more positive narrative on migration are keys for a more welcoming environment for migrants in the region.

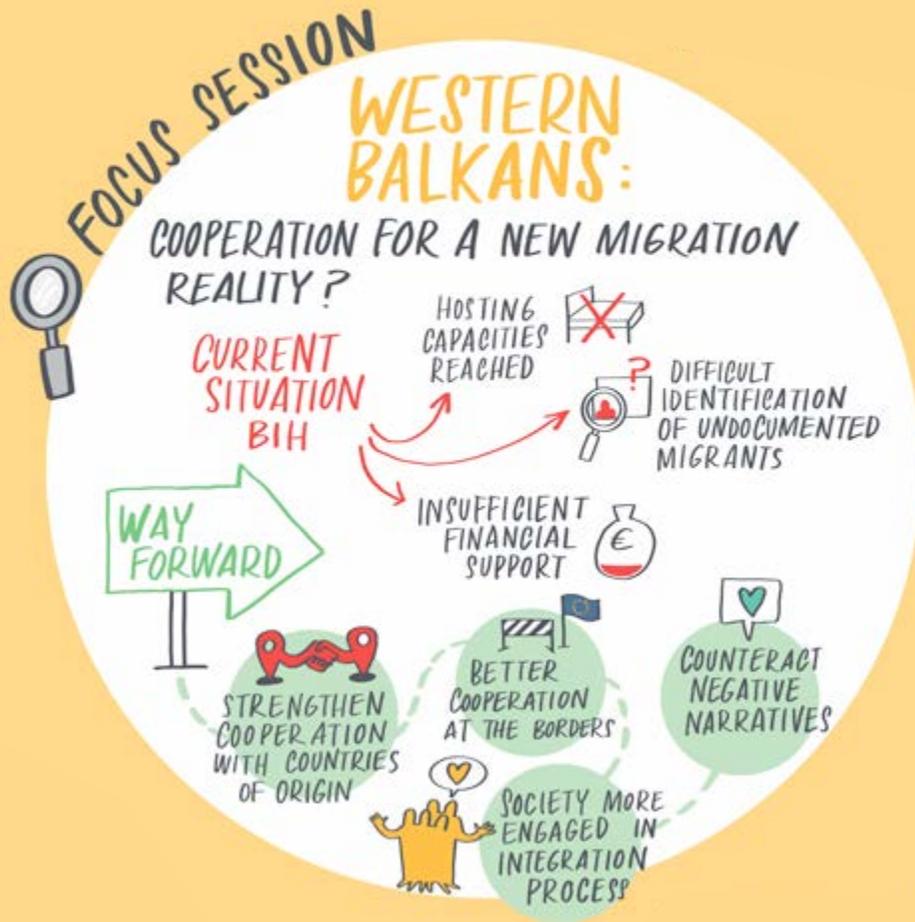
PARTICIPANTS FOCUS SESSION 2 | VMC 2020

Speakers:

Mr Marijan Baotić | Assistant Minister, Sector for Asylum, Ministry of Security, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Moderator:

Mr Tamer Kilic | Regional Coordinator, Western Balkans and Turkey, ICMPD



DAY 2

VISUALS BY *visuality*

FOCUS SESSION 3

LOCAL IS THE NEW GLOBAL - WHAT CITIES CAN DO FOR MIGRANTS THAT COUNTRIES CANNOT

The third Focus Session explored cities as crucial facilitators in the reception and integration of newcomers, and their work on stemming the pandemic. Mr Mounir Elloumi, Mayor of the Municipality of Sfax, Tunisia and Mr Emmanuel Carroz, Deputy Mayor of the Municipality of Grenoble, France, shared their efforts with ICMPD's Ana Feder. Sfax, the second-largest city in Tunisia, works to counter a lack of legal frameworks for migrants at the national level by ensuring migrants' civic participation. Since the start of the pandemic, migrants living in Sfax have faced severe problems, and the city responded with a humanitarian support campaign including vouchers and food donations as well as increased efforts to open access to health services. On the other side of Mediterranean, migrants often use Grenoble as a stopover on the way to other areas of France or the United Kingdom. As a "city for everyone", Grenoble has long had a policy of access to healthcare for all, which has proven critical during the pandemic. COVID-19 has shown that migrants' jobs, often considered to be of lesser importance, are actually vital to keeping society functioning – and Grenoble has acknowledged this in its work to promote a positive and humanitarian narrative during the crisis. To foster inclusion more generally, the city has set up participatory democracy systems for migrants, including independent citizens' council systems, participatory budgeting systems and citizen voting for all Grenoble residents, regardless of their nationality. Both city representatives emphasised the importance of inter-municipal cooperation to strengthen cities' political leverage vis-à-vis national governments and to share experiences and good practices.

PARTICIPANTS FOCUS SESSION 3 | VMC 2020

Speakers:

Mr Mounir Elloumi | Mayor of the Municipality of Sfax, Tunisia

Mr Emmanuel Carroz | Deputy Mayor of the Municipality of Grenoble, France

Moderator:

Ms Ana Feder | Regional Portfolio Manager, Regional Coordination Office for the Mediterranean, ICMPD



DAY 2

VISUALS BY *visuality*

FOCUS SESSION 4

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN MIGRATION MANAGEMENT - A REAL ASSET OR JUST A TREND?

The Focus Session on digital transformation in migration management explored the role that technology can play in supporting governments and migrants. Ms Britta Behrendt of Germany's Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community shared with ICMPD's Cecilia Lundström Carniel that, while a significant undertaking, digitalisation proved to be the right change for Germany. When faced with the need to process a large number of asylum claims in 2015-16, the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees undertook a comprehensive digitalisation of its procedures, from interpreter bookings to identity management. The innovative actions themselves, but more importantly the way in which these changes were implemented was essential. Diverse teams including IT and legal experts were put together and empowered to make ad hoc decisions – disrupting usual ministry procedures hence facilitating an agile response. Looking at returns, Ms Lotje van der Made, Head of the Pre-Return Assistance Sector at Frontex's European Centre for Return, noted that digitalisation is helpful both at different procedural stages like pre-return and in return operations, as well as for staff training. Both agreed that the pandemic has sped up digitalisation – and, as Ms Behrendt said, there is "no way back."

PARTICIPANTS FOCUS SESSION 4 | VMC 2020

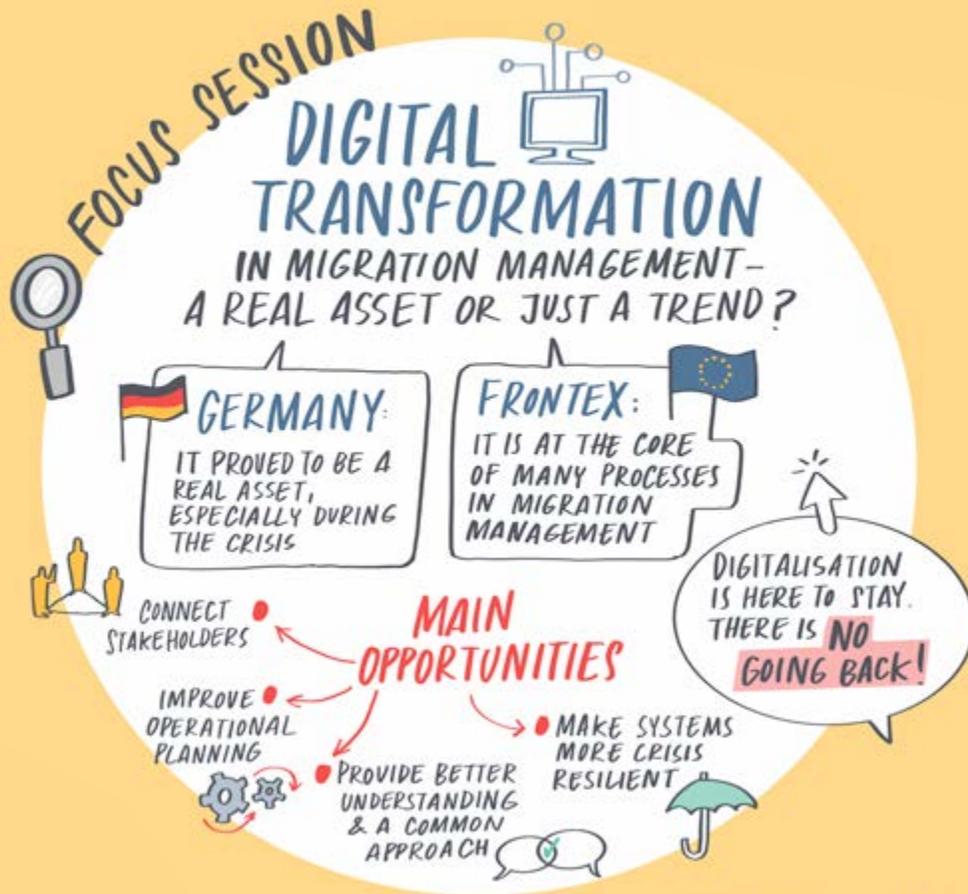
Speakers:

Ms Britta Behrendt | Head of Division, General Issues of Migration and Refugee Policy, EU Freedom of Movement, Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community, Germany

Ms Lotje Van Der Made | Head, Pre-Return Assistance Sector, European Centre for Return, Frontex

Moderator:

Ms Cecilia Lundstroem Carniel | Head of External and Member States Relations, ICMPD



DAY 2

VISUALS BY *visuality*

FOCUS SESSION 5

MIGRATION ON THE POLICY AGENDA - WHO IS TALKING WITH MIGRANTS IN THE SILK ROUTES?

The fifth Focus Session shed light on incorporating migrants' voices into policy and programme design in the Silk Routes region. Mr Francesco Luciani, Head of the Migration and Employment Unit at the European Commission's Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development, spoke with ICMPD's Sedef Dearing about the Commission's work to engage with and listen to migrants through its work with diasporas and support for structures close to migrants that can hear their needs, such as Migrant Resource Centres. Bringing in a national perspective, Mr Kashif Noor, Director General of Pakistan's Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment, explained that the government is increasingly communicating with current, former and potential future emigrants through interactive tools including an online portal and social media channels, which allow more direct outreach and exchange of feedback, suggestions and complaints. With many migrant workers returning due to COVID-19, Pakistan has launched a dedicated portal that enables it to better support returnees' financial inclusion and access to protection; with 75.000 people currently registered, it has decided to keep this platform up and running after the pandemic to continue to support returnees.

PARTICIPANTS FOCUS SESSION 5 | VMC 2020

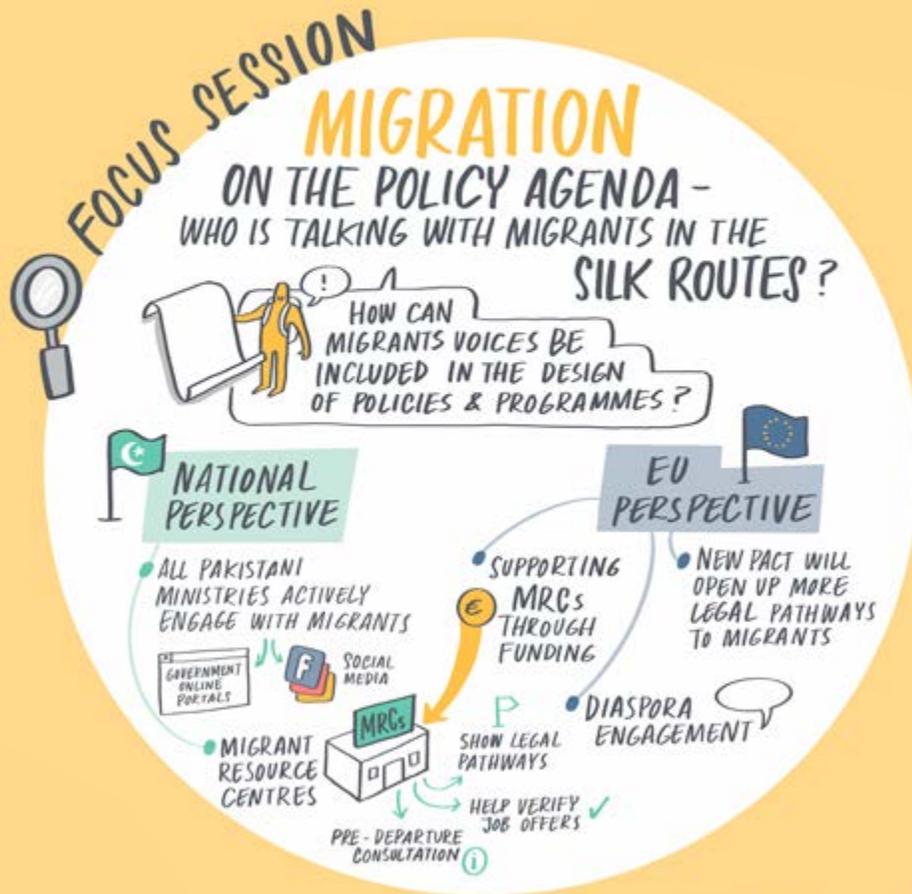
Speakers:

Mr Kashif Noor | Director General, Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment, Pakistan

Mr Francesco Luciani | Head of Unit, Migration and Employment, Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development, European Commission

Moderator:

Ms Sedef Dearing | Head of the Budapest Process Secretariat and Regional Coordinator Silk Routes, ICMPD



DAY 2

VISUALS BY *visuality*

FOCUS SESSION 6

COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP - WHAT POTENTIAL FOR SCALING UP RESETTLEMENT IN EUROPE?

The sixth Focus Session addressed the concept of community sponsorship to support the arrival and inclusion of refugees. Ms Hana Jalloul Muro, Secretary of State for Migration at Spain's Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migration, detailed to ICMPD's Sarah Schläger Spain's pilot projects in Basque Country and Valencia and the benefits of community sponsorship that Spain has experienced. This innovative concept can complement national resettlement efforts and has proven beneficial to fostering integration: "Community sponsorship has enormous potential to enhance social inclusion and cohesion" she concluded. Mr Giulio di Blasi, European Director of the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative, sees increased momentum around community sponsorship. He remarked that "the Pact signals the EU's willingness to take ownership of community sponsorship" and that the EU could play a key role in advocating for sponsorship in Europe and globally. This in turn could provide an opportunity to scale up programmes by identifying and sharing best practices, and expanding the number of countries, refugees and community stakeholders involved.

PARTICIPANTS FOCUS SESSION 6 | VMC 2020

Speakers:

Ms Hana Jalloul Muro | Secretary of State for Migration, Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migration, Spain

Mr Giulio di Blasi | European Director, Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative

Moderator:

Ms Sarah Schlaeger | Head of Office in Jordan, ICMPD



DAY 3

VISUALS BY *visuality*

FOCUS SESSION 7

PREVENTING A DOMINO EFFECT - BORDER MANAGEMENT IN EXTERNAL SHOCKS

Divergent border management responses in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak and possible implications on Schengen regulations were discussed in the seventh Focus Session, moderated by ICMPD's Borut Eržen. As explained by Mr Patrik Engström, Head of the National Border Policing Section at the Swedish Police Authority, re-establishing internal borders was a necessary short-term measure and in line with the Schengen Borders Code – a measure which, however, revealed a flaw in the current acquis in that it does not adequately address public health issues. As a result, Member States re-introduced internal border controls in an uncoordinated manner. At the same time, he argued that the major threat to Schengen is not the pandemic but evolving threats of terrorism and organised crime: "Instead of seeing external controls as an obstacle, these threats see the openness of the Schengen area as opportunity." Mr Marko Gašperlin, Assistant Director of the Uniformed Police Directorate at Slovenia's Ministry of the Interior, pointed out that a full-fledged harmonisation of relevant regulations still seems a long way away, even though it is sorely needed in order to deal with crisis situations. The session highlighted that European integrated border management (IBM) can only be effective once all its components are in place across all Member States, be it the Frontex Standing Corps, a long-awaited Exit/Entry System, a harmonised asylum policy or an effective return policy – all supported by proper IT infrastructure. With this in mind, both speakers agreed that the Commission's New Pact shows promise in strengthening all IBM elements. Beyond that, a substantial reform of Schengen seems inevitable. Mr. Engström argued that, "rather than reforming reactively, it is important to anticipate the development of threats and challenges and create a Schengen system that is much nimbler and faster in responding."

PARTICIPANTS FOCUS SESSION 7 | VMC 2020

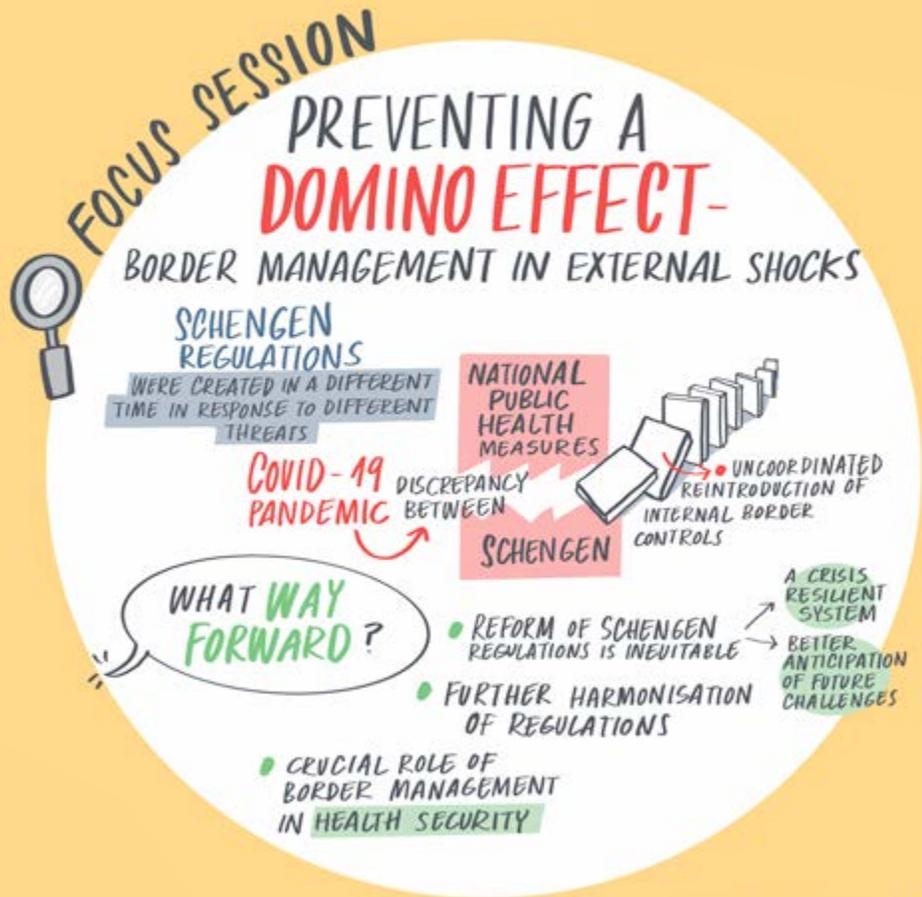
Speakers:

Mr Patrik Engström | Head, National Border Policing Section, The Swedish Police Authority

Mr Marko Gašperlin | Assistant Director, Uniformed Police Directorate, Ministry of the Interior, Slovenia

Moderator:

Mr Borut Eržen | Head, Border Management and Security Programme, ICMPD



DAY 3

VISUALS BY *visuality*

FOCUS SESSION 8

MAKING LABOUR MOBILITY WORK FOR ALL - PERSPECTIVES FROM THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP

The eighth Focus Session zoomed in on labour mobility between the EU and Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries, gathering H.E. Daniela Morari, Ambassador, Head of the Mission of the Republic of Moldova to the EU, and Mr Vusal Huseynov, Chief of Azerbaijan's State Migration Service who shared their perspectives with ICMPD's Violeta Wagner. While Russia and Turkey are traditional destination countries, Azerbaijan is experiencing increasing emigration to EU Member States. Seeing great potential in this area, the country is working to encourage legal pathways and to make the process as easy as possible for migrants. Moldova is working to maximise opportunities stemming from emigration – and combatting brain drain and brain waste – through implementing circular migration schemes and other labour migration tools. Despite a variety of such tools in place, many remain underutilized or even dysfunctional. The number of bilateral agreements regulating the status of Moldovan migrant workers remains limited, though, and so are the means available to protect their rights. Another priority for Moldova is the reintegration of returnees and engaging its diaspora in the country's development. According to H.E. Morari, the Pact "came at the right time" for the region, as countries are now increasingly discussing the future of the EaP.

PARTICIPANTS FOCUS SESSION 8 | VMC 2020

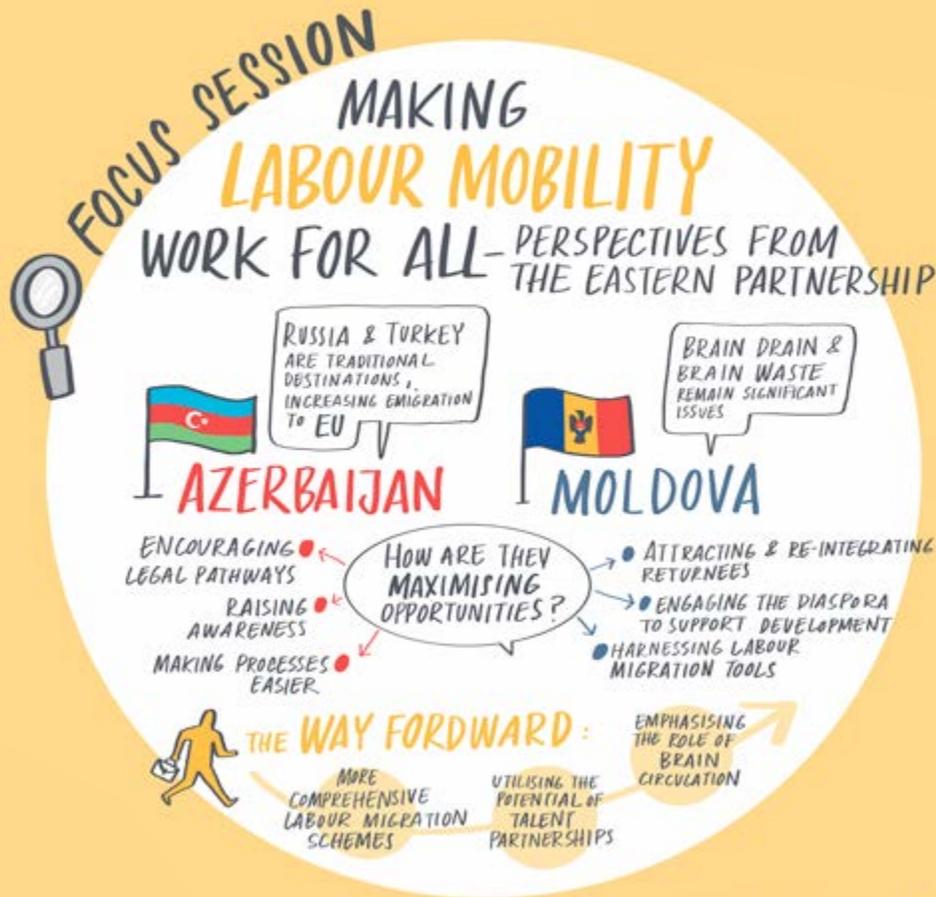
Speakers:

H.E. Daniela Morari | Ambassador, Head of Mission, Mission of the Republic of Moldova to the European Union

Mr Vusal Huseynov | Chief, State Migration Service, Azerbaijan

Moderator:

Ms Violeta Wagner | Regional Portfolio Manager, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, ICMPD



DAY 3

VISUALS BY *visuality*

FOCUS SESSION 9

ACCELERATED ASYLUM PROCEDURES - FEASIBLE, DESIRABLE, REASONABLE?

In the ninth Focus Session, ICMPD's Martin Wagner examined the feasibility and desirability of accelerated asylum procedures with Mr Thomas Segessenmann of Switzerland's State Secretariat for Migration and Mr Marios Kaleas from Greece's Regional Asylum Office of Lesbos in the final session of the day. Mr Segessenmann explained that the Swiss reform in this field rooted in a broad consensus that long asylum procedures were both inhumane and expensive, which resulted in accelerated asylum procedures. The objective was to create a fast and fair system, with the understanding that "if everything works faster, it's good for everyone." Rapid decisions on both manifestly founded and unfounded claims, the safeguarding of asylum seekers' rights, return support and consistent enforcement of return decisions have become cornerstones of the Swiss system. In its work, Switzerland has found sufficient and appropriate staffing and accommodation to be key, in addition to free legal assistance and the careful channelling of applicants into the correct procedure. Mr Segessenmann stressed that all of these factors are equally important: "The chain breaks at the weakest link." Also Greece has implemented procedures at the external border which aim to respond to a large workload in a fair and quick manner, including by prioritising the examination of applications considered more or less likely to be approved. Mr Kaleas emphasised that the potential to accelerate procedures depends to a large extent on tailoring them to local and national structures and realities.

PARTICIPANTS FOCUS SESSION 9 | VMC 2020

Speakers:

Mr Marios Kaleas | Head, Asylum Office of Lesbos, Hellenic Republic
Mr Thomas Segessenmann | Deputy Head, Staff Office Asylum, State Secretariat for Migration, Switzerland

Moderator:

Mr Martin Wagner | Senior Policy Advisor, Policy Unit, ICMPD



DAY 3

VISUALS BY *visuality*

FOCUS SESSION 10

DURABLE MIGRATION COOPERATION BETWEEN EU AND TURKEY - WHAT ARE THE EXPECTATIONS?

The tenth Focus Session offered a lively discussion on how to shape migration cooperation between Turkey and the EU, moderated by ICMPD's Tamer Kilic. The two speakers, DG NEAR Director of Strategy Ms Myriam Ferran and Chief Coordinator of the Facility of Refugees in Turkey (FRIT) Mr H. Halil Afşarata, emphasised the efforts of both sides to address the refugee situation in Turkey. They agreed that the March 2016 EU-Turkey statement remains the overall basis for EU-Turkey cooperation. The EU's humanitarian intervention in Turkey as well as the FRIT fund were also discussed in this Focus Session. Here, Mr Afşarata called for faster spending of promised funds and argued that Turkey has limited influence on the selection of local fund operators, which might result in negative consequences for project implementation. In response, Ms Ferran highlighted that, while the share of the funds indeed goes directly to Turkish Ministries in order to support mainstreaming programmes for refugees, including multiyear infrastructure projects, considerable funding reaches refugees directly through cash payments. Turkey furthermore called for the implementation of the EU-Turkey statement in its entirety, yet some provisions are conditional on Turkey's progress on rule of law and other democratic credentials. Turkey welcomes the Commission's Pact, but also underlines that it should not exclusively focus on EU border protection, but should also place more emphasis on economic development, supporting transit and origin countries and further alignment with the UN Global Compact on Refugees. Mr Afşarata concluded, "a global perspective in migration management should be the goal."

PARTICIPANTS FOCUS SESSION 10 | VMC 2020

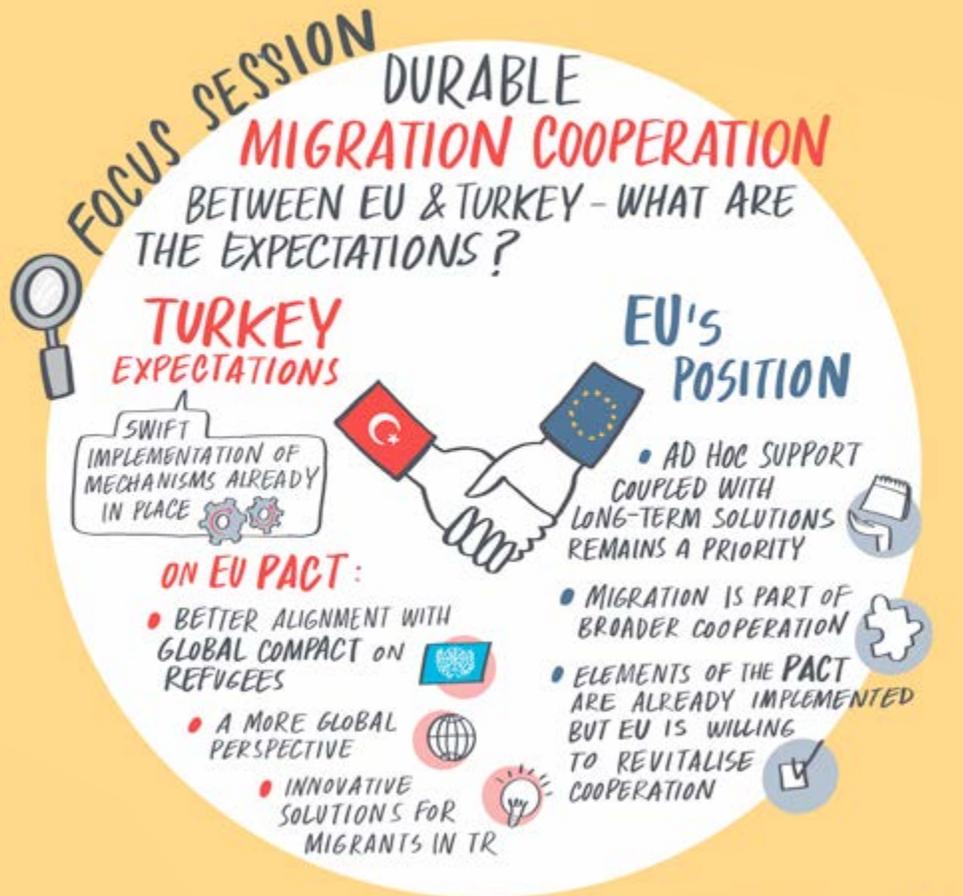
Speakers:

Mr H. Halil Afşarata | Chief Foreign Affairs Advisor to the Vice President of the Republic of Turkey and Chief Coordinator of the Facility of Refugees in Turkey

Ms Myriam Ferran | Director, Strategy and Turkey, Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, European Commission

Moderator:

Mr Tamer Kilic | Regional Coordinator, Western Balkans and Turkey, ICMPD



DAY 4

VISUALS BY *visuality*

FOCUS SESSION 11

PARTNERSHIPS RELOADED? THE NEW EU TALENT PARTNERSHIPS

The eleventh Focus Session concluded with a discussion on the Pact's proposed EU Talent Partnerships, which envisions more balanced benefits for both EU Member States and third countries. Ms Laura Corrado, Head of the Legal Pathways and Integration Unit at DG HOME, emphasised to ICMPD's Jennifer Tangney that "We need more comprehensive and mutually beneficial partnerships." She explained that the Pact proposes to create one umbrella under which a range of different initiatives can be housed. While the EU can play a key role here, Member States, third countries and the private sector will be essential to tailor programming: "it is not a one-size-fits-all model." The aim is to create a win-win situation in which targeted training contributes to labour market development in both Member States (via mobility) and third countries. Bringing in the business perspective, Mr Robert Plummer, Senior Advisor at Business Europe, reflected that, in view of the existing skills mismatches and labour shortages, "we see the role of migration as part of a policy mix to help address such needs." He remarked that, despite the pandemic triggering layoffs and short-term work schemes, talents will play a pivotal role in the pursuit of economic recovery. At the same time, direct engagement with companies and social partners to convince companies of the added value of Talent Partnerships will be key to Talent Partnership success.

PARTICIPANTS FOCUS SESSION 11 | VMC 2020

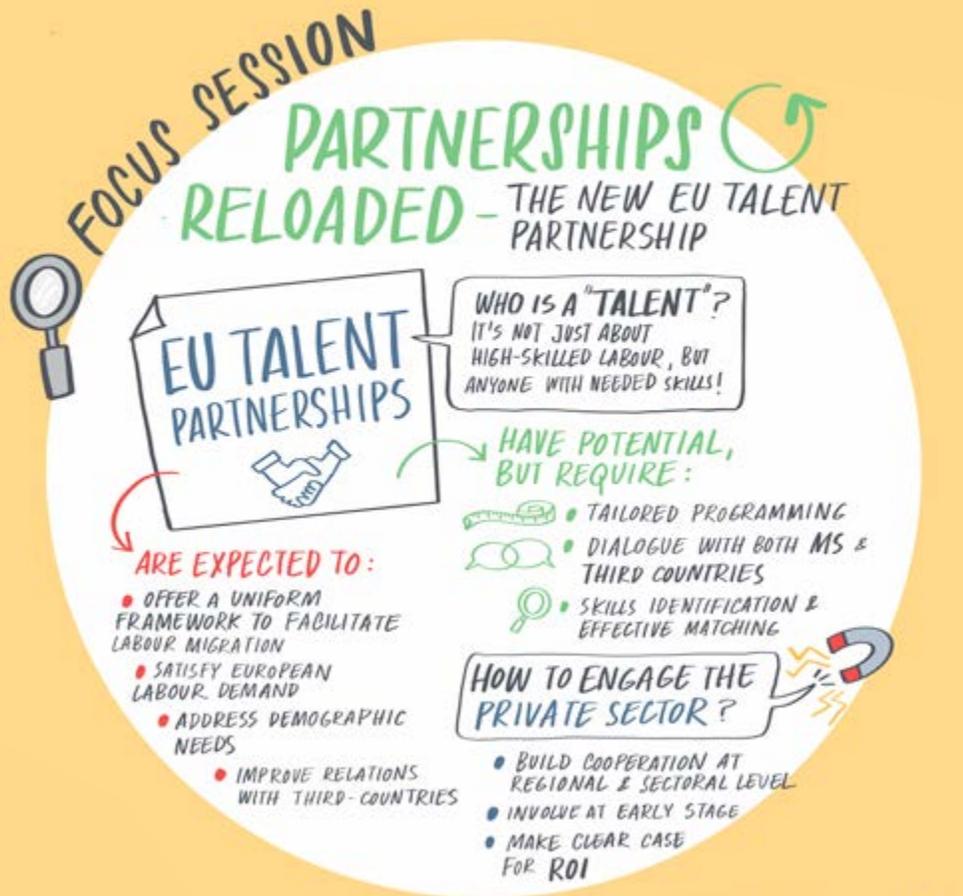
Speakers:

Ms Laura Corrado | Head of Unit, Legal Pathways and Integration, Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, European Commission

Mr Robert Plummer | Senior Advisor, Business Europe

Moderator:

Ms Jennifer Tangney | Senior Project Manager – Mobility Partnership Facility, ICMPD



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Text editing: Martin Hofmann, ICMPD
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Publication: Bernhard Schragl, ICMPD
Art Direction & Design: Sarah Blum

International Centre for Migration
Policy Development (ICMPD) Austria, 2021

AGENDA VIENNA MIGRATION CONFERENCE 2020

Monday, 16 November 2020

Introducing VMC2020: A year of seismic change

- ➔ **Ms Karin Keller-Sutter** | Federal Councillor, Federal Department of Justice and Police, Switzerland
- ➔ **Mr Eduardo Cabrita** | Minister, Ministry of Home Affairs, Portugal

The Krastev-Selmayr debate: Survive and thrive? How COVID-19 is changing the world, Europe and migration

- ➔ **Mr Ivan Krastev** | Chairman, Centre for Liberal Strategies
- ➔ **Mr Martin Selmayr** | Head of the Representation, Representation of the European Commission in Austria

Tuesday, 17 November 2020

Focus Session: Return - Remedy to EU migration gridlock?

Focus Session: Western Balkans - Cooperation for a new migration reality?

Focus Session: Local is the new global - What cities can do for migrants that countries cannot

High-level Political Session: Give and Take – The geo-political context for migration diplomacy

In Conversation: Priorities of the German Presidency of the EU on migration diplomacy

- ➔ **Mr Stephan Mayer** | Parliamentary State Secretary to the Federal Minister of the Interior, Building and Community, Germany
- ➔ **Mr Michael Spindelegger** | Director General, ICMPD

Give and Take – The geo-political context for migration diplomacy

- ➔ **Mr Yavuz Selim Kiran** | Deputy Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Turkey
- ➔ **H.E. Amira El Fadil** | Commissioner for Social Affairs, African Union Commission
- ➔ **Mr Olivér Várhelyi** | Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement, European Commission
- ➔ **Mr Stephan Mayer** | Parliamentary State Secretary to the Federal Minister of the Interior, Building and Community, Germany

Focus Session: Digital transformation in migration management - A real asset or just a trend?

Focus Session: Migration on the policy agenda - Who is talking with migrants in the Silk Routes?

Wednesday, 18 November 2020

Focus Session: Community sponsorship - What potential for scaling up resettlement in Europe?

Focus Session: Preventing a domino effect - Border management in external shocks

Focus Session: Making labour mobility work for all - Perspectives from the Eastern Partnership

Senior Panel I: Schengen and EU asylum - Strategies for progress

- ➔ **Mr Henrik Ankerstjerne** | Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry for Immigration and Integration, Denmark
- ➔ **Mr Ulrich Weinbrenner** | Director General, Directorate-General of Migration, Refugees and Return Policy, Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community, Germany
- ➔ **Mr Markos Karavias** | Head, Asylum Service, Ministry of Migration and Asylum, Hellenic Republic
- ➔ **Ms Nina Gregori** | Executive Director, European Asylum Support Office

Focus Session: Accelerated asylum procedures - Feasible, desirable, reasonable?

Thursday, 19 November 2020

Focus Session: Durable migration cooperation between EU and Turkey - What are the expectations?

Focus Session: Partnerships reloaded? The new EU Talent Partnerships

Senior Panel II: Migration partnerships in action - Finding a joint way forward

- ➔ **Hon. Ahmed Munirus Saleheen** | Secretary, Ministry of Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment, Bangladesh
- ➔ **Ms Andrea Schumacher** | Vice-President, Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Germany
- ➔ **Mr Maciej Popowski** | Acting Director-General, Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, European Commission
- ➔ **Mr Martijn Pluim** | Director, Migration Dialogues and Cooperation, ICMPD

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This publication has been made possible by the support of



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