Budapest Process Silk Routes Project
“Fostering Cooperation in the Area of Migration with and in the Silk Routes Region”
First Consultation Meeting

Ankara, 11-12 December 2012

Summary

The first consultation meeting of the Silk Routes project “Fostering Cooperation in the Area of Migration with and in the Silk Routes Region” took place on 11-12 December 2012 in Ankara with the participation of the representatives of Afghanistan, Iraq, the Netherlands, Norway, Pakistan, Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey. In addition, the European Commission and the United Kingdom also participated in the meeting partially.

On the first day, both the Silk Routes countries and the donor countries discussed their priorities as regards migration issues, mutual cooperation and their expectations from the consultation phase of the project. The following main points were made by the participating countries:

- Pull and push factors of migration in Afghanistan have changed; security is not the first factor anymore but the lack of livelihood opportunities. Very often returnees coming from Pakistan and Iran go back to these countries as irregular migrants having found no livelihood opportunities in Afghanistan. Jobs and livelihoods are needed in order to keep the Afghan returnees in the country.
- There is a capacity building programme for the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations (MORR) supported by the US Government focusing on four strategic directions: 1) basic management and administration training for everyone in the MORR, 2) development of a 5-year strategic plan, 3) review of the structure and staffing of the Ministry and 4) development of a national IDP policy. However, the Ministry does not have sufficient capacity to fully
implement policies or strategies developed. Adding on to the US project, a project targeting the development and implementation of migration policy as well as an information management system and enhancement of migration management capacity would be urgently needed. The MORR wishes to move from humanitarian assistance to long-term migration management capacity. In this context, the establishment of a coordination platform (Afghan Migration Board) could also be supported.

- It should be explored whether technical assistance projects can be supported also by countries in the region that might share similar challenges and have more comparable systems as well as a level of development of asylum and migration management systems.
- Afghanistan also wishes to involve the civil society and diasporas into projects. Working with the civil society and bringing local partners into the dialogue and cooperation framework offers the opportunity to communicate with migrants directly and is also cost-effective.
- There is a need for identification and analysis of labour market needs. There has been no population census for the last three decades in Afghanistan and no labour market surveys exist. A project focusing on the analysis of labour market needs and development of occupational standards and curricula for vocational training would be very useful in terms of creating livelihood opportunities in Afghanistan. Furthermore, capacity building for the Ministry of Labour to implement policies and strategies that are currently being developed such as labour migration policy, employment policy and strategy and technical, vocational and educational training policy (TVET) would also be very useful.
- As far as IDPs in Afghanistan are concerned, many of them cannot return to their place of origin either because of insecurity or lack of jobs. Very often IDPs become dependent on humanitarian assistance. Surveys show that 27% of IDPs are former refugees and that 33% of IDPs in the country were displaced very recently in 2012. As the authorities are trying to provide IDPs with durable solutions, there is a danger that more IDPs are pulled from rural to urban areas.
- There are various kinds of migratory flows in Iraq, both before the reign of Saddam Hussein and after: displaced persons, persons fleeing due to civil war or security reasons, government opponents, economic migrants, people leaving due to lack of water and services, etc. Presently many are not able to come back due to security reasons although there is a law providing financial and also non-material assistance to returnees and there are secure places in Iraq for returnees to live. Many returnees making use of the assistance eventually leave the country again and go abroad. Iraq also hosts a considerable number of migrants from other countries such as Egypt and Palestine. There is a new law on immigration before the Parliament. The Ministry of Displacement and Migration has
developed many training programmes for its staff recently, but the impact appears to be limited. Iraq wishes to put regular migration mechanisms in place.

- Most Pakistanis going to Europe use legal channels. There are between 1.5 and 2 million Pakistanis in the EU, alone in the UK there are 1 million. There are also many Pakistanis going through irregular channels to Europe, however most Pakistanis arrive in Europe with genuine visas (such as student visas) and then overstay. There are more than 1,600 overseas employment promoters in Pakistan, mainly working with the Gulf region. Only a very small part of overseas Pakistanis are contracted for Europe.

- People in Pakistan have the perception that there are jobs in Europe. There is a high lack of awareness and there are a lot of misconceptions about job opportunities available in Europe as well as about consequences of irregular migration. Information campaigns for potential migrants would be useful. Concrete availability of job information should be disseminated to the people openly, so that people do not necessarily resort to irregular means. The use of print and electronic media including social forums on the internet should be considered. The institutions offering false university diplomas in the UK should be curbed and exploitation should be prevented. As regards irregular migration, assessment of needs in the area of border controls would be useful.

- We need to keep the trust in the asylum system; otherwise people will not continue to support it. Currently return is a very important political issue in Europe. The figures of persons to be returned may not be so big in absolute numbers, but are nonetheless important for the countries concerned. Furthermore, asylum applications that are not genuine block the system, especially for those in genuine need of protection. The donor countries are willing to invest in the return of irregular migrants and failed asylum seekers. Good reception and reintegration measures are important priorities.

- Europe cannot create jobs, but can help build the institutional framework to create jobs in the countries of origin. It can provide targeted assistance to institutions and institution-building, so that the countries of origin can be restructured.

- The migration area is prone to surprises – for example the 200,000 Syrians that have come to Turkey within a short period. Countries should be prepared for such situations through a strong institutional structure. If the focus is only on return and readmission, it is not easy to achieve a strong migration management system. The migration discourse should focus on creating opportunities. One way is to look at circular migration.

On the second day of the meeting, the participants worked in three working groups composed of representatives of both the Silk Routes and donor countries on the identification of project ideas,
objectives, expected results and activities. The results and recommendations of each working group were as follows:

1st Working Group:

Project on Regional Migration Policy (Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan)

Result 1) Regional migration policy developed by the end of 2013
Activities: Identification of senior government officials in the Silk Routes countries to share information with one another; increase awareness of each other’s situation and priorities and jointly develop a regional migration policy, also through involving the civil society.

The role of the donor countries in this context is the facilitation of and assistance in the policy making process and in training the trainers. Donor countries should remain mentors and advisors in this process.

Result 2) National implementation plans developed by the first quarter of 2014
Activities: Establishment of national focal points; technical assistance provided by donor countries to develop national implementation plans.

Result 3: Implementation of regional migration policy by December 2015
Activities: Training provided by the trainers; initiation of implementation of the regional migration policy; focal points to meet regularly and follow results; evaluation of the policy in the first quarter of 2016.

Country specific:

Afghanistan: A further objective is the setting up of the Afghan Migration Board and development of a national migration policy; Iraq and Pakistan to act as advisors to enhance the partnership in the region.

Iraq and Pakistan: The main objective for these countries is to enhance regional cooperation.
2nd Working Group:
The working group focused on a number of proposals:

Migration policy:
- Taking stock of existing laws and regulations and of the institutional framework in the countries of the region (in some areas existing legislative framework as well as institutional framework might be sufficient, but there might be shortcomings as regards implementation).
- Lack of coordination among different partners in a given country, thus responsibilities need to be defined clearly.

Capacity building:
- General need for capacity building activities targeting government officials in all Silk Routes countries.
- Specifically, professional training targeting recruiters (and overseas employment promoters) and pre-departure orientation training for potential overseas migrants.
- Need to look at the efficiency of the government set up in the Silk Routes countries.

Irregular migration:
- On the enforcement side – training of law enforcement officials, supply of equipment and works (i.e. border gates) and sharing of information and best practices among the officials of different countries.
- Revision of the existing legislative framework governing law enforcement.
- Awareness-raising for the public on the risks, dangers and consequences of irregular migration.
- Protection needs, in particular of vulnerable groups, should also be addressed.
Turkey could be a key country here, acting as a training model.

Legal migration:
- Different perceptions of management (or facilitation) of legal migration among the Silk Routes and donor countries: For instance in Switzerland, the government is only responsible for setting rules and regulations while the actual recruitment is left to the employers according to regulations and rules. Acknowledging that there can be other roles for governments in other countries, it is still not easy to share information on job opportunities among governments.
- Dissemination of information on regulations and rules.
- Abolition of bureaucratic hurdles.
Returns:
- Promoting voluntary return of irregular migrants. It is important for the receiving countries to get information and accurate data (personal) on the returnees.
- Explore the possibilities for providing reintegration assistance also to forced returnees.

3rd Working Group:
Similarly, this group also worked on a number of proposals.

Development of migration policy:
- Policy coherence both at national and regional level which helps predictability and adjustability and avoids overlaps and arbitrariness, providing for a holistic approach.
- Bring in other actors (NGOs, academia, private sector, civil society including trade unions) for feedback and advisory purposes.

Reintegration of returnees:
Objective: Create sustainable employment opportunities for returnees using return money as micro-credit to set up small businesses.

Activities:
1. Develop a cooperation mechanism between host countries and countries of origin at institutional level to make the best use of capital (using the example of Italy and Moldova).
2. Develop programmes for the transfer of human capital and know-how.
3. Carry out demographic surveys on the returnees including personal information (age, skills, place of origin, education, work experience, family structure, etc.), in order to know who is returning and why, with a view to prepare tailor-made individual assistance.
4. Pre-departure and post-arrival preparation, which would involve civil society actors.
5. Reintegration based upon the above information exchange could be connected to return money.

Irregular migration:
- Based on the assumption that promoting regular migration would reduce irregular migration; provision of information on regular migration possibilities and awareness-raising campaigns at national level, combating illegal recruitment agencies (example: the Philippines), setting up a hotline and awareness campaigns to this purpose and research and information sharing on labour markets needs at international level.
Capacity building:
- Institutional capacity building should cover development of rules and regulations, development of human resources, provision of technology, equipment and infrastructure.
- Capacity building not only for the governments but also for the media and other (non-state) actors.

A general proposal: Keep the pilot projects at a practical, small level in the beginning instead of regional schemes; start with concrete, visible projects and then take them at a later stage to a regional level. Regional migration policy might be too ambitious to begin with.