“Support to the Implementation of the Mobility Partnership with Azerbaijan (MOBILAZE) project”

“Mobility Partnership in Azerbaijan”
International Conference

Conclusions

On 23 June 2016, the International “Mobility Partnership” conference was held in Baku, Azerbaijan. The conference was organized by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) within the EU-funded MOBILAZE (“Supporting the Implementation of the Mobility Partnership with Azerbaijan”) project in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan. The Conference brought together practitioners and policymakers from Azerbaijan, project partners from the EU MSs, partner countries outside the EU (Georgia and Moldova), international actors and other stakeholders in Azerbaijan. During the Conference, high level representatives from the Delegation of the European Union to Azerbaijan, EU MS, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, and ICMPD discussed the future of the Mobility Partnership between the EU and Azerbaijan, shared the lessons in their implementation/impact of the framework in different countries, and case studies in the implementation of other MP projects.

Background: What is Mobility Partnership?

The Mobility Partnerships, often called the most elaborated cooperation between the EU and its partners, are instruments introduced within the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility which since 2005 has been the overarching framework of the EU external migration and asylum policy. Mobility Partnerships offer a platform for practical and direct dialogue between partner countries on issues related to mobility, visa, asylum, return and integration.

The Joint Declaration on a Mobility Partnership between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the EU and its participating Member States (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, France, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia) was signed in Brussels on 5 December 2013.

“The launch of this Mobility Partnership is yet another important step towards bringing European and Azerbaijani citizens closer. Thanks to dialogue and specific cooperation, we can better ensure the joint and responsible management of migration in the interests of the Union, Azerbaijan and the migrants themselves”, commented Commissioner for Home Affairs Cecilia Malmström, speaking on the margins of the Justice and Home Affairs Council in Brussels.
The Mobility Partnership Joint Declaration established a set of political objectives and identified a number of areas in which further dialogue between the EU and Azerbaijan will continue in order to ensure that the movement of persons is managed as effectively as possible. It particularly focuses on migration issues such as migration management, mobility, legal migration and integration, the fight against irregular migration and trafficking in human beings, readmission, security of identity and travel documents, border management, migration and development, and asylum and international protection.

In preparation to the Conference, ICMPD team developed a background publication “Overview of the EU Mobility Partnership Instrument: Summary of the Initiatives in Moldova and Georgia” which provides a broad overview on MP instrument in general and its implementation in the Eastern Partnership region. The publication (in English language) can be downloaded here.

The Conference: Overview

The Conference was opened by the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan who underlined the importance of cooperation within and beyond the Joint Declaration on a Mobility Partnership between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the EU. The Head of the EU Delegation to Azerbaijan confirmed in her speech the willingness to move forward in many areas of cooperation within the Eastern Partnership framework, working together as partners, learning from each other and looking to develop relations to their full potential. This cooperation in the framework of MOBILAZE project is one of example of deep and mutually beneficial cooperation between AZ and the EU. The Deputy Director General of ICMPD highlighted that the Mobility Partnerships create excellent opportunities to operationalise the cooperation in the area of migration between the EU and its strategic partners. ICMPD has been implementing numerous initiatives and projects within the Mobility Partnerships and beyond in Eastern Partnership countries. This conference provided participants a unique chance to exchange best practices and lessons learned and make the best of them for the project with Azerbaijan.

Further, the Chair of the Conference provided general overview on EU’s Global Approach on Migration and Mobility (GAMM) and Mobility Partnership framework.

In following interventions, the overview of MOBILAZE project was introduced as not only an individual project, but an important element of both the dialogue between Azerbaijan and the EU within the Mobility Partnership and a powerful tool to enhance the migration management system in Azerbaijan, taking into account the specific needs, interests and priorities of this country. The representatives from implementing EU partner countries presented an overview of their particular priorities and possible expertise to be provided during the MOBILAZE project implementation. Georgian and Moldovan representatives shared information and their lessons learnt in implementation of the Mobility Partnership initiatives in their respective countries. The Head of Ombudsman Apparatus of Azerbaijan shared overview of the migrants’ human rights protection framework in Azerbaijan demonstrating the migrant-centered approach of the Mobility Partnership.

During the second part of the Conference, participants were split into two working groups according to their preferences and interests:

- Working group 1 focused on the legal migration and migration and development related issues;
- Working group 2 dedicated its discussion to border management related issues, irregular migration and asylum.

During both working groups, participants discussed how the Mobility Partnership with Azerbaijan could be further developed, by submitting new priorities, new projects, or implementing new activities. This covered both: single activities (covered for example by the Mobility Partnership Facility – a new EU funding instrument) or full-fletched new projects. Conclusions of both working groups were presented to the entire audience of participants and are listed below.

Finally, concluding the Conference, the progress in implementation of the MOBILAZE project and upcoming activities were presented and discussed.

**Working Groups Conclusions**

**Working Group 1: Legal Migration and Migration & Development**

Legal Migration/Mobility and Migration and Development are important areas of the Mobility Partnership initiatives. These areas include the following priorities:

- Facilitation of labour migration and student mobility;
- Strengthening of migration management in partner countries;
- Support to social security for migrants in destination countries;
- Strengthening of partner countries’ capacity to monitor migration flows, etc.
- Support to voluntary return of citizens, by providing information on return, development and implementation of the reintegration programmes;
- Promotion of circular migration schemes;
- Prevention of brain drain, etc.

Participants of the WG 1 actively discussed what priorities should be initiated by the Azerbaijani state institutions with regard to the future projects and initiatives. The following was particularly underlined:

**Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Population:**

- Methodology for assessment of the foreign labor demand in the Azerbaijani labor market;
- Development and maintenance of information database on foreign laborers in Azerbaijan;
- Creation of regular information database on the Azeri nationals working abroad;
- Exploring possibility of legal migration (regular, seasonal and other) for Azeri professionals and skilled laborers in the EU MS;
- Obtaining prior information on the readmitted persons returning from the European Union MS.

**State Diaspora Committee of Azerbaijan:**

- All the Mobility Partnership and migration related projects shall involve the State Committee, which has established solid representation in various countries. Azerbaijani diaspora has specific features, which are different from Moldovan and Georgian diasporas;
- Pre-departure trainings could be organized for potential Azerbaijani migrants on the situation in various destination countries – EU MS.

**State Migration Service:**

- SMS has already mentioned its priorities, most of which are reflected in the MOBILAZE project;
- Currently, the priority shall be rendering direct assistance to returning migrants in recognition of labor qualifications, access to health and social services, legal assistance and counseling, as well as enterprise development and accommodation;
- Working group shall be created for re-integration of migrants, relevant government agencies shall be invited to participate in regular meetings of this group;
- Recognition of labor skills, professions and qualifications of returning migrants;
- Analytical capacity of the relevant government agencies shall be enhanced.

**Trade Unions’ Confederation:**

- The Confederation covers around 2 million workers in all the parts of the country and it has established good system and mechanisms for support to actual and potential migrants, therefore, it may be involved in the future and current projects with support to returning and outgoing migrants;
- It would be useful to develop and maintain sophisticated statistical information with segregated data on migration trends to and from Azerbaijan.

**Chairman of the public council at the SMS:**

- Civil society plays an important role in implementation of migration related projects, therefore MOBILAZE could involve relevant civil society actors, including NGOs in this process of project implementation;
- CS representatives could be invited to work as experts, trainers, facilitators, carry out needs assessment, collect statistical data, working in the regions and with specific group of population, for example with asylum seekers and refugees.

**Working Group 2: Border Management, Irregular Migration and Asylum**

According to the MP Joint Declarations concluded so far, the priorities for initiatives in the field of prevention of irregular migration and guarantying human rights of persons in need of international protection include the following:

- Support in capacity building on border management, including document security;
- Strengthening of the fight against smuggling, trafficking and other cross-border crimes.
- Strengthening of national asylum systems;
- Development and implementation of regional programmes in the field of international protection.

The above mentioned initiatives as well as concrete projects developed and implemented in Georgia and Moldova were discussed during the WG 2, in particular by representatives of the State Border Service, State Migration Service, State Customs Service, etc.

Based on the discussions, the Working Group members suggested to organise in particular activities involving not only one governmental agency but representatives from different agencies with aim to improve also inter-agency cooperation.

The following conclusions were further presented in the plenary:
- Improvement of inter-agency and international cooperation and information exchange on migration threats, migration trends, new routes, forgeries etc.;
- Improvement of border security at Azerbaijani/Iranian border;
- Improvement of the technical equipment of the border crossing points;
- Strengthening capacities of staff involved in identification of forged documents and falsified documents, such as training of trainers and trainings on identification of forged and falsified passports, visas, etc.;
- Development of training guidelines and manuals for both teaching and self-learning purposes;
- Needs assessment related to migrant rights and public campaigns;
- Strengthening capacities of border agencies in advanced profiling of migrants (focused on potential irregular migrants, victims of trafficking/smuggling, foreign fighters, terrorists etc.);
- Capacity building activities on search of persons, vehicle and goods;
- Evaluation of effectiveness of established risk analyses system in Azerbaijan;
- Internship and study visits on different border related topics to EU MSs as well as mobility of trainers at national and at international level;
- Incorporation of migrants health issues; Migrant and health protection study;
- Social protection of refugees;
- Summary of best practice in support and information provided to refugees;
- Exchange of experience and lessons learned between EU and EaP during big international sports events, song competitions, etc.

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