EU-FUNDED SUPPORT TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MOBILITY PARTNERSHIP WITH AZERBAIJAN 2030 DAYS OF MOBILITY PARTNERSHIP IMPLEMENTATION IN AZERBAIJAN SUPPORTED BY THE EU, ICMPD AND THE EU MS CONSORTIUM
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**Azerbaijani project partners:** The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Mobility Partnership coordinator in Azerbaijan), the State Migration Service, the State Border Service, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population, the Ministry of Education, Baku State University.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CAMM
Common Agenda on Migration and Mobility

EaP
Eastern Partnership

ENIGMMA
“Enhancing Georgia’s Migration Management” project funded by the EU and implemented by ICMPD

ENIGMMA 2
“Sustaining Migration Management in Georgia” project funded by the EU and implemented by ICMPD

EU
European Union

EU MS
European Union Member State

EURODAC
European Asylum Dactyloscopy Database

ICMPD
International Centre for Migration Policy Development

MFA
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan

MOBILAZE
“Support to the Implementation of the Mobility Partnership with Azerbaijan” project funded by the EU and implemented by ICMPD

MLSPP

MP
Mobility Partnership

MPF
Mobility Partnership Facility

QIEE
Quality Initiative for Eastern Europe and South Caucasus

RSD
Refugee Status Determination

RESTART
‘Reintegration Support to Azerbaijani Returnees’ project financed by Germany, the Netherlands and Poland and implemented by ICMPD

SBS
State Border Service of the Republic of Azerbaijan

SMS
State Migration Service of the Republic of Azerbaijan

SOP
Standard Operating Procedure

TOT
Training of Trainers

UNHCR
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
The Mobility Partnership between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the European Union (and its participating member states: Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, France, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, and Slovakia) was officially launched on 5 December 2013.

The EU-Azerbaijan Mobility Partnership established a set of political objectives and identified a number of areas in which further dialogue and cooperation between the EU and Azerbaijan continue in order to support people-to-people contacts and mobility, whilst ensuring that movement of persons is managed as effectively as possible. These objectives include:

› BETTER MANAGING LEGAL AND LABOUR MIGRATION;
› PREVENTING AND COMBATING IRREGULAR MIGRATION;
› PROMOTING EFFECTIVE RETURN AND READMISSION POLICY, IN ACCORDANCE WITH FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS AND INTERNATIONAL LAW;
› PROMOTING INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION MECHANISMS;
› MAXIMISING THE DEVELOPMENT IMPACT OF MIGRATION AND MOBILITY.

This publication highlights the main milestones of the EU-funded MOBILAZE project implemented in Azerbaijan by ICMPD. The project comprised one of the main instruments of Mobility Partnership implementation in the country, while following the objectives of the Mobility Partnership Joint Declaration as prioritised by the project partners.
Ambassador, Head of the EU Delegation to Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan along with other Eastern Partner countries has benefitted from Mobility Partnership Facility during five last years. This EU-funded initiative allows people to travel across Europe more easily and safely.

The Mobility Partnership helps to facilitate visa progress, encourages more people-to-people contacts, strengthens institutional capacities and consolidates migration management. It enhances cooperation between EU and partner countries. It helps to provide better services for citizens and migrants and facilitates communication with diaspora.

Growing EU-Azerbaijan cooperation during the recent years has also helped to enhance work within the Mobility Partnership.

This year we are celebrating 10 years of strengthened cooperation within the framework of the Eastern Partnership. A lot has been achieved in EU-Azerbaijan relations as well. Let me highlight some of the important developments in our bilateral relations.

We adopted new Partnership Priorities in September 2018. They continue to guide our relations:

• We are advancing negotiations on Common Aviation Area Agreement which would bring tangible benefits for people in Azerbaijan, more flights, lower fares and more tourists;

• We are close to the finishing line in our new partnership agreement negotiations. This should bring our political and particularly economic relations to a higher level and open additional cooperation possibilities.

• We have recently launched new high-level Security and Transportation dialogues.

• Each year we see more participants and interest in our traditional EU-Azerbaijan business forums. This June it attracted over 800 participants.

All of these developments will further intensify contacts and travel of people between Azerbaijan and the European Union. This is good basis for our growing partnership. At the same time, it all needs to be well managed.

We are looking forward for preparation of Azerbaijan’s Migration Management Strategy 2019-2023 as well as Comprehensive National Integrated Border Management Strategy and Action Plan. At the same time we are working for effective implementation of the EU-Azerbaijan Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements.

The EU stands ready to invest further in promotion of legal migration, development of its legal and policy frameworks, mobility, asylum, reintegration and many other areas which would make the life of people more comfortable.
More than ten years have passed since the signing of the first Mobility Partnership Agreement between the EU and its neighbouring countries – in 2008, two countries (Moldova and Cape Verde) became the first states to embark on such a partnership. Since then, the list of partners has increased to nine countries, with the Republic of Azerbaijan joining the framework in 2013. The Mobility Partnerships are often cited as the most comprehensive frameworks for bilateral cooperation between the EU and its partners. This is due to the specific nature of the partnerships, being grounded in mutual commitments and project initiatives on mobility, migration and asylum issues.

In this way, the Mobility Partnerships aim to design and implement specific measures to ensure that migration and mobility are beneficial for both parties to the Agreement: the EU Member States and those countries in the European neighbourhood. In other words, the aim of the Mobility Partnership is to make migration better for all involved – an aim which ICMPD seeks to achieve in each of its projects and initiatives. This is why it is particularly meaningful that ICMPD is closely involved in implementation of the Mobility Partnership Agreements in Azerbaijan and other neighbourhood countries.

The ‘Support to the Implementation of the Mobility Partnership with Azerbaijan’ (MOBILAZE) project, funded by the European Union and entrusted to ICMPD for implementation, was initially designed to reflect the cooperation measures listed in the Mobility Partnership Joint Declaration between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the EU and its participating Member States. Each of these priorities was adopted by the comprehensive MOBILAZE programme, with each resulting in specific outcomes which further support the action’s sustainability. Together with trusted and devoted Azerbaijani partners, EU Member States, and ICMPD experts, several training manuals were produced, research studies conducted and policy roadmaps proposed. More than 120 national, regional and international activities were organised by the project, with participation from more than 1,500 Azerbaijani citizens and over 200 international experts.

It is my strong conviction that during the MOBILAZE project, through the stellar work of all involved and the cooperation achieved, formal and informal contacts between Azerbaijan and EU Member States have been developed and further strengthened. These in turn will bring Azerbaijani and EU citizens closer together, which of course was the project’s key message.
The rising importance of migration is manifested in various processes currently occurring in the international arena. One of the most effective ways to regulate those processes, which are becoming increasingly complicated, is to expand international cooperation and build effective dialogue on migration. In this context, establishing dynamic relationships with international institutions specialised in this area, and learning and applying the best practices they share, are important factors in progressive implementation of migration management.

Just as in all other areas, the European Union is one of the key strategic partners of the Republic of Azerbaijan in the area of regulation of migration processes. Jointly launched projects and implemented initiatives not only indicate long-term effective cooperation but also play an exceptional role in identifying new areas of cooperation.

The EU-Azerbaijan Partnership Priorities initialled last July is an important document that serves to strengthen existing co-operation by identifying political priorities on both sides. Indicating mobility and people-to-people contacts as one of the four key areas of cooperation in such an important document suggests that migration issues are in the spotlight for both the EU and Azerbaijan.

Our joint work with the International Centre for Migration Policy Development is of particular importance to our international cooperation in the area of migration. I can honestly say that we have successfully implemented the project ‘Support to the Implementation of the Mobility Partnership with Azerbaijan’ (MOBILAZE) undertaken within the framework of the Joint Declaration on a Mobility Partnership between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the European Union and its Participating Member States, and that generally this project can be characterised as one of the most successful and effective projects implemented in Azerbaijan in the area of migration during the last years.

As a result of our successful cooperation within MOBILAZE, the project concept “Sustaining migration management in the Republic of Azerbaijan” has been developed in line with the priorities and needs of the State Migration Service, and submitted to the EU with a view to following up initiatives undertaken within the current project.

I would like to stress once again that I highly appreciate our cooperation with ICMPD on strengthening the Mobility Partnership and hope that this cooperation will contribute to the current dialogue between the EU and Azerbaijan on facilitation of human mobility.
Launched in January 2016, the ‘Support to the Implementation of the Mobility Partnership with Azerbaijan’ (MOBILAZE) project, funded by the European Union and implemented by ICMPD and the consortium of the Member States of the European Union, draws to a close in July 2019, after exactly three and a half years of implementation. The project has produced an impressive set of outputs, starting with capacity building and knowledge exchange activities and culminating in the development of studies, guidebooks, manuals, e-learning tools, awareness raising materials and websites. Similarly to the Mobility Partnership Joint Declaration itself – which formed the basis for the project programme – the MOBILAZE initiative provided support to Azerbaijani partners in all essential migration management areas: research and analysis, legal and labour migration, border management and document security, asylum procedures, and return and reintegration. The present publication, therefore, is intended to allow interested readers to look back at the project’s implementation and acknowledge how the MOBILAZE project has supported cooperation on mobility between Azerbaijan and the European Union and its Member States.

The Mobility Partnerships address both opportunities and challenges related to migration as one of the most important phenomena of our time. I am confident that the MOBILAZE project has supported partners and stakeholders in Azerbaijan and the European Union Member States in further turning migration challenges into opportunities for the mutual benefits of all involved. This means countries of origin, transit, and destination, but, most of all, those who migrate and those choose to stay.

It was a fascinating experience to implement this project, and to witness the changes it brought. I would like to thank all project partners and experts in Azerbaijan, the Member States of the European Union, and other Eastern Partnership countries for their cooperation and support during project implementation, for their trust in our team, and for their friendship.
INTRODUCTION

The ‘Support to the Implementation of the Mobility Partnership with Azerbaijan’ (MOBILAZE) project was funded by the European Union (EU) under the Annual Action Programme Global Public Goods and Challenges Strategy 2014. The project was implemented in Azerbaijan by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) and a consortium of European Union Member States (EU MSs) – signatories of the Mobility Partnership (MP) – in close cooperation with state institutions in Azerbaijan. The project ran from January 2016 through July 2019, which means project partners devoted exactly 2030 days1 to the broad range of activities and measures set out in the project programme and work plan.

The present basis for cooperation between the EU and Azerbaijan is formed by the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement which came into force in 1999 and the European Neighbourhood Policy Action Plan adopted in 2006. The Mobility Partnership with Azerbaijan was signed in 2013 by eight EU Member States (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, France, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, and Slovakia) – Latvia also later joined the Joint Declaration. The Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreement entered into force in 2014. Together, the MP and the Migration Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan, which was approved and entered into force in 2013, represent the roadmap for Azerbaijani institutions toward improved migration governance. The MOBILAZE project supported the relevant Azerbaijani institutions in implementing the measures and regulations envisaged in these two documents.

The main objective of the project was to support implementation of the Mobility Partnership between EU and Azerbaijan, with a specific focus on strengthening the capacity of the Government to develop and implement national migration policy.

EU Commissioner for Home Affairs Cecilia Malmström, speaking on the margins of the Justice and Home Affairs Council in Brussels, 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.

1 2030 is the exact number of days from the date of signature of the Mobility Partnership Declaration until the final conference of the MOBILAZE project.
The sustainability of project achievements is assured by several outputs, including recommendations, manuals, an e-tool, and a website – all of which are accessible to the beneficiary organisations (some are even accessible to the wider public).

Project activities were divided into five components, each of them following the objectives of the Mobility Partnership Declaration – which were specifically prioritised for implementation of the MOBILAZE project by Azerbaijani and EU MS project partners. The project resulted in more than 120 national, regional and international activities, with participation from more than 1,500 Azerbaijani citizens, and over 200 international experts – who exchanged EU good practices and contributed to strengthening expertise and knowledge in a number of areas related to migration. All project outcomes are available on the ICMPD website and information on project activities on the project’s Facebook page. Specific reports are available upon request, from the ICMPD team.

This publication follows the main objectives of the Mobility Partnership Agreement and in this way demonstrates how the EU-funded MOBILAZE project supported implementation of this EU-Azerbaijan cooperation document. The present document can, therefore, be used by stakeholders and other projects in the Eastern Partnership neighbourhood or other regions as an example of substantiating cooperation objectives into concrete actions within a single multidisciplinary action.
I. MIGRATION MANAGEMENT

The Mobility Partnership Joint Declaration envisages cooperation measures for improving migration management. It establishes that cooperation in this area aims to support the capacity to monitor migration, in particular by strengthening Azerbaijan’s capacity to manage migration, focusing on:

- Strengthening capacity to develop analytical and statistical reports on migration flows;
- Improving the Azerbaijani database on migration;
- Strengthening migration management through, inter alia, updating the migration profile;
- Promoting European Union member states best practices on determining the need for skilled workers;
- Monitoring migration flows from Azerbaijan to the European Union; and
- Exchanging experience on labour management and forecasting.

ANALYTICAL CAPACITIES

31 ACTIVITIES
669 PARTICIPANTS FROM AZERBAIJAN
Taking into account the cooperation priorities voiced by the Azerbaijani and EU MS partners during the project development phase, the Mobility Partnership objective on improving migration management was realised within Component 1 (Strengthening Analytical Capacities) of the MOBILAZE project. Generally, this component aimed at improving the monitoring, analytical and forecasting capacities of the Government of Azerbaijan for development of evidence-based migration policy.

First and foremost, the project developed the Baseline Study on Migration in Azerbaijan, which comprises and analyses existing data on migration trends in Azerbaijan, examines these migration trends and assesses existing sources in order to put forward recommendations on information collection and analysis so as to facilitate informed migration policymaking. The Study focuses on Azerbaijan’s migration policy frameworks and developments and analyses emigration, immigration, internal migration and migration and development topics. Further, relevant migration literature was purchased for use in the Analytical Unit of the State Migration Service (SMS), contributing to the establishment of a Migration Research Centre at the SMS.

In terms of capacity building, analytical activities and promoting examples on migration policies and frameworks from the EU, Migration Studies Weekends and Research Methods Workshops were organised for interested students, young graduates and SMS staff. These events covered various topics and took the requests, interests and needs of participants into consideration. Invited EU experts provided valuable insight into principles of migration governance, security and migration, media, development, gender, conflict, data visualisation, trafficking in human beings and integration and citizenship, among other topics. The Migration Studies Weekends were a direct result of the Migration Studies curriculum drafted at the beginning of the project for students, young graduates and SMS staff on relevant migration topics, such as migration trends worldwide, migration and security, and migration and family. Furthermore, in close cooperation with the SMS, internships were provided to selected staff members on applied migration research, data collection and analysis and on-the-spot support on migration topics relevant to the daily work of the SMS. Selected SMS staff also received the opportunity to acquaint themselves with the work of Polish state institutions on diaspora and minority issues, the international protection framework, and data collection.

One of the most successful and fruitful activities in terms of migration education, capacity building, promotion of best practices, and strengthening migration management were the International Summer Schools on Migration Studies, organised in cooperation with the EU-funded ENIGMMA and ENIGMA 2 projects in Georgia and the Prague Process: Dialogue, Analysis and Training in Action project. In total, four summer schools were organised during the MOBILAZE project for students, young graduates and professionals working in the migration field. Professors from the University of Oxford, the State Veterinary Control Service, the State Veterinary Control Service and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), and facilitated exchange of information with EU female experts and guidance for increasing the effectiveness of female officers’ daily duties, both externally and internally.

Making full use of EU lecturers’ expertise, discussion rounds were organised for SMS staff on relevant migration topics, such as migration trends worldwide, migration and security, and migration and family. Furthermore, in close cooperation with the SMS, internships were provided to selected staff members on applied migration research, data collection and analysis and on-the-spot support on migration topics relevant to the daily work of the SMS. Selected SMS staff also received the opportunity to acquaint themselves with the work of Polish state institutions on diaspora and minority issues, the international protection framework, and data collection.

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II. MOBILITY, LEGAL MIGRATION AND INTEGRATION

Mobility and legal migration are at the core of the cooperation between the EU MSs and Azerbaijan laid down in the Mobility Partnership Agreement. Therefore, the Joint Declaration established that this cooperation should lead to promotion of a better framework for legal and labour mobility, including through the facilitation of temporary and circular migration, provision of information to potential migrants about ways of legal migration to the European Union and legal employment in the Member States, as well as about the risks of irregular migration; implementation of pre-departure training; promotion of student and professional exchanges; recognition of academic and professional qualifications and exchange of information on European Qualification Framework and national qualification legislation; social protection of regular migrants. In particular, the following measures were adopted by the Joint Declaration:

- Building capacity of authorities responsible for migration management, including in the area of information campaigns addressed to potential migrants and concerning matters such as legal ways of migration, migrant rights and responsibilities in countries of destination as well as potential risks of irregular migration;
- Exchanging information on opportunities for legal migration, including circular migration;
- Publishing and disseminating information in the Azerbaijani language on immigration rules and regulations applied in the European Union;
- Cooperating in the area of the facilitation of recognition of migrants qualifications;
- Learning the experience of European Union Member States on integration, reintegration and social protection of migrant workers;
- Facilitation of circular migration of students and researchers; and
- Raising awareness on the European Qualification Framework among students and researchers.

Priorities established by the Mobility Partnership Agreement with regard to legal and labour migration relate to many different aspects. After consultations between Azerbaijan and EU MS partners and the ICMPD team, Component 2 of the MOBILAZE project was designed to tackle issues related to reform of the labour migration quota system in Azerbaijan, provision of information services for potential migrants, and support for students’ mobility. Generally, the objective of Component 2 was to strengthen the management of labour migration and trade related to mobility to and from Azerbaijan and to increase public awareness about mobility between the EU and Azerbaijan.
An appraisal of the state of play in the area of legal and labour migration management was made through elaboration of the Assessment Report released in October 2016. The baseline report summarised the legislation regulating this area of migration in Azerbaijan, providing an outlook on institutional responsibilities and, most important-ly, suggesting recommendations for making the management system more efficient. In this way, the Report set the direction for implementation of the activities under this component. The assessment was carried out by the expert team comprising of the Bulgarian and Latvian national experts on legal and labour migration and ICMPD team.

The MOBILAZE project’s main output in the area of legal and labour migration is the Study Determination of the Demand for Foreign Labour Force in the Labour Market of Azerbaijan and the subsequent Guidelines suggesting practical implementation modalities for the Study’s findings. These two documents are part of the process of foreign labour quota revision that is currently ongoing in Azerbaijan, and which is supported by the EU and ICMPD through the MOBILAZE project. Multiple project meetings were organised within this process, involving a broad range of state actors and international experts, including working group meetings, focus group discussions and stakeholder interviews and presentations involving high-level decision makers.

The capacity-building activities on legal and labour migration included study visits hosted by Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. During visits to these three host countries, representatives from the SMS, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population, and the State Committee on the Work with Diaspora became acquainted with the respective national systems of labour migration, migration for education, family reunification and integration.

In order to empower Azerbaijani students preparing to study in the EU, the project team and experts developed the Brochure for Azerbaijani students studying in the EU which summarises visa and entry regulations for education purposes in the EU and the foreign diploma recognition procedure after return to Azerbaijan. The Brochure was initially presented during the International Education Exhibition in Baku 2017, with the updated version being released within the framework of the Education Exhibition in 2018. During the each three-day Exhibition, EU and ICMPD experts provided consultations on the practical aspects of entering the EU for education purposes.

Furthermore, an elaborated design for an online platform providing information on entry, stay and business opportunities in Azerbaijan was developed. Gradually the designed platform will be taken over by the State Migration Service of Azerbaijan and will be a part of the official website of the SMS providing the most updated and relevant information on mobility to Azerbaijan.
III. IRREGULAR MIGRATION AND TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS, READMISSION, IDENTITY AND TRAVEL DOCUMENT SECURITY, AND BORDER MANAGEMENT

In order to efficiently manage migration, states need to establish and support the well-functioning legal and institutional framework for border management. This framework enables states to fight irregular migration and border-related crimes such as trafficking in human beings. Therefore, Section III of the Mobility Partnership Joint Declaration focuses on development of effective mechanisms and concrete initiatives for preventing and combating irregular migration, effective implementation of readmission and reintegration procedures, enhancement of the security of identity documents and improvement of border surveillance and border management capacities. In particular, the measures for achieving the stated objective include:

- Strengthening of capabilities in detection of forged and falsified documents;
- Promoting of best practices on management of return and readmission;
- Promoting of best practices in the field of combating trafficking in human beings;
- Cooperating on activities in the field of border security including in the framework of integrated border management;
- Cooperating on the reinforcement of border surveillance and border management capacities, provision of equipment and training, including on document checking;
- Learning best standards on automated control and biometric systems applied in border crossing points; and
- Training of trainers for border service personnel.

The MOBLAZE project stakeholders decided to include several of these priorities in Component 3 of the project. Therefore, this component aimed to increase the capabilities of Azerbaijani institutions in the field of document security (Promoting best practices in return management was also a focus under Component 5, outlined in the following chapter of this report).

Based on careful analysis of background information collected from the main Azerbaijani migration and border services on training needs in the field of document security, the ICMPD team together with EU experts from the Czech Republic, Lithuania and the Netherlands developed a tailor-made manual consisting of two
parts: the Textbook on Security Features, Production Technologies and Examination and the Training Manual on Teaching Techniques including Sample Curricula. A distance learning tool – which included a self-examination feature – was created as both a standalone modern teaching tool and a source of support for trainers delivering lectures. The e-tool is available in different formats, including an online version, an offline version (on USB), and as a smartphone app. In addition, the Pocket Vocabulary for basic communication during border and migration control was developed in six languages (English, Russian, French, Chinese, Urdu, Arabic).

One of the most successful and sustainable project activities included interactive Training of Trainers (TOT) sessions allowing selected trainers/future trainers from the SMS and the SBS to deepen their knowledge on modern teaching techniques and implement training plans. The best trainers from the TOT piloted their practical skills gained during two follow-up sessions called Supported Pilot Trainings. During these supported pilot trainings, national trainers delivered various lectures on first-line document security topics, in close cooperation with international experts. Furthermore, selected national trainers delivered National Pilot Trainings in line with the training manuals and the e-tool developed, without support from international trainers. Detection kits, basic literature on document security and an atlas of passports (Volume 10/Regular) were purchased to enhance the capacity building activities.

Study visits on document security to EU MSs (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia and Austria) were organised to provide participants from the SBS and the SMS with the opportunity to deepen both their theoretical and practical knowledge. Participants also learnt the training system on document security according to EU best practices. Field visits were organised to EU external borders (railway, road and airport border crossing points, detention centres, and training academies) to exchange best practices from daily operational work, and technologies used during border control (including best standards on automated control and biometric systems used at border crossing points). The lessons learnt during these visits, including recommendations, were collected in the Joint Report on First-hand Experience of Studying Document Security.

Based on requests from the SBS and the SMS regarding their current needs, two trainings on profiling and identification at the border were organised for governmental officials in Baku and Nakhchivan with Dutch, Czech and ICMPD experts. The trainings, among other benefits, promoted best practices in the field of combating trafficking in human beings as one of the measures identified in the Mobility Partnership Declaration.

DOCUMENT SECURITY

43 ACTIVITIES

436 PARTICIPANTS FROM AZERBAIJAN

65% 28% 3% 4%

206 PILOT TRAININGS
110 WORKSHOPS
18 TRAINING OF TRAINEES
14 STUDY VISITS TO EU MSs
IV. MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

At ICMPD we believe that migration always means development. However, in order to strengthen the positive effect of migration on the development of country of origin, but also local community, specific measures need to be taken. In this regard, the Mobility Partnership Joint Declaration focuses on promotion of the positive synergies between migration and development, to prevent, reduce and counteract the negative effects of the brain drain and brain waste; to facilitate the smooth reintegration into Azerbaijan’s labour market of Azerbaijan citizens returning home and the recognition of skills and qualifications acquired abroad for their own benefit and the development of Azerbaijan, particularly by promoting migrants entrepreneurship. The following measures are seen as particular priorities within the Mobility Partnership instrument:

› DEVELOPING SUSTAINABLE PROGRAMMES AIMED AT REINTEGRATION OF RETURNING MIGRANTS, INCLUDING SUPPORT TO MIGRANT ENTREPRENEURS AND CREATION OF MICRO BUSINESS.

RETURN AND REINTEGRATION

10 ACTIVITIES
118 PARTICIPANTS FROM AZERBAIJAN

- 64 WORKING GROUPS
- 9 STUDY VISITS
- 45 TRAININGS

8% 54% 38%
Reintegration issues occupy a specific role within the MOBILAZE project, as successful return and reintegration of Azerbaijani citizens significantly contributes to the country’s development. Therefore, Component 5 - Return and Reintegration was dedicated entirely to this important issue. This component aimed at strengthening the capacities of central and regional government and non-government actors in Azerbaijan to implement sustainable reintegration of returned nationals (voluntary returnees and readmitted irregular migrants). Thus, the project contributed to the following outcomes and outputs:

The appraisal of the state of play in the area of readmission and reintegration was elaborated in the Analysis Report released in December 2016 and based on desk research activities, including focus group discussions with relevant Azerbaijani state and non-state stakeholders. The recommendations for reintegration activities included in the report have been used as a basis for implementing further activities under this component. The experts from the Netherlands and Bulgaria supported these initial activities and actively contributed to the report drafting.

One of the project’s main sustainable outcomes was the establishment of an effective institutional mechanism for the reintegration of returned nationals. The Reintegration Working Group was established in December 2016 and meets under the leadership of the SMS on a regular basis. It gathers all relevant ministries/state bodies responsible for coordination between relevant state agencies (including further referral of returnees).

An assessment of post-arrival needs on vocational training among readmitted nationals was implemented during January and February 2018. Out of 124 persons contacted, 61 returnees representing 26 families responded to the assessment. Based on demonstrated interest, two identified returnees received support and attended a five-month vocational course in marketing and sales management, which helped their further reintegration into the local labour market.

Two study visits on return support and management were organised in September and November 2017, to the Netherlands and Germany. Representatives from the SMS and the Ministry of Internal Affairs became acquainted with practices on return support and management, including implementation of the EU-AZ Readmission Agreement, and facilitation of bilateral relations and further cooperation on return and reintegration issues, including potential bilateral projects.

Based on current needs, two workshops on identification and interviewing techniques were organised (in May 2018 and April 2019) for representatives from relevant Azerbaijani state institutions, including Azerbaijani consuls in selected EU MSs.

In order to complement the activities implemented under Component 5 and build on the results achieved, a pilot project ‘Reintegration Support to Azerbaijani Returnees’ (RESTART) was developed and launched in January 2019 by ICMPD, in cooperation with the SMS and with financial support from three EU MSs (Germany, the Netherlands and Poland). The pilot’s objective is to support implementation of the Readmission Agreement in the area of reintegration through strengthening the capacities of authorities and civil society in Azerbaijan to actively facilitate sustainable return from EU MSs and reintegration of Azerbaijani nationals.

https://www.icmpd.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Com5_Analysis_Report_Final.pdf

V. ASYLUM AND INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

The right to seek and enjoy asylum from persecution is one of the fundamental human rights. In order to implement this right, states have established procedures and rules related to examination of asylum applications, decision-making, and integration of foreigners granted protection. The Mobility Partnership Joint Declaration also establishes specific objectives related to cooperation on asylum matters. In this regard, the Declaration seeks to strengthen the capacity of Azerbaijan’s government to implement an asylum policy and provide international protection according to best international standards and fully in line with relevant international instruments. In particular, the following measures are envisaged in the Joint Declaration:

› Learning the experiences of European Union Member States on asylum procedures, including interviewing of asylum seekers and quality assessment of interviews, country of origin information, decision-making and criteria on granting asylum and methodology for assessment the quality of decisions, with particular emphasis for the needs of vulnerable persons;

› Studying the forms of subsidiary and temporary protection applied in European Union Member States;

› Learning the experience of European Union Member States on addressing social needs of persons who have obtained the refugee status or are beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, their integration into the host society, and procedures for their naturalisation; and

› Studying the rules and procedures applied in the framework of Eurodac, including procedures concerning collection of fingerprints, registration of personal data of asylum seekers in a database and the handling of such a database.

The specific objectives of Component 4 of the MOBILAZE project relating to asylum issues echo the Joint Declaration priorities. During project implementation, several issues related to improving the asylum system in the Republic of Azerbaijan were covered, such as analysis of needs for capacity building, targeted capacity building, support for further improvement of asylum decision-making, and support in implementing measures aimed at integrating those foreigners granted asylum.

Discussions during the series of coordination meetings with senior management and representatives of the Refugee Status Determination (RSD) department, the SMS and the Protection Unit of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Azerbaijan resulted in a list of priorities which were followed throughout MOBILAZE project implementation.

The capacity building activities consisted of a workshop on subsidiary protection organised in November 2016, which raised awareness on subsidiary protection institutions and EU best practices; two trainings for judges on asylum protection delivered in December 2016 and February 2018 for judges of the Baku Administrative-Economic Court and representatives of
the relevant governmental institutions and international organisations; an October 2018 workshop on interviewing techniques and asylum procedures organised to enhance the capacity of SMS staff in ensuring and putting into practice quality assurance mechanisms in asylum procedures in Azerbaijan; and a workshop on country of origin information held in November 2017 to facilitate the exchange of EU best practices and lessons learnt. As a complementary addition to these activities, a study visit to Poland focusing on asylum protection was organised in April 2017 for representatives of the SMS.

Component 4 also saw the development of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) on asylum decision-making, including quality indicators. The contents of the SOPs were based on several discussions between SMS, ICMPD and UNHCR experts during workshops organised in November 2017, and October and December 2018. The SOPs were finalised and submitted to the Refugee Status Determination Department of the SMS in March 2019.

The Workshop on Integration of Recognised Refugees organised in June 2017 kicked off the discussions on developing the Recommendations for the Roadmap to Refugee Integration Policy in Azerbaijan, which was developed through close cooperation between national experts from Azerbaijani governmental bodies and EU, ICMPD and UNHCR experts during the period June 2017 - March 2018. The Roadmap was presented in March 2018 and again in May 2018, during the Roundtable on Integration of Refugees organised by the SMS.


DRAFT SOPS WERE DISCUSSED AND VALIDATED DURING A TWO-DAY WORKSHOP ON 5-6 DECEMBER 2018, JOINTLY HELD BY ICMPD, UNHCR AND THE STATE MIGRATION SERVICE. FOLLOWING FURTHER FINE-TUNING OF THE PACKAGE IN EARLY 2019, THE SOPS WERE FORMALLY PRESENTED TO THE STATE MIGRATION SERVICE. ADOPTION AND PROPER APPLICATION OF THE RSD STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES WILL UNDOUBTEDLY CONTRIBUTE TO BRINGING AZERBAIJAN’S NATIONAL ASYLUM PROCEDURE CLOSER TO INTERNATIONAL AND EUROPEAN STANDARDS.

Octavian Mahorea, UNHCR Protection Officer, 2019
VI. REGIONAL COOPERATION AND EXCHANGE ON MOBILITY PARTNERSHIP IMPLEMENTATION
In addition to above described activities, the project took an initiative to develop and maintain a cooperation platform on best practices of implementation of Mobility Partnership among the Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries and EU MS. Following this initiative, there were three Mobility Partnership Conferences organised in Baku within the MOBLAZE project:

› **THE FIRST MOBILITY PARTNERSHIP CONFERENCE,**
  23 JUNE 2016;

› **THE SECOND MOBILITY PARTNERSHIP CONFERENCE,**
  14-15 JUNE 2018;

› **THE THIRD MOBILITY PARTNERSHIP CONFERENCE,**
  27 JUNE 2019.

Refraining from a traditional project opening conference focused exclusively on project expectations and objectives, the MOBLAZE project was straight away placed in the wider regional cooperation context of Mobility Partnership implementation. At the First Mobility Partnership Conference, the Azerbaijani and European Union implementing partners discussed the project goals and activities, looking also at the experiences of MP implementation in Georgia and Moldova – two of the countries together with Azerbaijan participating in EaP cooperation framework.
The Second Mobility Partnership Conference gathered representatives from Azerbaijani governmental institutions involved in Mobility Partnership implementation, the European Union, ICMPD and other international organisations (i.e. the International Organization for Migration, UNHCR), as well as representatives of state institutions from selected EaP and MP countries. The conference served the following objectives:

- TAKING STOCK OF MP IMPLEMENTATION IN AZERBAIJAN THROUGH (NOT ONLY) THE MOBILAZE PROJECT;
- BENEFITING FROM THOSE MP COUNTRIES THAT HAVE VALUABLE EXPERIENCE TO SHARE;
- EXCHANGING ON EFFECTIVE TOOLS FOR MP RESULTS MONITORING;
- SUPPORTING FURTHER INITIATIVES WITHIN THE MP OR OTHER COOPERATION BETWEEN EU AND AZERBAIJAN INSTRUMENTS;
- STRENGTHENING EXPERT EXCHANGE AND COOPERATION BETWEEN AZERBAIJAN AND OTHER MP COUNTRIES IN MIGRATION MANAGEMENT AREAS;
- ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF THE MP IN AZERBAIJAN AND DISCUSSING POSSIBLE MEASURES FOR IMPROVEMENT.

The Third Mobility Partnership Conference also served as the MOBILAZE project’s final conference, looking back at the three and half years of project implementation, assessing the fulfillment of the Mobility Partnership objectives, and setting the direction for future cooperation.
Since 2016, the Mobility Partnership Facility (MPF) has been bringing together EU MSs and partner countries with the aim of strengthening dialogue and cooperation on migration and mobility issues. Over the past two years, the MPF Calls for Proposals have triggered a total of 20 Actions involving institutions from 16 EU MSs, as well as six Mobility Partnership and two Common Agenda on Migration and Mobility (CAMM) countries.

Inspired by MP/CAMM political declarations, MPF Actions address a wide range of migration-related topics and carry out various activities, such as: training sessions (including on how to use technical equipment), peer-to-peer expertise, research, study visits, conferences, expert meetings, review and development of legislation, and awareness raising activities. Priority areas identified by relevant Azerbaijani institutions can be translated into Grant Applications submitted through the MP/CAMM Call for Proposals by EU MS signatories to the MP. Actions are evaluated in only 15 working days and can be co-funded by up to 95%.

In addition to its Calls for Proposals, the MPF organizes horizontal activities such as conferences and workshops on different topics related to migration and mobility. In February 2019, representatives from Azerbaijan attended a workshop organized at the headquarters of the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation, on law enforcement cooperation in the area of cross-border crimes within the migratory context.

For more information on the MPF, visit: www.icmpd.org/mpf
A number of European Days were regularly organised by the EU Delegation to Azerbaijan in different parts of the country. In 2018, the Azerbaijani region of Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic of Azerbaijan also hosted Europe Days for the first time. The event was attended by the EU Delegation, diplomats from EU MSs, representatives from European cultural and education centres, resident experts from EU-funded projects, Young European Ambassadors and Baku-based journalists.

In addition to promoting EU-Azerbaijan relations, these events focus on introducing EU-funded projects (technical assistance, grants on education, regional development, women’s and human rights initiatives), the MOBILAZE project among them. Besides the EU Delegation, also embassies, international organisations (including ICMPD), and local partners presented their take on EU-Azerbaijani cooperation. The festivities also boasted numerous entertainment stands featuring European cooking demonstrations, dance and language classes, storytelling, master classes on pottery, karaoke, chemistry and physics experiments, face art, etc. The events ended with a concert from popular European and Azerbaijani singers and were highly praised by all.

Please get in touch with Eastern Europe and Central Asia Regional Centre at ICMPD for more information and details on MOBILAZE and other projects implemented by ICMPD in the region: eeca@icmpd.org

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2030 DAYS

OF MOBILITY PARTNERSHIP IMPLEMENTATION IN AZERBAIJAN

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