‘Support to the Implementation of the Mobility Partnership with Azerbaijan (MOBILAZE) project’

The Mobility Partnership Conference

27 June 2019, Baku, Azerbaijan

Conclusions

Background

The Mobility Partnership (MP) Conference was held in Baku, Azerbaijan, on 27 June 2019, within the framework of the EU-funded ‘Support to the Implementation of the Mobility Partnership with Azerbaijan (MOBILAZE)’ project. It served as a regional platform to discuss the Mobility Partnership (MP) priorities in different areas of migration and mobility in the region. However, as this year marked the final phase of the MOBILAZE project implementation, the project team presented the achievements of the MOBILAZE project and lessons learned from its implementation as well.

During the Conference, migration, asylum and border management experts representing Azerbaijan, other Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries, EU member states and international organisations debated a regional approach to migration and mobility, including best practices and areas for further improvement of cooperation on these issues, as well as the achievements within the MOBILAZE project within the field of migration management in Azerbaijan. Participants also included high-level representatives from the donor and implementing project partners. The MP Conference aimed at bringing the fulfilment of the Mobility Partnership objectives in Azerbaijan to multilateral and regional dimensions, in order to:

1. Take stock of the Mobility Partnership implementation in Azerbaijan through (but not ultimately) the MOBILAZE project, highlight the projects’ achievements and successes;
2. Benefit from the experience of those Mobility Partnership countries that have valuable experiences to share;
3. Exchange on effective tools of the Mobility Partnerships results monitoring;
4. Support further initiatives within the Mobility Partnership or other cooperation between EU and Azerbaijan instruments;
5. Strengthen expert exchange and cooperation between Azerbaijan and other Mobility Partnership countries in migration management areas;
6. Assess the impact of the Mobility Partnership in Azerbaijan and discuss possible measures for improvement.

The Conference gathered representatives of state institutions of the Republic of Azerbaijan involved in the Mobility Partnership implementation and the MOBILAZE project, the Delegation of the European Union to Azerbaijan, the EU Member States - signatories of the MP with Azerbaijan, ICMPD and other international organisations (i.e. IOM, UNHCR), as well as representatives of migration authorities from the Eastern
The Conference was organised by ICMPD as an implementing partner of the MOBILAZE project in close cooperation with the State Migration Service and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

**Summary**

**Session One: Opening Session**

The Conference was opened by Mr. Vusal Huseynov (Chief of the State Migration Service of Azerbaijan) who welcomed all participants and underlined the priorities in cooperation on migration and mobility between Azerbaijan and the EU and in particular the achievements of the MOBILAZE project. He highlighted that mobility and migration can have both positive and negative effects; being a global phenomenon, migration needs trans- and cross-border cooperation and approach. Further, he noted that migration is one of the drivers of development as it can bring changes and innovation. Here it is decidedly important to look at best practices from different countries and at different projects, such as MOBILAZE and other EU-funded activities in Azerbaijan. He stressed that the MOBILAZE 2 project is in the pipeline and hopes that the next phase of the project will be launched soon.

Mr. Ramiz Hasanov (Deputy Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan) thanked the EU, ICMPD and the MOBILAZE project partners for organising and joining the Conference. He emphasised the importance of a high-level dialogue between Azerbaijan and the EU and the cooperation on migration and mobility. In particular, he welcomed the readiness of Azerbaijani partners and ICMPD to take stock and to look for future joint work opportunities. Mr. Hasanov highlighted the importance of the MOBILAZE project and its excellent partnership with the stakeholders in Azerbaijan. The project has proven to be a successful cooperation example between the EU and Azerbaijan and serves as a basis for further development of new initiatives. The Deputy Minister welcomed and appreciated the continuation of the MOBILAZE project.

Further, Ambassador H.E. Kestutis Jankauskas (Head of the EU Delegation to Azerbaijan) emphasised the long standing EU – Azerbaijan cooperation in general and especially in the field of migration. The Ambassador talked about the good results achieved in the project with the help of the EU MS.

Mr. Michael Spindelegger (Director General of ICMPD) focused in his speech on the long history of relations between ICMPD and Azerbaijan, which currently resulted in joint implementation of the Mobility Partnership objectives; he also provided an outlook for the future. The Director General underlined the importance of the broader impact of the cooperation between the Eastern Partnership countries and the European Union; be it for the country, for further development of the region, and for benefits of migrants.

Ms. Violeta Wagner (Regional Portfolio Manager at ICMPD) introduced the agenda of the Conference and acquainted the audience with the main results of the MOBILAZE project implementation. The presentation included a brief introduction to each of the five project components dealing with research and analytical capacities, legal migration and mobility, document security, asylum and readmission and reintegrations. Ms. Wagner illustrated in her presentation how the MOBILAZE project served as the main instrument for the Mobility Partnership objectives implementation in Azerbaijan in 2016 – 2019 by comparing the priorities listed in the MP Joint declaration and specific objectives of each of the MOBILAZE project components. Ms. Wagner also talked about the role of the project to find best practices between the EU and Azerbaijan and to support cooperation. She thanked the EU and the EU Commission for funding this valuable initiative in Azerbaijan.

Mr. Ulvi Aliyev (Deputy Chief of the International Cooperation Department at the State Migration Service of Azerbaijan) talked about the achievements and modernisation in the migration field in Azerbaijan, such as the ASAN online visa system, e-services and the overall reform of the SMS. He introduced the main
activity areas of the SMS such as registrations, residence and work permits, citizenship issues, and readmission and refugee issues. Finally, Mr Aliyev underlined the importance of information campaigns and awareness raising, as well as work with youth (education, volunteering, etc.) which currently take the central role in the SMS external activities.

During the discussion, Mr. Azer Allahveranov (Chairman of “Hayat” Humanitarian Support Public Union) underlined the importance of civil society participation in the similar projects as MOBILAZE, and wished for stronger involvement of NGOs in future initiatives.

**Session Two: Examples of cooperation within Mobility Partnerships and beyond**

The second session provided examples of cooperation between Mobility Partnerships and beyond.

**Mr. Vadim Zaboronok (Department of Citizenship and Migration at the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Belarus)** informed participants about the development of the migration policy concept in Belarus and support of the Mobility Partnership Facility (MPF) project led by ICMPD in this regard. Each of the draft concept’s parts was presented in details. Mr. Zaboronok stressed that he was impressed by the work of the Azerbaijani State Migration Service and achieved results mentioned that exchange between Azerbaijan and Belarus migration institution would be beneficial for both countries.

**Ms. Xenia Pilipenko (Project Officer at ICMPD)** highlighted the methods for improvement of evidence-based migration policy development and used the MOBILAZE project activities as an example. Ms. Pilipenko focused in her presentation on MOBILAZE activities that dealt with strengthening analytical and research capacities of the project partners.

**Ms. Anastasia Zaharia (Principal Consultant at the Department of Employment Policy and Labour Migration Regulation at the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection of Moldova)** presented the labour migration regulations in Moldova with the support of Mobility Partnership projects. Ms. Zaharia acknowledged the great work that has been done by Azerbaijani authorities as well as within the project activities of MOBILAZE. She stressed that Moldova would appreciate gaining more experience from Azerbaijan in the migration field.

During the discussion, **Ms. Shafa Gasimova (Acting head of Humanitarian Issues Division, Humanitarian and Social Issues Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan)** enquired about Moldova’s mechanism of recording people employed abroad. A representative from Moldova explained that the country has a three level system of registering Moldovan citizens who wish to work abroad: first, on an individual level. In such case, the contract with the employer abroad is concluded in the territory of Moldova, and the person to be employed is obliged to register at the state registry. Second level is applied, if the person was employed by a private employment agency. In this case, the latter is responsible for registration. And third case is applied if the person was employed abroad based on the bilateral agreements between Moldova and another country, then s/he is automatically registered in the state registries.

**Ms. Ekaterina Belukova (Project Officer at ICMPD)** spoke about the reform of the labour migration regulation system in Azerbaijan with the MOBILAZE project as a case study. The project team together with international and national experts analysed several labour migration systems in Europe and beyond, proposed the most appropriate solutions for Azerbaijan, and provided a description of main definitions and procedures.

The session continued with a presentation of **Ms. Olena Vaniuhova (International Relations Department at the State Migration Service Ukraine)** on border management challenges and solutions in Ukraine.
Ms. Monika Weber (Project Manager at ICMPD) focused on the sustainability in strengthening capacities on border management in Azerbaijan illustrating her presentation by examples from MOBILAZE project activities, such as the training manual on document security, distance learning e-tool, training of trainers and exchange between EU member states and Azerbaijani representatives. A representative from Moldova, Ms. Mihaela Sticea, intercepted and pointed out that Moldova is currently working on the same topic in Moldova and appreciates the new input and ideas coming from the MOBILAZE project.

Further, the nexus of migration and development into the migration management policy in Georgia was presented by Mr. George Jashi (Executive Secretary of the State Commission on Migration Issues of Georgia). Mr. Jashi also provided an overview of development of institutional understanding and further mainstreaming of migration issues into development framework in the country, and further focused on Georgia’s migration management priorities.

Ms. Saltanat Mammadova (Project Officer at ICMPD) underlined in her presentation how reintegration can be used as a tool for development providing examples from the MOBILAZE and the RESTART (Reintegration Support to Azerbaijani Returnees) projects in Azerbaijan. RESTART project is an initiative which was jointly developed by the SMS and ICMPD during the MOBILAZE project implementation and its implementation is currently funded by Germany, the Netherlands, and Poland.

Towards the end of the session, the MOBILAZE project stakeholders provided their feedback and impressions on the project:

- Ms. Petra Achbergerova from the Slovak Ministry of Interior thanked the project for its activities. Ms. Sofija Barakate from the Latvian Ministry of Interior thanked ICMPD and the Azerbaijani colleagues on the excellent cooperation.
- Mr. Fuad Jabbarov, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population of Azerbaijan, expressed his gratitude and happiness about the multi-disciplinary activities of the project and thanked ICMPD and the donor. He stressed that he would like to see the cooperation continued and enhanced further.
- Ms. Sabrina Benaouda from the Repatriation and Departure Service at the Ministry of Justice and Security of the Netherlands was impressed by the professionalism of the project team and the strong participation of Dutch universities in several components of the project. The cooperation between Azerbaijan, ICMPD and the Netherlands still continues within the RESTART project which is highly appreciated.
- Mr. Timo Langemeijer from the Immigration and Naturalisation Service at the Ministry of Justice and Security of the Netherlands pointed out that MOBILAZE was an important project, in particular in document security and in legal expertise which was given by Dutch experts.
- Mr. Kayan Hajiev from the State Migration Service of Azerbaijan recalled the first meetings within the project in 2016. Comparing then to now, he sees such a big success of the project which lay the groundwork for further cooperation between the project stakeholders, and also generally between Azerbaijan and the EU.
- Ms. Shafa Gasimova from the Azerbaijani Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed its willingness to continue with the cooperation.
- Ms. Kalkidan Bezabih from the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees at the Ministry of Interior of Germany mentioned the high interest of the Federal Office in implementation of RESTART project, as well as potential participation of Germany in similar initiatives to the MOBILAZE project in future.
- Mr. Arturas Gedminas from the State Border Guard Service of Lithuania thanked for the excellent cooperation within the project.
- Mr. Ivaylo Naydenov from the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Bulgaria was impressed with the numerous project activities that were accomplished during the project’s duration and hopes that further collaboration can be achieved.
- Mr. Guloghlan Muradli from the Azerbaijani Customs Service hopes for the promotion of new technologies in their future activities.
The State Border Service, Lieutenant Colonel Vahid Osmanov thanked the ICMPD team for their great work and leadership. He appreciated that the State Border Service worked closely with the project and benefitted strongly. He thanked the ICMPD leadership and the hard work that they put in the project activities and the EU member states that provided valuable support.

*Bringing Azerbaijani and EU citizens closer together* – this was the key message of the MOBILAZE project. This was achieved within the project on many different levels as Ms. Wagner pointed out. She expressed her thanks to the EU for funding such an important initiative and thanked the Azerbaijani partners for the cooperation and their general participation, the EU project partners as well as ICMPD project team in Baku and Vienna.