

**Roundtable on Refugee Protection and International Migration in the Western Balkans: Suggestions for a Comprehensive Regional Approach
(10-11 December 2013, Vienna, Austria)**

Annex 3 to the Summary Report: Suggestions for the Regional Action Plan - DRAFT

The initiative on refugee protection and international migration in the Western Balkans, supported by UNHCR and IOM, aims to assist the Governments in the region in developing and operationalizing a comprehensive migration and asylum management system. It seeks to strengthen the capacities of States and other stakeholders to address mixed movements of migrants and refugees from outside of the region in a more predictable, efficient and protection-sensitive manner, and to foster national and regional dialogue and practical cooperation on relevant issues of common concern.

To initiate an inclusive and transparent discussion on these issues among relevant stakeholders, a series of national consultative meetings were organized across the region in 2013 (in The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Kosovo (UNSCR 1244/1999)),¹ to be followed by similar meetings at national level in remaining countries in early 2014. These meetings helped to define key areas for action from the national perspective, taking into account the specific national context and realities of concerned countries. A regional roundtable on 10-11 December 2013 in Vienna, Austria helped to further develop common understandings among Western Balkan countries at regional level. To address the request of the concerned governments for concrete initiatives and to ensure the future operationalization of these recommendations for action, a draft Regional Action Plan, organized in form of a matrix was developed.² Such a draft Action Plan will serve as a basis for a regional strategy on asylum and migration, as well as joint fundraising tool.

To ensure an inclusive and cooperative approach, suggestions made at the above mentioned national and regional meetings, attended by Government participants, were complemented by proposals developed through an informal brainstorming among international and regional organizations that took place on 4 July 2013 in Geneva, as well as through discussions with local civil society actors.

In line with the above, this matrix attempts to 1) outline the main challenges faced by Western Balkan countries in addressing mixed movements of migrants and refugees from extra-regional countries, 2) identify gaps in existing responses and 3) propose concrete actions that can be taken at national and regional levels to address these shortcomings.

The proposals contained in the matrix are addressed primarily to the Governments of Western Balkan countries; however their implementation may require support and close cooperation with local civil society, international and regional organizations and other relevant actors, as appropriate.

This draft matrix will serve as a basis for further discussions with the Governments and other interested stakeholders at national and regional level.

¹References to Kosovo throughout this paper shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

²See the Summary Report, Roundtable on Refugee Protection and International Migration in the Western Balkans: Suggestions for a Comprehensive Regional Approach, 10-11 December, Vienna Austria, page 7.

Thematic issue 1: Protection-sensitive Entry Systems

General Challenge: Entry officials (first contact officials including border and police officials) face difficulties with differentiating among various groups of persons on the move and with referring them to appropriate response mechanisms.

Overall Objective: Establishing identification, profiling and referral mechanisms and ensuring their operationalization through capacity building of entry officials.

Challenges and Gaps in Responses	Objectives	Activities	Timing
A-D) Entry officials (first contact officials including border and police officials) face difficulties with differentiating among various groups of persons on the move. Asylum-seekers, persons with specific needs and vulnerable migrants are not always identified and referred to appropriate procedures.	A1) Effective identification and profiling mechanisms are established and fully operational. Asylum-seekers, persons with specific needs and vulnerable migrants are identified and able to access the territory and differentiated procedures to have their needs assessed and addressed, in line with international and European standards.	<p>A 1.1) Assess existing mechanisms at borders to identify gaps and good practices in procedures and capacities</p> <p>A 1.2) Based on the existing models, develop standardized profiling questionnaires to be employed at the entry points and conduct informal interviews with a view to establishing preliminary profiles of arriving persons.</p> <p>A.1.3) Explore the utility of deploying mixed profiling teams with diverse expertise, composed of entry officials and experts from international and civil society organizations.</p>	Short Term
	B1) Effective referral mechanisms are established and fully operational. Persons with international protection or other needs are referred to appropriate authorities in a timely manner.	B 1.1) Establish formal referral mechanisms between the first contact government officials (border and police officials) and migration and asylum authorities.	Mid-Long Term
	C1) Entry officials (including border police and other first-contact officials) are equipped with and trained to utilize tools aimed at full operationalization of identification, profiling and referral mechanisms.	<p>C 1.1) Develop SOPs to ensure proper and efficient operationalization of identification, profiling and referral mechanisms by competent entry officials.</p> <p>C 1.2) Develop practical tools such as protection toolkits, operational guidelines/manuals outlining the main responsibilities and providing practical guidance on how to identify, refer and respond to the needs of asylum-seekers/refugees, persons with specific needs</p>	Short Term

and vulnerable migrants.

C.1.3) Conduct joint capacity building and training for all first contact entry officials at national level to ensure appropriate utilization of the tools.

C.1.4) Develop basic phrasebooks (in relevant foreign languages) and/or language courses to assist entry officials in their initial contacts/ communication with persons arriving in the territory.

C.1.5) Develop mechanisms to conduct systematic and continued capacity building of entry/law enforcement officials on issues such as international human rights/ refugee law and application of international principles in practice.

C.1.6) Conduct trainings aimed at developing specific psycho-social skills and culture, age and gender-sensitive interviewing techniques for entry officials.

C.1.7) Conduct regional capacity building activities/trainings, focusing on addressing specific protection challenges in mixed movements, to build regional synergies, create opportunities for cross-border cooperation on issues of common concern, and foster exchange of experiences and good practices.

Mid Term

D) National mechanisms are established to monitor the implementation of protection-sensitive entry procedures and to ensure sustained capacity building and cooperation, in line with international standards.

D 1.1) Develop cooperation agreements/MoUs between respective border services, NGOs and selected IOs active in the area of asylum and migration, to serve as a basis for cooperation, including joint border monitoring and strategic capacity building.

Thematic issue 2: Improvement of Reception Arrangements

General Challenge: Arrangements are not always in place to ensure that arrivals are provided with assistance commensurate to their status and needs at all stages (since arrival/apprehension, through status determination and until the execution of the solution (return, integration, etc.)). Reception centres for asylum-seekers are over-crowded due to the lack of alternative reception arrangements for persons outside of the asylum procedure.

Overall Objective: Ensuring that all arrivals are treated in line with international standards applicable to the particular group: Processing is accompanied by corresponding assistance depending on the needs, length of stay and the purpose of the procedure, etc.

Challenges and Gaps in Responses	Objectives	Activity	Timing
A. Sufficient and adequate reception capacities are not available in all countries to ensure appropriate responses in view of both the augmented and potential future needs.	A. Expand available capacities to address immediate needs of all arrivals, in line with their status and needs, through establishing facilities for initial reception. Such facilities can serve to conduct pre-screening, profiling and referral. (See Thematic Issue 1, Objectives A1 and B1)	<p>A 1.1) Undertake feasibility/cost-effectiveness/needs assessments of mobile/temporary facilities for initial reception of arrivals;</p> <p>A 1.2) Establish at BCPs and/or other relevant locations a pilot mobile/temporary facility for initial reception and screening of arrivals.</p> <p>A 1.3) Support establishment of further mobile/temporary centres, in line with international standards.</p> <p>A 1.4) Equip the centres with mechanisms for profiling and referral (See Thematic Issue 1, Objectives A1 and B1)</p>	Mid Term
B. Reception centres for migrants in an irregular situation (detention centres) do not always offer a range of services necessary to ensure that their basic needs are met.	B 1) Ensuring that SOPs at reception facilities for migrants in an irregular situation (detention centres), including temporary centres, are in line with international and European standards.	<p>B 1.1) Draft and effectively implement SOPs for reception facilities, clarifying roles/responsibilities of relevant government authorities and non-governmental actors, in compliance with international standards.</p> <p>B 1.2) Put in place specific support/assistance mechanisms to address needs of vulnerable persons.</p> <p>B 1.3) Engage in active outreach to local communities residing in the vicinity of reception centres to raise awareness and combat social prejudice and xenophobia.</p>	Mid Term

C. Reception facilities for asylum-seekers and vulnerable migrants (UAMs and VoTs) are not always separate and clearly differentiated from facilities for other persons on the move.

C1) Reception centres for asylum-seekers do not serve as mere accommodation facilities, but also offer a range of important services necessary to ensure that their specific needs are met.

B 1.4) Conduct regular monitoring (assessments of needs) to ensure appropriate standards of care in reception centres.

B 1.5) Develop and/or update communication tools/ glossaries/information leaflets on rights and responsibilities of migrants.

B2) Staff at the reception centres aware and trained on SOPs in line with human rights standards and good practices when dealing with mixed migration flows.

B 2.1) Build capacities of staff at reception centres in order to achieve the same level of capacity across the region;

B 2.2) Facilitate exchange of good practices, building upon existing practices through study visits at intra-regional level;

B 2.3) Through MARRI, facilitate dialogue between countries in the region in accommodating irregular migrants and migrants with special needs.

C 1.1) Reception facilities are equipped with SOPs clarifying the roles and responsibilities of various government and non-governmental actors providing relevant services.

C 1.2) Ensure that reception centres for asylum-seekers offer services, such as counselling, psycho-social assistance, mechanisms for identification and addressing of specific needs, and timely provision of information on the rights and obligations of asylum-seekers in the host country, as well as on available procedures (asylum procedure, procedures for victims of trauma, trafficking, etc.) in a language that they understand.

C 1.3) Put in place mechanisms to identify particularly vulnerable asylum-seekers (such as unaccompanied children, persons with

Mid Term

disabilities, women at risk, victims of trauma, torture, rape and other forms of violence, etc.) and establish mechanisms for their cross-referral to adequate support and assistance systems.

C 1.4) Conduct regular monitoring and assessments of needs to ensure appropriate standards of care in reception facilities and to identify persons with specific needs. Joint assessments and interventions can be conducted by mixed teams of experts from competent government authorities, NGOs and international organizations.

C 1.5) Allocate additional resources to increase the standards of treatment in reception facilities, including their day-to-day operation, maintenance and security of residents, including from human smugglers and traffickers.

C 1.6) Establish and/or continue dialogue with civil society actors to identify opportunities for increased and formalized cooperation in provision of essential reception services to asylum-seekers (in identification of specific needs and vulnerabilities, legal counselling, provision of basic material and psycho-social assistance, provision of vocational training and free time activities, etc.)

C 1.7) Engage in active outreach to local communities residing in the vicinity of reception centres for asylum-seekers to raise awareness about the status and plight of this group on the move and combat social prejudice and xenophobia.

C 2) Reception centres for particularly vulnerable migrants such as VoTs and UaMs do not serve as mere accommodation facilities, but also offer a range of important services necessary to ensure that their specific needs are met

C 2.1) Reception facilities are equipped with SOPs clarifying the roles and responsibilities of various government and non-governmental actors providing relevant services.

C 2.2) Ensure that reception centres for vulnerable migrants offer services, such as counselling, psycho-social assistance, mechanisms for identification and addressing of specific needs, and timely provision of information on the rights and obligations of migrants in the host country, as well as on available procedures (asylum procedure, procedures for victims of trauma, trafficking, etc.) in a language that they understand.

C 2.3) Allocate additional resources to increase the standards of treatment in reception facilities, including their day-to-day operation, maintenance and security of residents, including from human smugglers and traffickers.

C 2.4) Establish and/or continue dialogue with civil society actors to identify opportunities for increased and formalized cooperation in provision of essential reception services to vulnerable migrants (in identification of specific needs and vulnerabilities, legal counselling, provision of basic material and psycho-social assistance, provision of vocational training and free time activities, etc.)

C 3.1) Provide adequate training and continuous capacity building to staff of authorities responsible for managing reception, on issues such as proper utilization of SOPs, basic principles of international human rights and refugee law, standards of treatment, cultural sensitivity, conflict

Short-Mid
Term

Mid Term

Mid Term

management, etc.

C 4.1) Develop a clear plan to abolish informal accommodation facilities.

C 4.2) In the interim period, ensure that conditions in such facilities are regularly monitored and assessments of needs are conducted in order to ensure appropriate standards of care and to identify persons with specific needs.

C.4.3) Ensure the referral of migrants to relevant formal structures upon closure of the informal accommodation facilities.

C 3) Staff of relevant authorities responsible for managing reception facilities is adequately trained.

C 4) Informal accommodation facilities cease to operate and adequate solutions are offered to migrants residing in these facilities.

Thematic issue 3: Identifying and providing assistance to persons with specific needs and vulnerable migrants

General Challenge: Differentiated procedures and processes are not always in place to identify persons with specific needs (victims of trafficking, unaccompanied and separated children, migrants with health problems, women at risk, etc.) and to provide them with tailored responses, according to their profiles and needs.

Overall Objective: Identifying and addressing gaps in responses at policy and operational level. Establishing well-functioning cross-referral mechanisms between different procedures to ensure that persons with multiple needs who fit into various categories (i.e. refugee children who are victims of trafficking) can access required remedies, depending on their status and needs.

Challenges and Gaps in responses	Objectives	Activity	Timing	
1. Self-sustainable mechanisms and procedures are not always in place to identify vulnerable migrants and to meet their specific needs in accordance with international human rights standards.	A1) Identification of existing gaps and measures to further strengthen existing schemes to address national/transnational TIP	A 1.1) Draft, review, edit, print and disseminate the anti-TIP needs assessment report;	Short Term	
		A 1.2) Organize a regional validation workshop to present recommendations to stakeholders and policy makers.		
	B1) The implementation of identified recommendations contributes towards better protection of trafficked migrants' rights.		B 1.1) To be set on the basis of the assessment findings.	Short Term
			B 1.2) Conduct specific training on the asylum-trafficking nexus and relevant cross-referral mechanisms between the asylum procedure and procedures for victims of trafficking.	Short Term
	C1)-Identification of existing gaps and measures to further strengthen existing schemes to address the needs of UAM and separated children		C.1.1) Draft, review, edit, print and dissemination the UAM and separated children needs assessment report including recommendations.	Mid Term
			C 1.2) Organize a regional validation workshop to present recommendations to stakeholders and policy makers.	
	D1) Strengthen national capacities and enhance national and regional police/ border officials cooperation in identification and referral of UAMs and separated children.		D 1.1) National assessments (desk research and customized field surveys)	Mid Term
			D 1.2) Provide national workshops for national law enforcement agencies,	

E1) Strengthen the capacity of law enforcement bodies to identify smugglers of migrants and smuggling activities

reception structures officials and civil society activists to share findings and inform them on standards for treatment of UAM and separated children;

D 1.3) Develop information materials;

D 1.4) Enhance regional police and border officials cooperation in identification and referral of UAMs and separated children.

D 1.5) Develop unified procedures for determination of the best interests of the child, age assessment and appointment of legal guardians.

E 1.1) In cooperation with other relevant national and international organizations and by using a multi-disciplinary approach, develop and regularly update common indicators and to assist the law enforcement officials in detecting smugglers and smuggling activities at the border and internally

E 1.2) Regularly train the law enforcement bodies on common indicators and profiles (as these keep constantly changing) in order to facilitate identification of smugglers of migrants and at the same time ensuring non-discriminatory profiling

E 1.3) Create and maintain a system to ensure that information relating to indicators, data and trends pertaining to smuggling of migrants is stored and shared with other agencies on a timely

Mid Term

F1) Policy frameworks and mechanisms are in place to regulate status of persons who are not in need of international refugee protection, yet cannot be returned to their countries of origin due to humanitarian and/or other reasons.

basis at the local and national level

F1) Introduce and/or amend legislation and establish relevant procedures to regulate legal status and provision of assistance to persons who are not refugees, but who cannot be returned to their countries of origin for reasons of no fault of their own (including access to accommodation, healthcare and social welfare).

Thematic issue 4: Recognizing Refugees

General Challenge: Procedural and substantive deficiencies in asylum procedures may result in refoulement of refugees.

Overall Objective: Ensuring access to fair and efficient asylum procedures through capacity-building and legislative measures, as appropriate.

Challenges and Gaps in Responses	Objectives	Activity	Timing
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<p>A-C) Asylum-seekers may face difficulties with access to fair and efficient asylum procedures in line with international refugee law and standards.</p> <p>Instances of direct and indirect refoulement may occur.</p>	<p>A 1) The legal and policy framework is fully implemented and in line with European and international standards</p>	<p>A 1.1) Revise and/or amend the current asylum legislation with a view to its full alignment with international standards.</p> <p>A1.2) Elaborate comprehensive and compatible by-laws and administrative regulations/instructions outlining mechanisms for their practical implementation.</p>	<p>Mid -Long term</p>
<p>Asylum-seekers and refugees are not always able to exercise their rights, in accordance with international law and standards.</p>	<p>B 1) The processing capacity, quality, fairness and effectiveness of the asylum procedure are enhanced.</p>	<p>B 1.1) Using protection checklists, conduct national assessments of the quality of asylum procedures, including evaluation of processing capacity, to identify existing shortcomings as well as outstanding capacity and training needs.</p> <p>B 1.2) Based on the above assessments, establish comprehensive training programmes to improve the understanding and application of EU law, international refugee and human rights law in general, and enhance the expertise and capacity of competent staff to implement national legislative acts and administrative regulations in particular.</p> <p>B 1.3) Conduct specific training on the use of adequate interviewing techniques, cross-cultural communication, handling of vulnerable cases, use of interpreters, etc.</p> <p>B 1.4) Develop additional case management and procedural tools to enhance the processing capacity of asylum authorities and the quality of asylum procedures. This may include caseload analysis or introduction of appropriate accelerated procedures with full respect to the principle of non-refoulement.</p>	<p>Mid Term</p>

B 1.5) Develop a coordinated system for collection and appropriate application of accurate, impartial and regularly updated country of origin information in the respective language of the host country.

B 1.6) Consider utilizing the MARRI website as a regional database of country of origin information.

B 1.7) Ensure state-sponsored provision of free legal aid to asylum-seekers, including at first instance of the asylum procedure.

B 1.8) Put in place appropriate procedural safeguards to ensure that third country nationals readmitted under the readmission agreements enjoy access to fair and efficient asylum procedures and incidents of potential indirect (chain) refoulement are prevented.

B 1.9) Ensure that adequate safeguards are in place when applying the safe third country concept to ensure that the designated country is safe for the particular individual, that s/he will be readmitted to the territory of this country and have his/her claim examined in a fair and efficient asylum procedure.

Mid Term

(C) Asylum-seekers enjoy access to the asylum procedure and instances of potential detention and/or refoulement are avoided

C 1.1) Ensure that asylum-seekers are registered without delay and provided access to the asylum procedure.

C 1.2) Provide adequate documentation to asylum-seekers and refugees.

C 1.3) Issue Convention Travel Documents to recognized refugees

Thematic issue 5: Solutions for Refugees

General Challenge: Absence of appropriate solutions for recognized refugees can become a push factor for many to resort to (irregular) onward movements.

Overall Objective: Enabling refugees to access appropriate solutions, including integration and resettlement.

Challenges and Gaps in Responses	Objectives	Activity	Timing
<p>A-B) The lack of adequate and effective solutions for recognized refugees, including low prospects for self-reliance and integration, may result in (irregular) onward movements.</p> <p>Refugees are not always able to exercise their rights, in line with relevant national legislation and international standards.</p> <p>Potential of refugees to contribute to the growth and development of the host communities is not fully realized to the benefit of all.</p>	<p>A/B Engage with civil society and relevant international organizations to develop comprehensive integration programmes for recognized refugees from third countries.</p> <p>B) Establish mechanisms of burden sharing and international cooperation for countries in the Western Balkan</p>	<p>A 1.1) Ensure integration of refugees, including by facilitating their access to the labour market, for instance to fill in specialized positions for which there is no local labour supply, such as instruction and/or translation and interpretation services in rare foreign languages.</p> <p>A 1.2) Undertake measures to ensure access of recognized refugees to appropriate housing, medical services and education (including local language courses) and vocational training.</p> <p>B 1.1) Establish a small resettlement programme to provide refugees who cannot stay in the region with a durable solution and to encourage authorities through such cooperation and burden sharing efforts to invest in their asylum systems</p>	<p>Long Term</p> <p>Long Term</p>
<p>C) Refugees may be ostracized and negatively stereotyped due to insufficient sensitization of local populations.</p>	<p>C) Combat prejudice and xenophobia towards refugees from third countries to ensure more harmonious community relations.</p>	<p>C 1.1) In cooperation with relevant stakeholders, including civil society, conduct public awareness and information campaigns aimed at sensitizing the local population about the plight of refugees</p>	<p>Long Term</p>

Thematic issue 6: Enhancing Mechanisms for Information Sharing

General Challenge: Lack of comprehensive data and information on movements to and through the region.

Overall Objective: Develop tools for collection and systematic analysis of quantitative and qualitative data on mixed movements at national level and facilitate exchange of relevant information on cross-border movements at regional level, in line with international standards and building on existing regional instruments and initiatives.

Challenges and Gaps in Responses	Objectives	Activity	Timing
A) Accurate and up-to-date data and information on mixed movements is not always available.	A 1) Upgrade/ establish national computerized registration systems/databases to identify migrants and asylum seekers through biometric identifiers.	A 1.1) Conduct assessment on the status of national databases and systems for the registration of asylum seekers and irregular migrants; A 1.2) Upgrade/establish computerised registration systems for recording relevant data on irregular migration.	Long term
	A2) Enhance the capacities of national stakeholders in data collection and analysis on mixed movements through the region, providing the inputs and ground for pertinent, effective and homogeneous policy formulation	A 2.1) Conduct training workshops on data collection and analysis for researchers, encompassing on-the-ground research, thematic ad-hoc studies, feasibility studies, etc. A 2.2) Facilitate regional standardization and storage of collected data to ensure access of all countries within the region. A 2.3) Assist in the production of independent analytical and policy studies.	Short term
B-D) Lack of systematic coordination and cooperation between countries in the region regarding sharing of relevant information on cross-border movements.	B 1) Establishment of new mechanisms and strengthening of the existing ones, such as International Cooperation Units, and ILECU, to facilitate the exchange of information on cross-border movements and irregular migration among WB countries, in line with European and international standards	B 1.1) Explore modalities for exchange of data on irregular migration between participating countries, including biometric data collection, taking into account relevant data protection standards.	Long term
		B1.2) Strengthen management / exchange of operational information between relevant agencies and institutions such as International Cooperation Units, and ILECU;	
		B 1.3) Develop a framework agreement outlining specific terms and conditions regarding regional data exchange.	Mid Term

C 1) Align the existing mechanisms for the exchange of information with the European and International data protection standards

C1.1) Identify gaps within the management / exchange of operational information between relevant agencies and institutions and implement necessary corrective measures.

D1) Ensure regular and systematic sharing of operational data amongst Border Police agencies in the region through functioning Police Cooperation Centres (PCCs) in the Western Balkans, in line with European and international standards.

D1.1) Identify auspicious sites within the region and conduct feasibility studies for the establishment of PCCs according to the standards of existing Centres in the EU.

Mid Term

D 1.2) Organise roundtables to facilitate drafting and signing of bi and/or multi-lateral agreements and ToRs.

D 1.3) Develop specialised training curriculum and SOPs and build the capacities of staff to be deployed at PCCs.

D2) Strengthened capacities for cooperation and tackling of irregular migration between Law Enforcement Officials of WB countries including enhanced capacities in Performing Joint Border Patrols

D 2.1) Facilitate on-the-job training through a study visit to an EU country that has established functioning Mobile Units and a PCC;

D 2.2) Purchase requisite technical equipment and infrastructure

Mid Term

D 2.3) Enhance capacities of officials to undertake joint patrols including the development of regional training curricula, materials, manuals and handbooks;

Thematic issue 7: Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration

General Challenge: Lack of return arrangements for non-refugees

Overall Objective: Establish and operationalize programs for voluntary return and reintegration of persons not in need of international protection

Challenges and Gaps in Responses	Objectives	Activity	Timing
A-B) Countries in the region currently lack sustainable and cost-effective instruments to facilitate voluntary return of migrants in an irregular situation (and not in need of international protection) to their countries of origin.	A1) Countries in the region are implementing assisted voluntary returns to countries of origin in safety and dignity, taking into consideration the needs and protection standards for vulnerable migrants	<p>A 1.1) Establish a framework for a regional AVR fund, to manage assisted voluntary returns, and establish SOPs;</p> <p>A 1.2) Establish legal frameworks in line with EU standards and pilot the implementation of AVRs of extra-regional migrants;</p> <p>A 1.3. Develop SOPs to ensure that international standards are applied and vulnerable categories such as persons who may have international protection needs are channelled to the asylum or other relevant procedures, and pre-departure risk assessments are undertaken for all vulnerable and at-risk migrants.</p> <p>A 1.4) Undertake assessment on reintegration opportunities in selected countries of origin with the highest caseload of migrants willing to return;</p> <p>A.1.5) Implement AVRs to countries of origin;</p> <p>A.1.6) Carry out a pilot return and reintegration programme.</p>	Short term
	B) Strengthen consular cooperation between Western Balkan countries and countries of origin to verify the identity of third country nationals and facilitate their return process, as appropriate.	<p>B 1.1) Bring together relevant stakeholders to share experiences on consular/diplomatic cooperation and map contributions that each country can make;</p> <p>B 1.2) Develop concrete tools and mechanisms for bilateral/regional cooperation in support of return mechanisms and readmission.</p> <p>B 1.3) Facilitate signing of MoUs on consular</p>	Short Term

<p>C) Country of origin information is available and regularly updated in the Western Balkan countries as tool for facilitating the return/reintegration of migrants that are not in need of protection such as rejected asylum seekers</p>	<p>cooperation within countries of origin;</p> <p>B 1.4) Monitor implementation of agreements and share best practices/lessons learned;</p> <p>C 1.1) Define priority countries of origin and structure and methodology for obtaining country of origin information, as well as common templates and minimum standards;</p> <p>C 1.2 Build capacities of staff in conducting research on countries of origin according to the agreed templates and standards;</p> <p>C 1.3) Establish mechanisms to ensure that information is readily available to relevant authorities;</p> <p>C 1.4) Establish mechanisms for the collection, sharing, analysis, and processing of information and data between countries;</p> <p>C 1.5.) Conduct joint research activities in priority countries of origin to update data.</p>	<p>Mid term</p>
<p>D 1) The relevant state agencies have the capacities to carry out assisted voluntary return and reintegration, taking into account the needs of vulnerable migrants that are not in need of international protection.</p>	<p>D 1.1) Build capacities of agencies to provide tailored return information and counselling;</p> <p>D 1.2) Support the Governments in undertaking tailored assessments of (re)integration needs;</p> <p>D 1.3) Assist states in organising travel arrangements and providing airport assistance and escort;</p> <p>D 1.4) Provide Return and Reception Assistance, and Reintegration Assistance.</p>	<p>Mid term</p>

Thematic issue 8: Strengthening Regional Cooperation

General Challenge: Individual actions of States have limited results and often lead to shifting the problem across the borders.

Overall Objective: Facilitate regional cooperation and coordination through gradual harmonization of standards and joint activities at operational level. Explore areas where pooling of resources would be useful to maximize outcomes, avoid duplication of efforts and promote cost-effectiveness.

Challenges and Gaps in Responses	Objectives	Activity	Timing
<p>A) Unequal standards of treatment or dysfunctional systems in one country can trigger (irregular onward) movements and be one of the factors contributing to the uneven distribution of asylum-seekers in the region.</p> <p>B) MARRI does not have the necessary resources and capacities to fully realize its potential in supporting its Member States.</p>	<p>A.1) Standards of treatment of asylum-seekers, refugees, migrants and persons with specific needs are gradually harmonized across the region with a view to avoiding spill-over effects across the borders, as well as in the context of the potential future EU accession.</p> <p>B) Acting in coordination with its member states MARRI is self-sustainable and capacitated to act as the central coordination mechanism within the WB and to provide strategic direction in migration management.</p>	<p>A 1.1) Facilitate exchange of information, experience and good practices in view of gradual harmonization of procedures and standards.</p> <p>A 1.2) Take necessary measures to further harmonize the national legislation related to migration management with the EU acquis.</p>	Medium-Long Term
		<p>B 1.1) Undertake assessment of internal mechanisms of MARRI to identify where its value-added is optimum;</p> <p>B 1.2) Define role of MARRI and undertake targeted strategy formulation;</p> <p>B 1.3) Develop field analysis, strengthen mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation, and ensure that MARRI's work reflects changing trends;</p> <p>B 1.4) Coordinate structured training and capacity building, and ensure active participation of field analysts in strategic planning;</p> <p>B 1.5) Strengthen communication strategies to enhance the visibility of MARRI.</p> <p>B 1.6) Strengthen MARRI's capacity to monitor harmonization of legislation with the EU acquis</p>	Mid Term

C. Interpreters for rare foreign languages are not available. As a result, relevant officials face difficulties with ensuring appropriate communication with refugees and migrants at all stages (since their arrival/apprehension, throughout reception and status determination, up until the identification and execution of the solution).

Refugees and migrants may not be able to express their needs and access necessary support. Lack of adequate professional interpretation may likewise affect the outcome of the asylum procedure.

C1) A regional pool of interpreters is established for the countries in the region.

C 1.1) Analyse relevant national legislation/criteria to assess the feasibility for utilizing a regional interpretation pool.

C 1.2) Undertake necessary steps to harmonize relevant national systems/criteria to allow use of a regional pool of interpreters.

C1.3) Explore most appropriate way of establishing/running a regional pool of interpreters in compliance with EU standards and good practices (including development of protocols and standardised procedures);

C 1.4) Undertake necessary amendments to ensure video/telephone conferencing procedures are in line with legislation.

C 1.5) Identify and purchase required infrastructure, and create secure communication networks for interpretation (including user training) in accordance with national legislation.

C 1.6) Identify available interpreters for the most widely spoken languages of migrants and refugees in the region.