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NOTE

From:	Presidency
To:	Working Party on External Aspects of Asylum and Migration (EMWP)
Subject:	The role of regional processes in achieving the objectives of the external dimension of migration (Khartoum, Rabat, Budapest, Prague) - Presidency paper

Budapest Process

The Budapest Process is one of the oldest interregional dialogues on migration providing a platform for dialogue and operational cooperation and aiming to strengthen regional dialogue and cooperation on migration and mobility. The Budapest Process is funded by the EU and bilateral contributions from several participating countries. Chaired by Türkiye and co-chaired by Hungary, with ICMPD as the Secretariat, its geographical scope includes over 50 countries and 10 organisations from Europe, Central Asia, and the Silk Routes, with participation of observers in other regions, reflecting its broad and inclusive reach. Since 2013, the geographic focus of the Dialogue has been on the Silk Routes region, covering Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iran, Iraq and Pakistan. Thematically, the dialogue's current focus is on strengthening law enforcement cooperation, preventing irregular migration including combatting migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings, fostering partnerships on legal migration pathways, and promoting cooperation on return and sustainable reintegration. The Budapest Process prides itself on not only serving as a trusted forum for effective dialogue on migration, but also as a network, knowledge hub, and catalyst for migration policy projects and innovative approaches.

Over time, the Budapest Process has mastered the balance between political dialogue and operational action, with concrete projects supporting and delivering tangible outcomes aligned with its political objectives. The dialogue's strategic direction is guided by Ministerial Declarations and Action Plans endorsed every five years at Ministerial Conferences, setting thematic priorities and implementation frameworks. Beyond these conferences, the Budapest Process operates through three meeting types: Senior Officials' Meetings (SOMs), which typically meet annually and form the backbone of the dialogue; Reference Group Meetings, where a smaller group of senior officials refine strategy and maintain continuity between SOMs; and the Working Group Meetings, bringing together policy experts and practitioners from Budapest Process countries of origin, transit, and destination for thematic discussions focussing on the following three areas: Law Enforcement Cooperation (supported by COLEP, the operational arm), Return and Reintegration, and Legal Pathways for Migration. In November 2024, the Budapest Process members adopted the new Ministerial Declaration and accompanying Call for Action (2025-2030), showing support for and a renewed commitment to the Process. The current and future focus of the Budapest Process will be on the implementation of the joint commitments and actions agreed upon.

Prague Process

The Prague Process is a targeted migration dialogue and policy process promoting migration partnerships among the countries of the European Union, Schengen area, Eastern Partnership, Western Balkans, Central Asia, and Türkiye. The dialogue has been funded by the EU and operated for 15 years, with the main principles and cooperation areas including: preventing irregular migration; readmission, voluntary return, and sustainable reintegration; legal and labour migration; integration of legally residing migrants; migration, mobility, and development; and strengthening capacities in asylum and international protection. In conjunction with these priority areas, the Prague Process is guided by three main organisational pillars: Policy Dialogue, Migration Observatory and Training Academy. The Observatory engages academic researchers and state experts, who produce analytical publications informing policy-makers, state specialists, the scientific community, and the wider public about migratory developments and best practices. The Academy aims to provide tailor-made, targeted, high-quality trainings in the six thematic areas set by the Prague Process Action Plan.

The dialogue prides itself on its track record of strengthening communication, partnership, and trust-building among its participants, as well as enhancing policy alignment, sustainable capacity building, and the promotion of evidence-based policies. Ministerial Conferences are organised every 3-5 years to evaluate the results achieved and to decide upon the future strategic orientation of the dialogue. The implementation of this strategy is overseen by annual gatherings of Senior Officials and supported by the Strategic Group (SG), which is composed of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, the European Commission, the ongoing EU Council Presidency, with a rotating Chairmanship. Concrete actions corresponding to the priorities listed in Ministerial Declarations and Action Plans are executed by a Project Implementation Team attached to the Secretariat at ICMPD. The current ministerial mandate covers years 2023-2027.

Khartoum Process

The Khartoum Process is a platform for enhanced political cooperation amongst the countries along the migration route between the Horn of Africa and Europe. Also known as the EU-Horn of Africa Migration Route Initiative, the inter-continental consultation was established in 2014 and follows a rotating chairmanship. The Secretariat is jointly managed by the African Union Commission and the European Commission and is supported by ICMPD with EU funding (DG INTPA). The Khartoum Process aims at establishing a continuous dialogue on migration and mobility. As per the Rome Declaration, its main focus lies in tackling migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings. Since then and due to the ever-changing nature of migration realities and challenges, the Khartoum Process has expanded its scope to address concerns within the five domains of the Joint Valletta Action Plan (JVAP) and beyond. These areas include: the development benefits of migration and addressing root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement; legal migration and mobility; protection and asylum; the prevention of irregular migration and trafficking in human beings; and return, readmission, and reintegration. The dialogue supports its member countries in identifying and implementing concrete projects in these domains.

Additionally, the Khartoum Process gives a new impetus to the regional collaboration between participating countries of origin, transit and destination, together with further opportunities and incentives for information exchange. The Process seeks to create opportunities for balanced partnerships, within the main pillars of JVAP, and a spirit of shared responsibility. At the political level, the Khartoum Process's activities include Senior Officials' Meetings and Steering Committee Meetings. At the technical level, the dialogue holds Thematic Meetings, Thematic Workshops and Trainings. Currently the Khartoum Process is chaired by Egypt.

Rabat Process

The Euro-African Dialogue on Migration and Development, known as the Rabat Process, is an intergovernmental migration dialogue established in 2006. It provides a platform for consultation on technical and political issues related to migration and development, connecting countries of origin, transit, and destination along the migration routes linking Central, West, and Northern Africa with Europe. The dialogue promotes solidarity, partnership, and shared responsibility, aiming for collaborative management of migration issues while respecting human rights. Aligned with the five domains of the Joint Valletta Action Plan (JVAP), the Rabat Process is guided by a flexible strategic framework (currently the Cadiz Action Plan 2023-2027), structured around the development benefits of migration and the root causes of irregular migration; regular migration and mobility; protection and asylum; irregular migration, migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings; and return, readmission and reintegration.

With many of countries of the Rabat Process being at the source, transit and destination of the Atlantic and Western Mediterranean routes and the Central Mediterranean route, this dialogue has been key in building Euro-African networks at both technical and political levels, fostering knowledge sharing on projects, policies, and good practices among countries and key stakeholders. It also monitors the implementation of commitments within the JVAP and periodically, a new multiannual cooperation programme is adopted at the ministerial level. Supported by EU funding, the dialogue is driven by its Steering Committee and an alternating chairmanship – currently held by Portugal - in collaboration with 57 state partners, 2 regional organisations (the European Union and the Economic Community of West African States ECOWAS), and 4 permanent observer organisations (ICRC, IOM, UNODC, UNHCR), with ICMPD serving as the Rabat Process Secretariat. In addition, the Rabat Process is cooperating and coordinating with other regional processes, such as the Khartoum Process. The Rabat Process is financially supported by DG INTPA.

EUROMED Migration

EUROMED Migration (EMM) supports EU Member States and the European Southern Neighbourhood Partner Countries (SPCs) in establishing a comprehensive, constructive and operational dialogue and co-operation framework on migration, with a particular focus on reinforcing instruments and capacities to develop and implement evidence-based migration policies. EMM aims to foster rights-based migration governance systems by consolidating and expanding cooperation between European Southern Neighbourhood Partner Countries and European Union Member States as well as among SPCs themselves within the thematic areas identified in the new EU agenda for the Mediterranean on migration and mobility and the New Pact on Migration and Asylum. It sets out to do so through three distinct yet complementary components, aligned and integrated to enhance and reinforce one another, namely- dialogue, knowledge and communications.

The Dialogue and Cooperation component builds upon the consultations and momentum generated through the 16-year dialogue platform of EUROMED Migration, addressing the need to reinforce and improve cooperation between relevant stakeholders in the field of migration. The thematic priorities of the Dialogue component are devised in consultation with participating states to ensure their relevance and added value.

The Knowledge management and development component serves to inform the priorities identified through the Dialogue component in order to foster a sound evidence basis for further exchange. The Knowledge component aims to provide stakeholders with a flexible tool to leverage migration research as a mean to consolidate evidence-based policy-making and, as a result, create an enabling environment for adequate and sustainable responses to identified migration issues.

The Communications and Narrative component aims to promote a balanced migration narrative in the Euro-Mediterranean region. This component seeks to restore favourable conditions for pragmatic and cognisant policy choices. Influential stakeholders, such as migration practitioners, communicators and journalists are engaged to advocate for a more balanced and nuanced discussion on migration's various realities. The Communications component contributes to attenuate polarisation and generate an enabling environment for migration policy-making.

Together, these three components contribute to reinforcing the coherence, operational scope and resilience of cooperation on migration in the Euro-Mediterranean region as well as to enlarge the common base of national governance systems.

EUROMED migration was funded by DG NEAR until January 2024. Since then, EU MS have advocated to resume activities under EUROMED Migration recognising the contribution of this technical forum to achieve EU strategic objectives in the external dimension in the Mediterranean region.

Overall assessment

The regional processes and migration dialogues, described in this paper, are funded by the EU, in addition to bilateral contributions. Funding, support and engagement of the EU is ensured with the objective of being able to benefit from the targeted, regional work of the processes and migration dialogues, in support of the EU's priorities in the area of migration management. So far, the regional processes have contributed to building trust and facilitated contacts among the origin, transit and destination countries. They are a reliable platform to discuss and agree on the regional priorities in migration management and a common approach, followed by the implementation of concrete joint activities. To ensure that those objectives are achieved, the involvement of the EU Member States is instrumental.

The questions below will help steer the discussion and understand how to further improve and capitalise on the well-established regional processes and migration dialogues, in support of the EU policy goals.

Questions for Member States:

1. In general, do the Member States consider the level of participation and activity of the partner countries in the regional processes and migration dialogues adequate and satisfactory?
2. Do you see any gaps in the work of the dialogues and processes, and if so, where do you think there is potential for further improvement? How do you think they could be made more effective? Should there be better synergies / cooperation between the Processes?
3. Do Member States consider that the processes and dialogues are addressing adequately the current migration challenges and the current situation of migration routes to Europe? What topics or geographical areas would need to be prioritised?
4. How can these regional processes and dialogues play an enabling role in the development of possible further comprehensive partnerships with third countries?

DIALOGUE PARTICIPATION

– **Budapest Process**

Participating States: *Afghanistan**, Albania, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, *Belarus**, Belgium, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Montenegro, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Pakistan, Poland, Portugal, Romania, *Russian Federation**, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Türkiye, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United Kingdom and Uzbekistan.

Observer States: Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, China, India, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, United States of America.

NB: Cooperation with Afghanistan, as well as with the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus have been halted in 2021 and early 2022, respectively.

– **Prague Process**

Participating states: Albania, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kosovo*¹, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, North Macedonia, Malta, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Türkiye, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan.

NB: Cooperation with the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus has been halted in early 2022.

¹ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and the International Court of Justice Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

– **Khartoum Process**

Participating states: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Kenya, Latvia, Libya, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Somalia, South Sudan, Spain, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Tunisia, and Uganda.

Participating Organisations: European Union, African Union Commission

– **Rabat Process**

Partner countries: Algeria (observer), Austria, Belgium, Benin, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Croatia, Czech Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Equatorial Guinea, Estonia, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liberia, Libya (observer), Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Morocco, Netherlands, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Cyprus, Romania, Sao Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sudan*,_Sweden, Switzerland, Togo, and Tunisia.

Partner organisations: The European Union and the Economic Community of West African States

Permanent observer organisations: ICRC, IOM, UNODC, UNHCR

– **EUROMED Migration**

Participating countries: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, State of Palestine*², Tunisia.

Observer countries: Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

² This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the Member States on this issue.