

Information measures and capacity building on asylum, legal and irregular migration in Afghanistan, Iraq and the Western Balkans (IKAM)

Factsheet, August 2021

Background

The Western Balkans Region (WB) has developed since 2014 into one of the most important migration routes to EU countries. In 2020, an estimated 70,000 migrants¹, who moved via routes along Greece, North Macedonia and Albania and Montenegro were registered in the WB region, mainly in Serbia and in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Many migrants have been stranded in the WB as border controls have increased in recent years and the possibility of onward migration to the EU is limited. In addition, the Covid-19 pandemic resulted in an increased number of stranded migrants on the move in the region. Transit migrants come mainly from Pakistan, Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Morocco and Bangladesh. In this context migration is often seen as irregular and associated with individuals in search of protection. Smuggling and human trafficking networks exploit this vulnerable situation and contribute to the spread of misinformation by offering irregular migrants false prospects of asylum.

Donor: Austrian Ministry of Interior and the European Union (AMIF)

Implementing partner: ICMPD

Duration: March 2021 – February 2022

Budget: 1,490,000 EUR

Overall objective: Provide objective information about the dangers and consequences of irregular migration as well as options for legal / labour migration and to counteract misinformation. Ultimately, the campaign aims to enable people to make informed decisions about migration and to reduce irregular emigration and onward migration.

Objectives

The overall objective of the project is to: a) provide information about the dangers and consequences of irregular migration and about options for legal migration and to counteract misinformation; b) to inform potential migrants, vulnerable communities and people in transit about the legal, social and economic realities of life in Europe and about the possibility of voluntary return; c) to enable informed decisions about migration and to reduce irregular emigration and onward migration; d) to support migrants in transit countries to avoid vulnerability for human trafficking and smuggling; and e) to strengthen capacities of local authorities in the target regions to raise awareness of migration.

Activities of the IKAM in the Western Balkans Region

The project activities aim to provide information to migrants present in the Western Balkans about services relating to assistance and protection, asylum and return. The following activities are planned:

1. Provision of information through a smartphone application 'WeBSafe'

¹ International Organization for Migration, Europe Flow Monitoring, <https://migration.iom.int/europe?type=arrivals>

Information on the risks that irregular migrants may face along the WB routes and on the protection of victims of human trafficking, exploitation and abuse will be available through a customised smartphone application, called 'WeBSafe'. The application aims to provide, inter alia, information to migrants on: a) the risks of irregular migration; b) assistance and services available for migrants arriving in the region; c) rights and obligations of migrants; d) information on asylum procedures and protection mechanisms; e) voluntary return options and organizations that offer assistance; f) special services available for migrants in vulnerable situations in order to prevent trafficking, exploitation and abuse; and it e) aims to serve as a trusted channel for authorities to convey relevant information to migrants. The information will be available in the languages of the migrants present in the region.

2. Provision of information through a website and information material

The WeBSafe smartphone application will be supplemented by a website, the WeBSafe website. The website will contain information that cannot be accessed in the smartphone application, as well as provide additional information (thematic videos, laws, etc.). It will also enable service providers to register and publish information about their services and ongoing activities. The website could also be used to exchange requests for support and cooperation, as well as to communicate and coordinate joint activities to protect vulnerable migrants.

Printed informational material on human trafficking, exploitation and abuse as well as on support for vulnerable migrants will be produced and disseminated to raise awareness on potential vulnerabilities. It will be multilingual and culturally adapted to the different nationalities of the migrants moving through the Western Balkans.

3. Capacity strengthening on preventing human trafficking

Understanding the vulnerability to human trafficking and exploitation is important for authorities to provide adequate response and assistance. In the Western Balkan region, the project will aim to support the work of national authorities with migrants, particularly with vulnerable migrant groups. Trainings planned for authorities will aim at sharing knowledge related to identifying vulnerabilities and offering adequate services, and exchanging on best practices among countries of the region will help migration and law enforcement agencies, trafficking stakeholders, NGOs and international organizations who support migrants and victims of human trafficking to define and implement best practices.

4. Analysis of the linkages between inadequate protection, lack of development opportunities and irregular secondary movements / transit migration

A research component of this project will review existing scientific explanations of destination country selection by migrants with a specific focus on the linkages between transit / secondary migration and the migration governance systems in the Western Balkans. The geographical focus of this component lies on Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Serbia. It focuses on two perspectives: 1) Migrants' motivation, expectations, choice of destination; and 2) State characteristics and functioning of relevant migration governance systems. The results will contribute to further development of migration governance in the region and be reflected in future awareness-raising campaigns.

Find out more

Ms. Admirela Ancion

Project Manager, ICMPD Western Balkans

Tel.: + 387 61 050 990

E-mail: Admirela.ancion@icmpd.org