

INFORMATION MEASURES AND CAPACITY BUILDING ON ASYLUM, LEGAL AND IRREGULAR MIGRATION IN AFGHANISTAN, IRAQ AND THE WESTERN BALKANS (IKAM)

BACKGROUND

Migration along the eastern Mediterranean route has considerable significance for Austria. In 2018 and 2019, a quarter of asylum seekers in Austria came from Afghanistan (2018: 15%, 2019: 23%) and Iraq (2018 and 2019: 6%).

Afghanistan and Iraq have suffered from a precarious security situation for decades. In this context migration is therefore 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 the false prospect of asylum. The Western Balkans Region (WB) has developed into one of the most important migration routes to EU countries since 2014.

In 2019, an estimated 80,000 migrants, who came 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 people on the move in the region. Transit migrants in this context come mainly from Pakistan, Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Morocco and Bangladesh.

OBJECTIVE

The overall objective of this project is to provide impartial information about the dangers and consequences of irregular migration as well as options for legal, such as e.g. labour and educational migration, family reunification, etc. and to counteract misinformation to potential migrants. The project aims to inform potential migrants, vulnerable communities and people in transit about the legal, social and economic realities of life in Europe, as well as about the possibility of voluntary return. Ultimately, the campaign aims to enable people to make informed decisions about migration and to reduce irregular movements and onward migration. In addition, the project aims to support migrants in transit countries in order to avoid further vulnerabilities to human trafficking and smuggling by providing adequate information. The project will also strengthen the capacities of local authorities in the target regions to raise awareness of migration and related information campaigns.



The information campaigns go beyond traditional media information channels, but are set up via multiple modes of communication to create trust in the information provided through the Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs) as well as local community-based organisations.



Information campaigns and capacity building in Afghanistan and Iraq

Based on the communication strategy, the awareness raising actions are built on various channels of communication (radio, TV, social media, SMS, newspapers, journalists, influencing community members) and the outreach work will focus on trust-building, embedded in communities. Information campaigns have a limited scope and have little lasting impact if interventions are not carried out over a longer term. ICMPD therefore plans strategic interventions to strengthen the capacities of local administrations (MORR and MOLSA in Afghanistan and MOLSA / MOMD in Iraq) in dealing with migration information and to build structures that enable the respective countries to communicate migration topics autonomously.



Information campaigns in the Western Balkans for transit migrants

Information on the risks that irregular migrants may face along the Western Balkan routes, as well as detailed information about support options for migrants, and especially for protecting potential victims of human trafficking, exploitation and abuse, will be available through a customised smartphone application 'WeBSafe', a dedicated website, as well as brochures and posters. The content will be multilingual, providing culturally sensitive information, adapted to reach diverse nationalities of the migrants moving along the Western Balkans route. Understanding the vulnerability to human trafficking and exploitation is important in order to improve the response and assistance from authorities. In the Western Balkan region, the project therefore also focuses on strengthening capacities and supporting the work of authorities with migrants, with a particular focus on vulnerable migrant groups.



Analysis of the linkages between protection, development opportunities and decisions about irregular onward movement

The research component of this project reviews existing scientific explanations of destination country selection by migrants with a specific focus on the linkages between decision-making on target countries, migration routes and the migration governance systems in the Western Balkans. The research focus of this component lies on Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Serbia. The empirical study is based on secondary literature and policy document analysis and fieldwork with migrants and experts in these three countries. The qualitative interviews emphasize 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 give recommendations for awareness-raising campaigns.

FIND OUT MORE

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