

Budapest Process

22nd Meeting of the Senior Officials of the Budapest Process

Istanbul, 16 December 2014

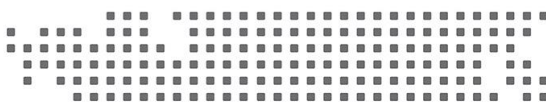
Summary/conclusions

1. On 16 December 2014, the 22nd Meeting of the Budapest Group of Senior Officials was held in Istanbul, Turkey.
2. The Senior Officials meeting gathered 69 participants from 31 countries – Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Croatia, Denmark, France, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Pakistan, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom – as well as the European Commission, the European Union Delegation in Turkey, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), FRONTEX, the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).
3. The annual Senior Officials Meetings are both the monitoring and steering body of the Budapest Process. The first part of the meeting reported on the **progress during 2014 including projects and meetings held:**
 - i. The UK reported on the finalisation of the Bridging Project. Hungary, as lead country, reported on the progress of the EU funded project “Support to the Silk Routes Partnership for Migration” (activities and pilot projects).
 - ii. Furthermore, IOM presented the final report of the Turkey funded project "Humanitarian Border Management in the Silk Routes Region". Reporting on other events of relevance in relation to the Silk Routes Partnership, Frontex referred also to the annual International Border Police Conference – where also the Silk Routes countries are represented.
 - iii. In addition, presentations were given on the results of the Working Group meetings held in 2014. Croatia reported on the South East European Working Group in Budapest and the Secretariat reported on the Silk Routes Region Working Group meeting in Dushanbe.
4. The second part of the meeting was dedicated to a discussion on an **optimised working group structure of the Budapest Process**. The issue had been prepared also through discussions at the meeting of the Friends of the Chair which was held one day earlier, on 15 December. The Secretariat reported back on those discussions and presented a background paper on the issue.
5. The reason for refining the working group structure is to better ensure that all thematic and regional priorities, as provided in the Istanbul Ministerial Declaration, are sufficiently addressed. At the same time it is important not to lose the functioning and important regional

working group structures. In short, the following proposal was referred by the Friends of the Chair:

- i. The Silk Routes Region Working Group, being the structure thematically covering the themes of the Ministerial Declaration, should meet at least two times a year.
- ii. Separate meetings will be organised for the Black Sea and South East European regions according to a more flexible schedule.
6. Following the presentation, the floor was opened for discussion. The Silk Routes Region countries Pakistan, Iran and Iraq initiated the discussion. In general, the initiative to focus stronger on thematic issues in the Silk Routes Region was welcomed by the countries. The strong need to reach the objectives of the partnership was especially mentioned.
7. Some countries were hesitant regarding the proposal and warned against an exclusive focus on the Silk Routes Region. The Russian Federation confirmed the importance of the Silk Routes Region Working Group but also put importance on retaining the other two working groups – on the South East European and Black Sea regions. In the discussion later on, Belarus supported the intervention. Also Armenia referred to the importance of keeping the regional balance in the Budapest Process and the need to keep the regional platforms on the South East European and Black Sea regions. These two working groups should not be reduced to working tables in the Silk Routes Region Working Group.
8. Other stakeholders, notably the UK and the European Commission, reminded that migration flows taking place along the Silk Routes are the Budapest Process priority. They supported the proposal to increase the focus on thematic work in the Silk Routes Region Working Group. The work of other working groups should contribute to the implementation of the Silk Routes Partnership for Migration.
9. The European Commission pointed out the need to plan meetings carefully, tailor-make them to the needs, and ensure that the right people are there, in order to receive best value for money and concrete follow-up, also in the form of initiatives and projects. As a cost-saving measure Budapest Process meetings could be organised jointly with project activities, notably with the regional trainings.
10. Bulgaria, as the Chair of the Working Group on the Black Sea Region, expressed its continued strong support and commitment to the Budapest Process and this working structure and explained that the next meeting is planned for 17-18 March 2015, dealing with effects of crisis on migration management. Supporting countries in the region and beyond were warmly invited to participate actively and show their support.
11. The Chair summarised discussions held and concluded the following:
 - i. In general, there is an agreement to optimise the structure of the Budapest Process, and to intensify the focus on thematic areas of the Ministerial Declaration in the Silk Routes Working Group.
 - ii. The South East European and Black Sea Region Working Groups are important and appreciated and should be continued. Increased thematic focus will also be important in these working group structures.
 - iii. The findings relating to the working group structure will be summarised and sent to all participants (please see Annex).

- iv. It is important to remember that if arrangements agreed here do not function, they can always be revisited and amended by Senior Officials at a later stage (within the framework of the Ministerial Declaration).
12. The third session of the meeting focused on the **financial viability of the Budapest Process**.
13. The Chair introduced the agenda item and explained the need for a widened donor base and shared commitment in order to ensure the longer term planning and implementation capacity of the Budapest Process.
14. The Secretariat presented the past and present funding structure of the Budapest Process, proposals for possible modalities for funding in the future and the draft budget for 2015.
15. The Chair expressed that it will continue supporting the Budapest Process activities. Also the Co-chair, Hungary expressed readiness to increase support, as far as possible.
16. In general, participants expressed strong support to the Process and its activities.
17. Regarding funding to the Secretariat, the Netherlands, supported by the UK, referred to the substantive project contributions that several countries make to the Budapest Process and mentioned that it is not easy to get additional funding. In any case, it will be easier to discuss the funding when it is formulated as a project. Switzerland and several other participants agreed that a multi-annual (two-year) funding framework – with a detailed project proposal and budget should be elaborated in order to facilitate funding discussions.
18. FRONTEX expressed its support and proposed to hold a joint border-management related meeting at its Warsaw headquarters, for which in this case it would be ready to provide co-funding.
19. In the later discussion and tour de table, also IOM and EASO expressed interest in co-hosting/co-funding meetings. EASO proposed the elaboration of training curricula in the field of protection as a possible area of cooperation. OSCE also expressed interest to cooperate more closely, especially considering that migration will be a priority for the next presidency.
20. The fourth session dealt with **priorities for continued project development and cooperation** to fully implement the Silk Routes Partnership for Migration. The Budapest Process Secretariat described the state of play and project pipe-line.
21. In the open discussion, the representative of **Iraq** drew attention to the particular situation of his country – as well as needs and priorities. The Ministerial Declaration contains carefully chosen priorities and topics for cooperation. These priorities are based on the need of the countries. Iraq is not a migrant exporting country but due to the crisis, the patterns of migration have changed. Previously there has been political or economic migration from Iraq, now – certain groups create political instability and push minorities outside Iraq. The Migration Information Centres as presented for Pakistan would be a priority also for Iraq. Furthermore, Iraq supports programmes on voluntary return and to increase the capacities of migrants to come back to Iraq and contribute to the development and economy of the country. In addition, it would be a priority to develop programmes to communicate better with the Iraqi diaspora. In this sense it would be important to build on the Turkish model and experience in dealing with expatriates. For Iraq it is needed to encourage the professional diaspora to return and help re-build Iraq. Reducing brain-drain will also ultimately help fighting extremism. The country is in an exceptional situation regarding IDPs and it needs both regional and international cooperation, support and burden-sharing.



22. IOM mentioned that it has two projects in the pipe-line. In follow-up to the humanitarian border management report, one initiative is to work on producing generic Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) at borders that can be used and adopted to countries' specific needs. A second initiative has been developed by IOM Kabul also relates to return of skilled Afghan diaspora.
23. Regarding concrete follow-up, the European Commission mentioned the two proposed pilot projects - one to support Migration Information Centres in line with the first chapter of the Ministerial Declaration: to equip migrants with the information tools to make informed decisions. The second one to increase regional cooperation in the fight against migrants smuggling – to disrupt the transnational criminal networks. There is an interest also for other countries to work with the project – for instance, Iran receives many unaccompanied minors from Afghanistan through smuggling. There are also a few other projects funded by the European Union in the region – dealing with trafficking in human beings and the Afghan population in Pakistan respectively.
24. A tour de table followed. All countries thanked the chair and expressed support to the Budapest Process, the plans for the next year and the calendar outlook. Special thematic areas of priority were expressed. The following additional comments were made;
 - i. Australia offered to provide expertise to ongoing projects and is also looking to initiate additional projects in the region. Also Denmark, Portugal and Poland indicated willingness to provide expertise to project activities. Belgium, noted that it is a long-term supporter of the BP and is thinking of reactivating its support and engagement.
 - ii. Bangladesh and Iran remain observers to the process, but will continue at a thematic level to contribute and participate in relevant activities and events. Iran also indicated a willingness to support ideas which will increase regional cooperation on these issues and provide capacity building to neighbouring countries.
25. The Chair summarised discussions held, thanked all participating countries for their engagement and contributions and entrusted the Secretariat with the task of summarising discussions and conclusions as well as to circulate results and coordinate feed-back. The Secretariat was furthermore requested to elaborate a proposal for a multi-annual funding framework for the Budapest Process which should also be distributed to Senior Officials.

ANNEX – Agreement on the Working Group structure

Background:

Since 2009/2010 the Budapest Process has three regional working groups:

- the Working Group on the South East European Region (chaired by Croatia since 2007),
- the Working Group on the Black Sea Region (chaired by Bulgaria since 2008) and
- the Working Group on the Silk Routes Region (co-chaired by Afghanistan and Turkey since 2010).

The Istanbul Ministerial Conference in April 2013 shaped the future mandate of the Budapest Process with the establishment of the Silk Routes Partnership for Migration. The objective of the Silk Routes Partnership for Migration is to promote further dialogue and mutual cooperation in managing migration flows taking place along the Silk Routes as the Budapest Process priority.

The Istanbul Ministerial Declaration held that on the one hand thematic expert meetings should be initiated in order to facilitate in-depth discussions between all stakeholders on specific priority issues, on the other hand an appropriate geographical working group structure, offering interested states in certain sub-regions a possible additional platform to discuss migration flows along the Silk Routes should be ensured.

A bit more than 18 months into the implementation of the Silk Routes Partnership for Migration a need to increase the thematic coverage capacity in the work of the Budapest Process had been identified. In order to ensure that all thematic priorities, as provided in the Istanbul Ministerial Declaration, are sufficiently addressed, the need to optimise the working group structure was brought to the attention of the Senior Officials.

While agreeing on the need to intensifying focus on the thematic areas, it was also considered important not to lose the important and functioning regional working group structures. For this reason, a more thematic orientation should not lead to losing the regional dimension.

Agreement on the Working Group structure

Following discussion the Senior Officials agreed on the following:

- i. The Working Group structure of the Budapest Process should be optimised, intensifying focus on the thematic areas of the Istanbul Ministerial Declaration.
- ii. The Silk Routes Region Working Group, being the structure thematically covering the priorities of the Ministerial Declaration, should for this reason meet at least two times a year.
- iii. The South East European and Black Sea Region Working Groups are appreciated structures and will continue to have separate meetings, according to a more flexible schedule.