

WESTERN BALKANS READMISSION CAPACITY BUILDING FACILITY (WBCAP)

Background

The return of irregular migrants and failed asylum seekers is an important aspect of migration management that contributes to guarding the integrity and credibility of asylum and migration policies and systems. Effective readmission policies, in full respect of international law and standards, are hence central aspects of migration management that address irregular migration in a way that helps to discourage people from risking their lives undertaking dangerous migration routes.

Since the beginning of 2018, the Western Balkans (WB) region has re-emerged as a transit route for migrants towards the EU. This situation revealed an immediate need to further support a comprehensive migration management framework in WB, including the safe and orderly return and readmission of irregular migrants which is essential to enhance the effectiveness of policies in the field of international protection and legal migration. In this context, the authorities of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Kosovo* expressed need to further efforts in the area of readmission, especially in terms of establishing cooperation with the Countries of Origin (CoO) of irregular migrants.

To respond to these needs, IOM established the **Western Balkans Readmission Capacity Building Facility (WBCAP) with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark**. Envisaged as a four year framework intervention, WBCAP will comprehensively address the deficiencies of national migration management systems related to readmission and provide sustainable and protection-sensitive solutions to the challenges identified by the WB administrations and the EU. The WBCAP Facility provides sufficient flexibility to tailor country specific approaches to arising trends, priorities and needs.

The overall objective of the WBCAP Facility is to **contribute to enhanced national migration management and readmission systems in the Western Balkans, and strengthened cooperation with relevant countries of origin and EU Member States on readmission, which will be achieved through four main outcomes.**

BUDGET:

DKK 37,400,000.00

DONOR:

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark

IMPLEMENTED BY:

International Organization for Migration (IOM)

DURATION:

1 January 2021 – 31 December 2024

GEOGRAPHICAL COVERAGE:

Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Kosovo*

BENEFICIARIES:

Ministry of Interior of Albania, Ministry of Interior and Service for Foreigners' Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ministry of Interior of Montenegro, Ministry of Interior of North Macedonia, Ministry of Interior of Serbia, Ministry of Interior of Kosovo*, Ministry of Interior Affairs and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan; Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of Bangladesh; Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan; Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Kingdom of Morocco and returnees as indirect beneficiaries

*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Outcome 1

Successful implementation by WB authorities of the readmission actions funded by the WBCAP Facility, as adapted to their needs and in line with international and European migrant protection standards

At the start of the implementation period IOM will organize consultations with the national authorities to assess and identify the key needs and priorities of the beneficiaries. The Project Management Team will provide support to the national project coordinators and the beneficiaries in conceptualizing and developing the requests for complementary support actions. Priority will be given to activities that focus on technical assistance and dialogue on return and readmission among beneficiaries, while also promoting engagement and facilitating cooperation with EU and CoO counterparts. WBCAP Facility will seek to ensure synergies and complementarities with the working methods and priorities of existing relevant support projects, facilities, and networks active in the Western Balkans. The planned national interventions will be reviewed and revised according to arising needs during annual national steering meetings.

Outcome 2

Improved functional communication, negotiations and cooperation channels on readmission between WB Countries and priority CoOs

Within the WBCAP Facility, IOM will provide technical expertise and operational support to project beneficiaries in negotiating readmission agreements or arrangements between WB and priority CoOs, as identified by authorities in the WB. IOM will also conduct four targeted technical assessments on the legal and operational challenges of readmission cooperation between specific WB beneficiaries and CoOs that have expressed interest in further developing readmission cooperation among them. Building on the findings of a regional assessment of readmission frameworks in WB, IOM will organize bi-lateral and multilateral thematic meetings between WB authorities and CoO readmission practitioners and will support the development of at least two readmission arrangements or agreements. Additionally, in order to ensure effective exchange of knowledge and experience between the relevant WB

beneficiaries and CoOs, IOM will organize four working study visits for relevant readmission officers from the CoOs to the WB and explore possibilities for implementing potential support mechanisms for returning migrants.

Outcome 3

Improved protection-sensitive practices on return and readmission of WB and third country nationals in the WB

IOM will strengthen the strategic and operational cooperation on readmission among relevant authorities in the region by organizing annual readmission meetings and supporting the development or update of operating procedures or protocols regulating the bi-lateral return and readmission processes among WB beneficiaries. This activity will be complemented by a series of national and regional expert trainings for return officials on rights-oriented return and readmission and effective case management. To ensure adequate exchange and retention of readmission- and return-related knowledge in the region, IOM will establish a Regional Group of Readmission Specialists.

Outcome 4

Strengthened and digitalized readmission cooperation between the EU and the WB, in line with international and EU standards

IOM will strengthen return and readmission cooperation between the WB and EU MS through the rollout of up to three innovative and sustainable digital readmission case management systems (RCMS). The RCMS is envisaged as an electronic case management platform which will allow the requesting and receiving country to easily initiate readmission procedures, verify the identity of the migrant and share the necessary personal or travel documents needed for the return in a compatible and secure manner. Based on a targeted digital maturity assessment, IOM will aim for the RCMS to be seamlessly integrated in the national IT architecture and will be accompanied by the development of protocols and trainings on its use and sustainability. Additionally, IOM will support national technical capacities of readmission authorities through the development of relevant support software and procurement of IT equipment.