



EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA, SWITZERLAND AND THE UNITED KINGDOM

REGIONAL STRATEGY
2020–2024

IOM is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. As an intergovernmental organization, IOM acts with its partners in the international community to: assist in meeting the operational challenges of migration; advance understanding of migration issues; encourage social and economic development through migration; and uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants.

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The European Economic Area (EEA) is an area of free trade and movement of people comprising the 27 Member States of the European Union, with the addition of Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. Switzerland is not party to the EEA Agreement, but developed its relations with the European Union through a set of bilateral agreements which provide for economic collaboration and cooperation on asylum and free travel within Schengen borders. Following its decision to leave the European Union on 31 January 2020, with terms of withdrawal from the European Union still under negotiation, the United Kingdom is likewise not party to the EEA Agreement.

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FOREWORD

In November 2019, the IOM Strategic Vision was presented to Member States. It reflects the Organization's view of how it will need to develop over a five-year period, in order to effectively address complex challenges and seize the many opportunities migration offers to both migrants and society. It responds to new and emerging responsibilities – including membership in the United Nations and coordination of the United Nations Network on Migration – as we enter the Decade of Action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. As part of the implementation of the Strategic Vision, I asked each of the Regional Offices to develop its own strategic priorities for the 2020–2024 period, integrating key elements of the Vision to respond to emerging needs within the region.

This regional strategy reflects the essential role that IOM plays in the field of human mobility: protecting, assisting and supporting migrants across the world, developing effective responses to the shifting dynamics of migration, and serving as a key source of advice on migration policy, research, data and practice. It also highlights the critical work that IOM undertakes in emergency situations, developing the resilience of communities and mobile populations, and particularly those in vulnerable situations, while building capacity within governments to manage all forms and impacts of mobility.

Most importantly, this strategy highlights the current and future regional and cross-regional trends and challenges with respect to migration and situations of displacement, and outlines how IOM will seek to address them, including through collaboration with United Nations agencies and other partners.

I would like to thank colleagues at all levels of the Organization – and particularly at the regional and country levels – for their diligent and insightful work in developing this strategy, which places IOM's global strategic objectives in context and sets out a course of action to achieve them. It is particularly timely, given the high salience of human mobility in public discourse, and as operational needs on the ground, particularly in the humanitarian sphere, are becoming more complex in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Under this strategy, IOM colleagues will engage with a wide range of stakeholders in all countries in the region, along with key regional bodies, including economic communities, consultative processes and multilateral forums, on the priorities it sets out. I and all my colleagues look forward to working with you over the next years to ensure that migration is safe, orderly and regular for the benefit of all. Together, we can respond to the needs and aspirations of migrants and displaced populations around the world, building societies fit for a modern, mobile and interconnected world.



António Vitorino
Director General
International Organization for Migration

CONTENTS

Foreword	iii
Acronyms	v
<hr/>	
1. Introduction	1
<hr/>	
2. Political and institutional outlook for the region	5
<hr/>	
3. Migration outlook for the region	11
3.1. Key migration and policy trends in the region and potential areas of expansion for IOM's work	12
<hr/>	
4. Regional strategic priorities	17
4.1. Resilience	18
4.2. Mobility	20
4.3. Governance	21
<hr/>	
5. Institutional development	23
<hr/>	
6. Concluding statement: IOM in the region in 2024	25
<hr/>	
Annex: IOM in the European Economic Area, Switzerland and the United Kingdom	27



ACRONYMS

AVRR	assisted voluntary return and reintegration
COVID-19	coronavirus disease 2019
CSO	civil society organization
DTM	Displacement Tracking Matrix
EASO	European Asylum Support Office
EEA	European Economic Area
FRA	European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights
Frontex	The European Border and Coast Guard Agency
GBV	gender-based violence
HPDN	humanitarian–peace–development nexus
IBM	integrated border management
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MFF	Multiannual Financial Framework (of the European Union)
NEET	youth not in employment, education or training
NGO	non-governmental organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SDG(s)	Sustainable Development Goal(s)
SRF	IOM Strategic Results Framework
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

This policy document presents the strategic direction of the work of IOM in the European Economic Area (EEA) region, Switzerland and the United Kingdom (hereinafter referred to simply as “the region”) for the period 2020–2024. The document is a product of a process involving the IOM Regional Office in Brussels and country missions in the region, as well as feedback and guidance from several thematic units and the Office of the Director General at IOM Headquarters.

Since early 2020, the IOM region of the EEA, Switzerland and the United Kingdom has been impacted by the COVID-2019 pandemic. While the short-term impacts are already being felt most acutely by vulnerable groups, the longer-term, socioeconomic, development-related and humanitarian consequences are yet to be fully determined. These outcomes will continue to impact the needs of migrants and other populations on the move, host communities and governments, and must therefore be fully reflected in the programming of IOM, which has already shifted in response. This regional strategy should therefore be read in light of these developments and will be reviewed periodically to ensure the necessary response to address ongoing and emerging impacts of the pandemic and other significant regional and global developments.



1.

INTRODUCTION





1. INTRODUCTION

The core values and principles of IOM are at the heart of its work. The Organization holds itself to high standards, guided by the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, including upholding human rights for all. Respect for the rights, dignity, empowerment and well-being of all migrants and (associated) communities remains paramount. IOM has always assisted governments in their effective implementation of international standards in its programming and will continue to do so. In addition to the values enshrined in the IOM Constitution, the Organization continues to adhere to the core United Nations values of integrity, professionalism, equality and respect for diversity, ensures that it is accountable to its beneficiaries, and plays an active role in preventing sexual exploitation and abuse.

The work of IOM in the European Economic Area (EEA) region, Switzerland and the United Kingdom focuses on achieving good migration governance by supporting efforts to develop and advance internal and external migration policies, strengthen their effectiveness, and ensure protection and promotion of migrants' rights. These efforts take place in a dynamic regional context in terms of both the migration and political landscapes and where intraregional mobility continues to grow, accompanied by increases in the influx of migrant workers from South-Eastern and Eastern Europe and beyond. These migrants are instrumental in addressing demographic challenges and consequent labour market needs caused by a fast-ageing population, low wages and digitalization, among others. At the same time, the region continues to integrate large numbers of migrants and refugees. Irregular migration continues to challenge national border management schemes and migration policies, which has also seen a rise in human trafficking for labour and sexual exploitation. For the 2020–2024 period, IOM will exercise its mandate in a new political and institutional landscape within the governance framework of the European Union, which presents several key strategic opportunities, as well as challenges, for the Organization. The United Kingdom's departure from the European Union in January 2020 is expected to have several implications on the situation of European Union citizens in the country, as well as of British citizens in European Union Member States, potentially affecting the programming of IOM.¹ The European Union Migration and Asylum Pact, released in October 2020, as well as the adoption of the European Union Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for the 2021–2027 period, will have a significant impact on the Union's and its Member States' ability to address mobility and migration issues, as well as on the Organization's programming capacities in the region and beyond. Furthermore, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic will significantly impact the work of IOM in supporting Member States' efforts to balance public security and health, while ensuring that migrants are protected.²

¹ The United Kingdom is one of the biggest bilateral donors to IOM.

² In consideration of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the regional strategy will be a living document that will be continuously adjusted to new realities and priorities in the region and beyond.

Reflecting on migration realities and policy trends in each country in the region, the IOM Regional Strategy for the EEA, Switzerland and the United Kingdom 2020–2024 overall strategic goal is to pursue safe, orderly and regular migration to enhance the well-being of migrants and societies through a rights-based and whole-of-government approach to the governance of migration and mobility to, from and within the region that is coherent, holistic and balanced. The regional strategy recognizes that gender equality is central to the causes and consequences of migration and is essential to integrate in organizational responses related to achieving the objective of safe, humane and orderly migration for all. The strategy is grounded in IOM Strategic Vision 2019–2023³ (which reflects the IOM commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)), and in the Global Compact for Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration. Other reference policy documents include the IOM Institutional Strategy on Migration and Sustainable Development,⁴ the IOM Migration Data Strategy (2020–2025), the IOM Migration Governance Framework (MiGOF), the IOM Migration Crisis Operational Framework (MCOF) and the Global Compact on Refugees.

³ IOM, *IOM Strategic Vision 2019–2023: Setting a Course for IOM* (C/110/INF/1) (Geneva, 2019). Available at <https://governingbodies.iom.int/system/files/en/council/110/C-110-INF-1%20-%20IOM%20Strategic%20Vision.pdf>.

⁴ IOM, *IOM Institutional Strategy on Migration and Sustainable Development* (2020, Geneva). Available at <https://publications.iom.int/books/iom-institutional-strategy-migration-and-sustainable-development>. Available at <https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iom-institutional-strategy.pdf>.

2.

POLITICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL OUTLOOK FOR THE REGION



2. POLITICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL OUTLOOK FOR THE REGION

Migration is a complex phenomenon that undeniably affects countries, communities, migrants and their families in very different and sometimes unpredictable ways. Simultaneously, economic and social conditions also shape migration dynamics and the positive contributions that migration can bring to communities of origin and destination. IOM, together with its strategic partners in the region (national governments, European Union institutions and agencies, communities, United Nations agencies, international and local civil society organizations (CSOs), and the private sector, among others) promotes a comprehensive approach to well-managed migration and a balanced, evidence-based discussion around migration.

IOM engages with national counterparts on migration governance and the promotion of the well-being of migrants, equality, non-discrimination, social inclusion and diversity. IOM gives due consideration to the fact that migration governance is a multidimensional reality that requires forward-looking, well-planned policies that are based on collection, analysis and communication of accurate, reliable, comparable and contextualized migration data. IOM will continue supporting national governments and development partners (including development banks) to mainstream migration into sectorial policies and programmes, and international cooperation and development. IOM will continue advocating for addressing multisectoral determinants of migrants' health and promoting the inclusion of health in the migration agenda (e.g. in the context of climate change, labour migration, border management and migration policy development). Furthermore, IOM will continue working closely with local authorities and municipalities to foster social cohesion between migrants and local communities.

IOM remains a steadfast and reliable partner engaged in regular, multilevel strategic dialogue with the European Union on migration governance.⁵ Given the new composition and priorities of European Union institutions, following the Union's Parliamentary elections of May 2019, and with the new European Commission and a new President of the European Council since December 2019, the IOM Regional Office for the EEA, the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), based in Brussels, in close coordination with relevant country offices, will contribute to solidifying the Organization's role as a global leader on migration in both operational management and policy guidance. In the context of the European Union's commitment to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, IOM will advocate for developing and implementing migration policies that fully explore the migration–sustainable development nexus and strengthen the role of migration as an accelerator for sustainable development outcomes. Furthermore, IOM will support the European Union in mainstreaming a migration perspective into the development policies of the Union and international cooperation agreements. In the context of the European Union Pact on Migration and Asylum, IOM will continue advocating with European Union Member States and institutions for a balanced approach to migration that will look at the management of irregular migration and borders in harmony with the need to address

⁵ In July 2012, the European Union and IOM established a strategic framework for cooperation to enhance collaboration on migration, development, humanitarian response and human rights issues, building on both partners' shared interest in bringing the benefits of well-managed international migration to migrants and society. The framework was extended in 2016.

demographic trends and labour market requirements in the Union, and to promote social cohesion and inclusion of migrants. IOM will advocate for implementing holistic approaches to addressing vulnerability and strengthening protection and access to needs-based support for migrants who are survivors of human trafficking, gender-based violence (GBV), exploitation and abuse, social exclusion, and discrimination on various grounds. Furthermore, a rights-based approach to return will be advocated while promoting an integrated approach to reintegration assistance that will entail bringing together governments of the countries of origin, the initiatives of European Union Member States and development actors, to ensure impactful post return assistance that encourages sustainable reintegration. IOM will further advocate for a predictable and robust Common European Asylum System which includes resettlement and relocation.

IOM recognizes the growing demand by European Union institutions and agencies to further explore linkages between migration and other major policy areas, such as foreign and security policy, humanitarian aid, development cooperation, stability and peacebuilding, justice and fundamental rights, health, employment and social inclusion, and the need to address them through both policy and programming. The linkages between migration, environment and climate change will be increasingly high on the international agenda and of key strategic importance to IOM. The European Union has taken the lead in creating an international legal framework, as well as putting forward concrete action to tackle climate change. The European Green Deal, which is at the heart of the European Commission's strategy to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and related policy priorities, will be an important guiding document for the efforts of IOM in this regard. Migration affects all policy areas under the Green Deal, including sustainable agriculture, a circular economy, clean energy and the "Just Transition Mechanism" that promotes social fairness in the shift towards a climate-neutral economy for those most vulnerable to the effects of a changing economic model. IOM will advocate for migration considerations to be reckoned during the implementation of the European Green Deal,⁶ to avert and minimize displacement of populations affected by climate change. IOM will provide advice and operational support to European Union Member States to support affected regions and countries.

The European Union and its Member States constitute the largest donors to IOM programmes in the EEA region and beyond. The negotiations for the next MFF (2021–2027) offer a unique opportunity for European Union Member States to develop the next generation of instruments and funds, enabling Europe to uphold its international engagements while pursuing European Union priorities. Delays in the negotiations, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the outcome of the negotiations on the MFF for the 2021–2027 period, will have a significant impact on the programming capacities of IOM. The structure and volume of the proposed Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) and the designated funds for migration will be instructive for the Organization.

⁶ The European Union will be climate-neutral in 2050 and for doing so, a European Climate Law that turns the political commitment into a legal obligation and trigger for investment has been proposed. Actions will be required from all sectors of the European Union economy and include: (a) investing in environmentally-friendly technologies; (b) supporting industry to innovate; (c) rolling out cleaner, cheaper and healthier forms of private and public transport; (d) decarbonizing the energy sector; (e) ensuring buildings are more energy-efficient; and (f) working with international partners to improve global environmental standards. Through the Transition Mechanism, the European Union will mobilize at least EUR 100 billion over the 2021–2027 period in the most affected regions.

In efforts to further strengthen existing partnerships with European Union institutions, IOM will cooperate closely with several Directorates-General⁷ of the European Commission on issues related to integration, labour migration, protection and assistance to vulnerable migrants, return, readmission and reintegration, border management, humanitarian and other types of crisis response, and health. It should be highlighted that the European Commission is increasingly allocating resources to specialized agencies in the migration–development nexus.⁸ Partnership will also be reinforced and expanded with European Union agencies. The European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) has been assigned an extended mandate covering the entire return continuum, next to its existing mandate on external European Union borders, as well as increased financial and personnel resources to deliver on this, as part of European Integrated Border Management (IBM).⁹ IOM will strengthen its cooperation with Frontex to promote a holistic approach to promoting and facilitating safe and dignified return, linking return and sustainable reintegration to broader development efforts, while prioritizing a rights-based approach and care for migrants in vulnerable situations throughout the entire return continuum. Additionally, IOM will enhance its cooperation with the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), which has already considerably broadened its operational involvement on resettlement and European Union relocation. Furthermore, IOM will further develop its partnership with the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). Overall, IOM will strengthen policy advice on migration to European Union institutions, as well as to national governments in the region.

As the United Nations Migration Agency, IOM maintains close collaboration with United Nations coordination structures on all fronts (from humanitarian to development, peace and security), including in the context of the United Nations–European Union dialogue on the 2030 Agenda. IOM will play a key role in the coordination of the United Nations Network on Migration, established in 2019 to ensure effective, timely and coordinated system-wide support to Member States in the implementation and review of, and follow-up to, the Global Compact for Migration. Towards this aim, IOM will support regional and national migration networks and the engagement of a wide range of migration stakeholders, including civil society. With regard to bilateral cooperation with United Nations agencies, IOM will continue and potentially expand on existing cooperation in the field of labour migration and integration,¹⁰ migration and development, resettlement and complementary pathways in the European Union,¹¹ border management,¹² promotion of universal health care (UHC) and access for vulnerable populations to national health systems.¹³ Ongoing collective efforts,¹⁴ including measuring the footprint of human trafficking and forced labour, including child labour, in global supply chains – and other types of exploitation such as forced marriages, begging and sexual slavery – will continue.

⁷ Such as the Directorates-General for Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME), European Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO), European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO), Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE), Justice (DG JUSTICE), and Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL), and the European Union External Action Service (EEAS).

⁸ Such as Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), the International and Ibero-American Foundation for Administration and Public Policies (FIAPP), and the Belgium Development Agency (Enabel), among others.

⁹ Defined in Article 3 of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency's Regulation 2.0.

¹⁰ With the International Labour Organization (ILO).

¹¹ With UNHCR.

¹² With the United Nations Office on Counterterrorism (UNOCT) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

¹³ With the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UNAIDS.

¹⁴ With UNICEF, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), ILO and UNODC.

IOM is committed to strengthening the role of countries in the region in all migration-related discussions in support of bilateral and regional dialogue and cooperation on migration governance. IOM will provide support to European Union institutions and Member States to strengthen dialogue with migrants' countries of origin, transit and destination to foster international cooperation and develop migration management and governance capacity. Furthermore, the Regional Office in Brussels, in cooperation with other IOM regional offices, will further strengthen dialogue and cooperation between European Union institutions and countries in the European Union Neighbourhood to ensure that policies targeting the Eastern Partnership and Southern Neighbourhood sufficiently reflect migration and mobility as key priorities in all its dimensions.¹⁵ IOM will also engage in interregional cooperation processes on migration where the European Union is involved and which represent a strategic opportunity for the Organization to advocate for embedding migration comprehensively into intercontinental partnerships.¹⁶ In this regard, IOM will further support ongoing dialogue between the European Union and the African continent to ensure a balanced, coherent and comprehensive partnership on migration and mobility, in the context of the European Union Strategy with the continent.¹⁷ The recently launched IOM Continental Africa Strategy can be a helpful tool in this regard. IOM considers it important to carefully examine and prioritize the migration–environment–climate change nexus, as well as to address the links between urban development and migration, including intraregional mobility, in the context of massive urbanization on the African continent in the coming 10 years. In addition, opportunities that could arise from harnessing the potential of migration (e.g. migration linked to education, health and employment) shall be further explored and pursued.

Given the essential role of the European Union and its Member States in supporting immediate and long-term solutions to displacement situations around the world, IOM will engage with the Union to support the work of the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement by sharing its experience in internal displacement and helping organize consultations and events.

IOM intends to further strengthen existing cooperation with CSOs and other partners¹⁸ in several areas of migration. In addition, IOM will engage with the private sector¹⁹ to strengthen its capacity for ensuring diversity in the workplace, putting administrative procedures in place for the ethical recruitment of migrant workers, and addressing the vulnerabilities of migrants in their operations and supply chain. Finally, IOM will aim to enhance its cooperation with academia and think tanks in the area of data collection and research analysis in various areas of migration management.

¹⁵ European Union membership of six candidate countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey and Kosovo*) is currently in the negotiation process. Furthermore, the European Union is increasing its cooperation with six Eastern European partners, namely, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.

* References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

¹⁶ Such as the Budapest Process, Prague Process, Rabat Process and Khartoum Process.

¹⁷ A new Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States is expected to be concluded. The proposal for a strategy introduces a specific focus on the green transition and digital transformation as key target areas for future cooperation, focusing on youth and women, including in particular their potential as agents of change. (See, for example: https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/system/files/communication-eu-africa-strategy-join-2020-4-final_en.pdf)

¹⁸ IOM will seek to strengthen relations with the Council of Europe (CoE) within the frame of human rights, health and migration movements, including migrant vulnerability.

¹⁹ Successful practices of cooperation with the private sector have also been recorded in the areas of labour migration, migration health, integrated border management, and migrant protection and assistance.

3.

MIGRATION OUTLOOK FOR THE REGION



3. MIGRATION OUTLOOK FOR THE REGION

3.1. KEY MIGRATION AND POLICY TRENDS IN THE REGION AND POTENTIAL AREAS OF EXPANSION FOR IOM'S WORK

The region covering the EEA, Switzerland and the United Kingdom will continue to be influenced by migration and mobility in the foreseeable future, and among the challenges and issues identified are demographic shifts, skills and labour gaps, human trafficking, stranded migrants, inadequate access to health care, environmental and climate change impacts, preparing for and responding to emergencies, irregular migration, and return and reintegration. Opportunities include mainstreaming migration into development policies, labour mobility, diaspora engagement, the use of remittances for sustainable development, facilitating cross-border mobility through optimized border management and visa policies, and (green) investment – all of which will be part of the strategic approach within the region.

In the short to the medium term, labour mobility is expected to grow both within and in the direction of the region, in response to demographic challenges and consequent labour market needs caused by a fast-ageing population in several European Union countries, and also due to labour market conditions in the countries of origin of labour migrants, as well as low wages and digitalization, among other factors. This trend will be impacted by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The confinement measures introduced by countries in the region to mitigate the spread of the disease have reduced people's mobility and social interactions. However, the causal impact of different COVID-19 confinement policies on mobility trends during and after the spread of the epidemic are yet to be measured.

A distinction needs to be made between free movement within the European Union and the EEA region, which concerns European Union citizens and their family members, and labour mobility from other countries to the region. Three-quarters (17.6 million) of all EU-28²⁰ citizens who have moved from their respective countries of citizenship currently reside in Germany, the United Kingdom, Spain, Italy and France, the main European Union sending countries being Romania, Poland, Italy, Portugal and Bulgaria. The situation of European Union citizens and their families living and working in the United Kingdom (approximately 3.6 million),²¹ and of the migrant workers from other countries (approximately 1.29 million),²² as well as that of British citizens and their families living in European Union Member States,²³ will also demand additional attention in the coming years, following Brexit. It should also be highlighted that the number of people not in employment, education or training (NEET) in the region have increased, with a significant gender gap (with disproportionately more women in this category). In member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), one in 10 young people fall under the NEET

²⁰ The European Union when it consisted a group of 28 countries (Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechia, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Greece, Spain, France, Croatia, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Malta, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Finland, Sweden and the United Kingdom). (See: European Union, EU Vocabularies. Available at <https://op.europa.eu/en/web/eu-vocabularies/at-concept/-/resource/authority/corporate-body/EUMS28>.)

²¹ According to the Migration Observatory of Oxford University, an estimated 3.6 million European Union-born migrants were living in the United Kingdom in 2018.

²² United Kingdom, Office for National Statistics, Migration statistics quarterly report, August 2019 (London, 2019). Available at www.ons.gov.uk/releases/migrationstatisticsquarterlyreportaugust2019.

²³ The Foreign and Commonwealth Office estimates that "over 1 million UK nationals live in EU and EFTA countries." (Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Dominic Raab, "£3 million grant to help UK nationals in EU for Brexit", press release, 30 August 2019. Available at www.gov.uk/government/news/3-million-grant-to-help-uk-nationals-in-eu-for-brexit.)

category.²⁴ Hence, there is an urgent need to bridge the skills gap, as well as strengthen the European Youth Guarantee for younger generations.²⁵ In this context, IOM supports the United Nations Youth Strategy and its implementation at the global, regional and national levels. IOM promotes engagement with Member States and other partners to advocate for a balanced approach to stimulate youth labour demand and prompt improvements in skills development systems, with the objective of easing the school-to-work transition and reducing the NEET rate, particularly among young women and disadvantaged youth, in alignment with United Nations Youth Strategy 2030.²⁶

Labour migration from South-Eastern and Eastern Europe towards the region is likely to continue in the coming years. On the one hand, this is due to the increased access that citizens of these countries have to the European Union labour market. On the other hand, it is triggered by the process of negotiation for European Union membership (such as in the case of Western Balkan countries). Labour migration is an important avenue for addressing labour shortages in the region, as well as stimulating sustainable development, in both migrants' countries of destination and countries of origin, through remittance transfers, diaspora engagement and contributions to the development of local communities.

Irregular migration (through irregular border crossing and/or stay) will challenge national border and migration systems. The region has seen a rise in both trafficking for labour and sexual exploitation. Two important trends reported by European Union Member States are the sharp increase in child trafficking (23% of all victims), and the growth of intra-European Union trafficking (44% of victims are European Union citizens). Several countries in the region have enacted anti-trafficking legislation to hold companies accountable and promote anti-trafficking due diligence. Despite growing awareness and knowledge of trafficking practices, prosecution and conviction rates remain low. Irregular migrants are especially vulnerable, as traffickers and smugglers often take advantage of their status to lock victims into cycles of exploitation. IOM, therefore, considers enhancing protection measures for vulnerable migrants in the region as highly important.

The region has also witnessed the arrival of large numbers of migrants and refugees, with a peak in 2015, that has put a lot of pressure on national asylum systems, prompting the introduction of border checks by several European Union Member States. Migrants originating from Northern and sub-Saharan Africa make up a significant portion of migratory movements towards the European Union, particularly Italy and Spain.²⁷ In 2019, 82,000 migrants in mixed flows arrived in the European Union via the Eastern Mediterranean Route, entering the European Union via Turkey to Greece – a route used predominantly by migrants and asylum seekers from countries affected by violence and conflict, including Afghanistan, Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic. In July 2015, European Union Member States, together with Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland, adopted the Conclusions of the Council of the European Union which established the resettlement of 22,504 individuals in need of international protection over the 2015–2017 period through multilateral and national schemes. By March 2018, more than 19,432 people – mainly from Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey – had been resettled under the July 2015 scheme. By March 2018, around 12,400 Syrian refugees had been resettled under the European Union–Turkey statement of

²⁴ OECD, *How's Life? 2020: Measuring Well-being* (Paris, 2020). Available at www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/9870c393-en.pdf?expires=1594033807&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=CBE2640C7DE963E10D0A98CCBDBBB580.

²⁵ Beatriz Rios, "The disengaged youth, a pending challenge in the EU", *Euractiv*, 11 February 2020.

²⁶ United Nations, *United Nations Youth Strategy – Youth 2030: Working with and for Young People* (New York, 2018). Available at www.un.org/youthenvoy/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/18-00080_UN-Youth-Strategy_Web.pdf.

²⁷ IOM, *World Migration Report 2020* (Geneva, 2019), pp. 185–186. Available at <https://publications.iom.int/books/world-migration-report-2020>.

18 March 2016.²⁸ The record-high forced displacement has exposed a widening gap between the number of refugees in need of a third-country solution and the far smaller number of available resettlement places. In line with the IOM global advocacy that calls for an expansion of resettlement and the provision of durable solutions for those in need of international protection, European Union leadership on this issue will be crucial to maintaining broad global support for assistance to refugees. IOM supports the view of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) that resettlement should remain the priority, and that other pathways, including humanitarian admission, should complement resettlement numbers to increase overall access to international protection.

Over time, a polarized discourse on migration has developed in the region. In some countries, migrants have been presented as a challenge to national identity, values, economic stability and security, and a threat to social cohesion. IOM assesses that a balanced public discussion will require greater emphasis on migrant-centric research and analyses that examine the real impact of migration on receiving countries and communities. IOM can effectively contribute to this effort, including through on-the-ground data collected by its Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), which will contribute to a balanced and evidence-based migration discourse.²⁹ It is also worth highlighting that despite challenges, several Member States have reaffirmed the centrality of migrants' inclusion and social cohesion in the Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration Policy in the European Union (2004),³⁰ the European Union Action Plan on the integration of third-country nationals (2016), as well as in the Global Compact for Migration.³¹ Therefore, IOM sees concrete opportunities for countries in the region to adopt holistic inclusion policies, which go beyond the focus on labour market inclusion and can lead to deeper and more sustainable inclusion outcomes such as health coverage and education. Furthermore, IOM sees the need for strengthening the involvement of local actors and migrants in developing and (re-)evaluating national inclusion policies.

IOM views return and readmission as part of a comprehensive and balanced approach to enhancing migration governance. Return and readmission policies remain important instruments of response to irregular migration for most countries in the region.³² IOM engages in supporting countries in the region to improve their cooperation on readmission with partner countries. Furthermore, IOM continues to advocate for and provide technical assistance to concerned stakeholders to ensure that migrants in need are assisted to return voluntarily, safely and in dignity, in full respect of human rights and regardless of their status. While essential instruments are already in place in the area, IOM sees an urgent need for European Union Member States to adopt an integrated approach to return that is rights-based and includes measures to promote sustainable reintegration. Furthermore, this approach should strongly consider the impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic on mobility, including that of migrants. Large numbers of international migrants are stranded in the region, while others, such as seasonal migrant workers, are unable to return to the countries in which they were employed because of closed borders. The situation of people on the move is rapidly deteriorating, with direct consequences for migrants themselves and the communities that depend on them. Over time, this can force more people to

²⁸ The full text of the statement is available at www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/03/18/eu-turkey-statement.

²⁹ The Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) is available at <https://dtm.iom.int>.

³⁰ Also reflected in: Barcelona Center for International Affairs (CIDOB) and Migration Policy Group (MPG), *Migrant Integration Policy Index 2015* (Barcelona, CIDOB and MPG, 2015). Available at www.mipex.eu/what-is-mipex.

³¹ Specifically, Objective 16 of the Global Compact for Migration (full text available at www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/73/195).

³² According to the *World Migration Report 2020*, majority (54%) of all AVRR beneficiaries globally in 2018 returned from the European Economic Area (EEA) and Switzerland, particularly from Germany, Greece, Belgium, Austria and the Netherlands.

move within countries or other countries in the region out of necessity, which can lead to increased unsafe and irregular migration.³³

Human mobility linked to disasters, climate change and environmental degradation will be a priority in the region. Climate-driven migration is a contributing factor to many trends in internal migration in the European Union. This includes rural-to-urban migration in countries experiencing heatwaves and severe droughts, where rural livelihoods are made increasingly less profitable, and movements of people away from rivers, floodplains and other low-lying, at-risk areas will be impacted by flooding and sea-level rise. Climate migration is also expected to contribute to patterns of movement across borders and regions. Therefore, IOM finds it equally important to consider migration trends in the region that are associated with the impacts of climate change, as well as to consider the impact of climate change on human mobility in policy development.

³³ IOM, "Why migration matters for 'recovering better' from COVID-19", Issue Brief No. 1, 25 June (Geneva, 2020). Available at www.iom.int/sites/default/files/documents/issue_brief_why_migration_matters_for_recovering_better.pdf.

4.

REGIONAL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



4. REGIONAL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The overall strategic goal for the region is stated as follows:

IOM will pursue safe, orderly and regular migration to enhance the well-being of migrants and societies through a rights-based and whole-of-government approach to the governance of migration and mobility to, from and within the region that is coherent, holistic and balanced.

To achieve this strategic goal, IOM will engage in evidence-based policy and programming focusing on the regional strategic priorities enumerated herein. These strategic priorities have been clustered under, and respond to, the global vision of IOM, as operationalized by the Strategic Results Framework (SRF) and its four objectives: humanitarian response and resilience (SRF Objectives 1 and 2), mobility (SRF Objective 3) and governance (SRF Objective 4).

4.1. RESILIENCE

Main objective: Ensure continuous capacity in the EEA region, Switzerland and the United Kingdom to effectively respond to migration challenges and vulnerabilities at any time

This pillar (as in the IOM Strategic Vision) and strategic priority area emphasises the need for IOM to prepare for higher numbers of people moving in and out of situations of vulnerability, stemming from a range of complex drivers, including climate change, instability, poverty and exploitation. IOM will endeavour to take a long-term and holistic approach to emergency response, integrating development objectives and acknowledging changing drivers and vulnerabilities.

4.1.1. Strategic priority 1: Address the mobility dimensions of crisis situations in the region through prevention, preparedness, principled response and long-term solutions

IOM will generate and provide information and analysis on displacement and migration crises using its DTM methodology, which utilizes flow monitoring systems, that will support the development of narratives around migration and displacement based on facts and evidence. Countries in the region will be supported in efforts to increase the protection space for those in need through the setup of new and expansion of established resettlement programmes, the development and expansion of complementary pathways,³⁴ and the implementation of family reunification programmes. Based on its long experience, IOM will be able to effectively advise on and support health assessments and pre-departure orientation in support of resettlement and relocation programmes, as requested by Member States. To ensure greater probability of success, IOM will work with European Union Member States to prepare the groundwork for integration in the countries of destination before resettlement or relocation takes place.

³⁴ Including community-based sponsorship; labour mobility pathways for refugees; and student scholarship programmes.

IOM will support the repatriation of European Union citizens abroad in times of crisis. Furthermore, it will support countries in the region in coordinating with immediate neighbours to prepare for and respond to mobility dimensions of crisis in the context of disasters, health and other emergencies. In the context of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, building on the Organization's global presence and data collection abilities, IOM will develop reference data collection, guaranteeing stakeholders' access to timely, contextually specific and correct information on migrants' needs. This will support national governments in strengthening disease surveillance among border communities, points of entry and migrant-dense areas, among others. Furthermore, IOM will take action to strengthen and support national, regional and local coordination to build up and improve migrant-friendly services, especially health services. Support will also be provided to national governments in identifying the protection, psychosocial, health and economic needs of most vulnerable groups and map gaps for direct assistance to beneficiaries.

4.1.2. Strategic priority 2: Strengthen national policies and practices in the EEA region, Switzerland and the United Kingdom to address and reduce vulnerabilities in migration

IOM will undertake advocacy, capacity-building, research and targeted technical assistance with its Member States to implement holistic approaches to addressing vulnerabilities in migration. In addition, IOM will contribute to strengthening protection and access to needs-based support and rights of migrants who are survivors of human trafficking, GBV and other forms of violence, exploitation and abuse. IOM will specifically promote policy and programmes to protect children on the move – whether unaccompanied, separated or with their families, with respect to risk assessment and determination of the “best interest of the child” for return options. IOM will promote the inclusion of migrants in health systems responses as a good public health practice. Being and staying healthy is a fundamental precondition for migrants to work, be productive and contribute to the social and economic development of communities of origin and destination.

4.1.3. Strategic priority 3: Enhance understanding and response to adverse drivers of human mobility due to environmental degradation, disasters and climate change

IOM, in cooperation with other partners, will facilitate research and analysis that will help create a better understanding of human mobility linked to disasters, climate change and environmental degradation to be able to advise relevant policy actions. Furthermore, IOM will provide recommendations to the European Union and national governments for promoting migration health that account for climate change, while ensuring that the Organization's migration, environment and climate change (MECC) programming uphold the right to health of affected communities, while keeping in mind groups vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

4.1.4. Strategic priority 4: Strengthen social inclusion and cohesion for migrants and societies

IOM will engage in targeted initiatives that aim to empower migrants and societies to realize full inclusion and social cohesion by eliminating all forms of discrimination, reducing inequality and enabling inter-group contact, while promoting evidence-based public discourse to shape perceptions of migration. In response to the call to “leave no one behind”, which is at the core of the 2030 Agenda, IOM will support the efforts of national governments and local authorities to integrate the needs of migrants into national and local plans, policies and strategies across sectors, in accordance with the 17 SDGs and their respective targets. Partnerships with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to strengthen community-led projects and public awareness and communication campaigns that promote social

cohesion will also be explored. Finally, IOM will engage with stakeholders to demonstrate and deliver best practices in the area of integration in the countries of the EEA region, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

4.1.5. Strategic priority 5: Create conditions for migrants and diasporas to fully contribute to sustainable development

IOM will support diaspora communities in Europe to connect them with their countries of origin, and, as such, facilitate their contributions to sustainable development in all stages of the migration continuum. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, IOM will assess the impact of the ongoing crisis on migrant communities and promote their contributions to crisis response and socioeconomic recovery, both in their host and origin countries. To this end, IOM will capitalize on the iDiaspora tool³⁵ to better engage diaspora communities and develop targeted support programmes that facilitate migrant and diaspora contributions to sustainable development. Finally, IOM will continue working with development partners in the region to promote and enhance the mainstreaming of migration into international cooperation and development policies and programmes.

4.2. MOBILITY

Main objective: Enhance efficient, predictable and rights-based mobility pathways in the EEA region, Switzerland and the United Kingdom to effectively pursue safe, regular and orderly migration

In order to fulfil the SDGs and strengthen cohesive societies, migrants must be able to travel in a safe, orderly and dignified manner that mitigates risks related to the migration process. This pillar and strategic priority area reflects the necessity of labour migration as a key regular pathway that is in tune with the demographic and labour market realities of Europe and contributes to the upskilling of talent pools, in a context where the profile of needed skills is continuously shifting and the creation of more dynamic European labour markets and economic growth are needed. IOM recognizes that maintaining the integrity of migration and mobility schemes also requires an ability to detect irregular migration and to prohibit irregular cross-border activity.

4.2.1. Strategic priority 1: Enhance labour market-responsive and rights-based labour mobility pathways to the region

Working with European Union partners and national-level counterparts, IOM will promote the development of safe, rights-based and beneficial labour migration policies, with a view to addressing labour market needs in an ageing Europe. IOM will support the promotion and implementation of safe and regular labour mobility pathways to European Union Member States through flexible, balanced and rights-based admission policies and programmes. Leveraging its extensive global presence, IOM will work closely with the private sector to support the development of rights-based and ethical recruitment schemes and promote International Recruitment Integrity System (IRIS) standards. Furthermore, IOM will sustain its support in facilitating transnational dialogue between countries of origin and countries of destination on, among others, matters related to skills partnerships and the protection of migrant workers. IOM will contribute to putting in place appropriate occupational health policies that will also look at working conditions for migrants and the overall health implications of poor or dangerous working conditions.

³⁵ iDIASPORA is a global engagement and knowledge exchange hub for diaspora communities and those looking to engage with them. It provides comprehensive, regularly updated data and analysis relevant to diaspora communities, policymakers and NGO actors, and showcases successful diaspora actions and partnerships. More information is available at <https://idiaspora.org>.

4.2.2. Strategic priority 2: Promote safe, dignified return and readmission, as well as sustainable reintegration

IOM will work through direct assistance, technical assistance and advocacy to allow key stakeholders in the European Union and other countries of the region to implement voluntary return programmes that protect the human rights of migrants while ensuring the necessary safeguards for migrants in vulnerable situations. IOM will continue facilitating dialogue among European Union Member States and partner countries and providing technical assistance on return and readmission policies, and legal and operational frameworks. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, assisted voluntary return and reintegration (AVRR) programmes will systematically include virtual counselling, health and psychosocial support options, as well vulnerability assessment and responses. Furthermore, reintegration measures are foreseen and will be designed to support sustainable reintegration for returnees and promote opportunities for human development. IOM will advocate for and provide technical assistance to its Member States to facilitate sustainable reintegration of returnees by promoting a holistic assistance methodology, looking at the economic, social and psychosocial and health aspects of reintegration.

4.2.3. Strategic priority 3: Support the implementation of the European Union Integrated Border Management Framework

IOM will support, as relevant, efforts of the European Union and its Member States to implement a balanced and rights-based European IBM approach. To achieve this, IOM will partner with Frontex, EASO, the FRA and other European Union agencies, United Nations sister agencies, and CSOs. The Organization's main modus of engagement and intervention will be through core capacity-building activities, including training infrastructure enhancement, sharing of migration management tools (including readmission and border management information systems), access to legal identity and adequate documentation, supporting passenger data exchange (comprising Advanced Passenger Information and Passenger Name Records), fostering trade and border management, exchange of expertise with the governments and partner agencies, promotion and implementation of rights-based and protection-sensitive border management (including the concept of humanitarian border management), among others. IOM will ensure the mainstreaming and promotion of human rights (including through refugee law, where applicable), as well as data protection policy standards throughout its support. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, support will be provided to European Union Member States to balance the approach and responses to maintain public security and public health, starting with border controls and movement within, into and out of European Union territory.

4.3. GOVERNANCE

Main objective: Improve migration governance through a whole-of-government, whole-of-society approach and through regular international dialogue and cooperation on migration

Migration as a transnational phenomenon requires international cooperation and sustainable multilateral solutions. This pillar and strategic priority area reflects the global role IOM should play in promoting a comprehensive approach to well-managed migration and towards a balanced, evidence-based discussion around migration both in Europe and internationally.

4.3.1. Strategic priority 1: Promote a rights-based, strategic, comprehensive approach to migration governance

IOM will continue advocating with European Union institutions and national counterparts for a comprehensive, whole-of-government approach to migration, specifically in relation to legislative, policy and programmatic actions. IOM will, as appropriate, work with national authorities in the countries of the region to support them in meeting the commitments they made in the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, the Global Compact for Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees for promoting policies and practices in line with these international frameworks. Multi-stakeholder partnerships in policy development and implementation will be fostered to address migration in all its dimensions.

4.3.2. Strategic priority 2: Enhance collection and utilization of accurate and disaggregated data as a basis for evidence-based policies and balanced public discourse on migration

IOM acknowledges that evidence-based, forward-looking and well-planned policy can enhance migration governance, which benefits both migrants and the communities that welcome them. Accurate and disaggregated data serves as a foundation for evidence-based policies that can promote social cohesion. Sound analysis and evidence-based information that is communicated strategically can contribute to balancing public discourse and reducing discrimination. IOM in the region, through close coordination with IOM's Global Migration Data Analysis Centre (GMDAC), will encourage governments collecting accurate, comparable and reliable data to share relevant data, while observing data protection principles, and promote the digitalization of migration data collection, use and management in partner countries. Accurate data will also allow migration stakeholders to effectively monitor and evaluate the implementation of policies over time.

4.3.3. Strategic priority 3: Support coherent migration governance across sectors and ensure policy coherence at the national level

IOM will engage with relevant stakeholders in European Union institutions, agencies and Member States in the region to support close linkages between migration and specific sectoral policies, such as foreign policy, security, humanitarian aid, gender mainstreaming, development cooperation, justice and fundamental rights, health, employment and social inclusion, climate action, and research. IOM will advocate for and provide technical support to mainstream migration into sectoral policies to ensure the effectiveness of each policy and that there is coherence between internal and external migration governance policies. Furthermore, IOM will engage in working with local authorities in cities and regions to ensure policy coherence.

4.3.4. Strategic priority 3.4: Facilitate international cooperation and partnerships for safe, orderly, and regular migration

IOM will continue to strengthen its role in all migration-related discussions in the region, as well as in the context of interregional processes,³⁶ to advance regional and bilateral cooperation between governments, as well as regular dialogue for safe, orderly and regular migration. IOM will support European Union institutions and EEA countries, as well as Switzerland and the United Kingdom, in their efforts to strengthen dialogue with countries of origin, transit and destination, to foster international cooperation and develop migration governance capacity.

³⁶ Such as the Khartoum Process, Rabat Process and Prague Process, among others.

5.

INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT





5. INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

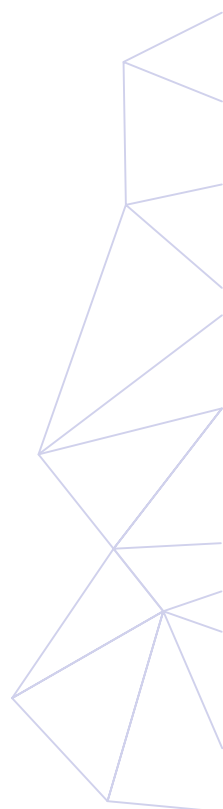
The key drivers to IOM success in the region lie in several areas in which the Organization will need to strengthen its capacity to realize its goals as outlined in this document, as well as in the overall IOM Strategic Vision 2019–2023.

IOM in the region will enhance internal capacity to ensure high-quality programming that contributes to migration governance and sustainable development outcomes. Efforts will be made to gather and manage knowledge, whether in the form of operational expertise, information on policy trends and developments, lessons learned from project implementation, or the collection of key data.

The Regional Office in Brussels, in coordination with country offices and IOM Headquarters, will continue to work on the strategic communication of complex issues. The vision of this regional IOM policy document will be communicated both internally and externally through a communications strategy that will also serve to increase interlocutors' knowledge of IOM and their understanding of the Organization's mandate and work at both regional and global levels. To advance external communications in the region, IOM will enhance the capacity of offices to undertake public awareness-raising activities and campaigns.

Furthermore, IOM will continue improving the digitalization of all processes with respect to direct assistance to migrants (from registration up to monitoring of support). IOM will be further promoting the use of technology for health inclusion through public–private partnerships and health data management (including personal health data management to improve access to services and health data security).

Overall, the opportunities for enhancing IOM staff capacity on data collection and analysis will be strengthened through training and other forms of support, along with knowledge management. IOM will also enhance staff knowledge of key institutional tools and results-based management. Additionally, to advance policy capacity and resource mobilization in the region, IOM will invest in further strengthening its offices' dialogue with development agencies of IOM Member States, as well as national authorities. This has significance, as the national authorities are equally responsible for the management of European Union funds and for mainstreaming migration into their policy planning and for programmatic response and funding allocation.



6.

CONCLUDING STATEMENT: IOM IN THE REGION IN 2024





6. CONCLUDING STATEMENT: IOM IN THE REGION IN 2024

By 2024, IOM in the EEA region, Switzerland and the United Kingdom will have succeeded in supporting countries in the region in applying a rights-based approach to the governance of human mobility to, from and within the region that is coherent, holistic and balanced, as well as being responsive to public health concerns. IOM will have supported regional and international cooperation on migration, including strategic partnerships, such as that of the European Union with Africa, and of the European Union with countries in the Southern and Eastern Neighbourhood.

ANNEX: IOM IN THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA, SWITZERLAND AND THE UNITED KINGDOM

The figure below details the presence of IOM in the region, including offices and staff counts.

IOM offices and staff counts in the region (as of July 2020)

Regional Office for the EEA, European Union and NATO

Total staff: 74

Austria	Belgium (CO)	Bulgaria	Croatia	Cyprus	Czechia	Denmark	Estonia
Vienna	Brussels	Sofia	Zagreb	Nicosia	Prague	Copenhagen	Tallinn
Total staff: 35	Total staff: 36	Harmanli	Total staff: 9	Total staff: 10	Total staff: 7	Total staff: 2	Total staff: 3
		Burgas					
		Total staff: 32					

Finland	France	Germany	Greece	Hungary	Ireland	Italy	Latvia
Helsinki	Paris	Berlin	Athens	Budapest	Dublin	Rome	Riga
Total staff: 30	Total staff: 16	Nuremberg	Thessaloniki	Total staff: 6	Total staff: 11	Total staff: 229	Total staff: 2
		Total staff: 176	32 camps: 14 jointly run with implementing partners and 1 with the municipality				
			Total staff: 1,493				

Lithuania	Malta	The Netherlands	Norway	Poland	Portugal	Romania	Slovakia
Vilnius	Valletta	The Hague	Oslo	Warsaw	Lisbon	Bucharest	Bratislava
Total staff: 12	Total staff: 2	8 in-take locations	Total staff: 20	Total staff: 10	Total staff: 21	Total staff: 17	Kosice
		Schipol Airport					Total staff: 34
		Total staff: 32					

Slovenia	Spain	Switzerland	United Kingdom
Ljubljana	Madrid	Bern	London
Total staff: 2	Total staff: 19	Total staff: 21	Total staff: 67

	Country/Territory
	Main office
	Sub-office
	Camps

Total staff in the region: **2,428**



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