



HOW DOES THE BUDAPEST PROCESS CONTRIBUTE TO MIGRATION GOVERNANCE?

A thought piece based on the publication “How the Budapest Process contributes to migration governance”

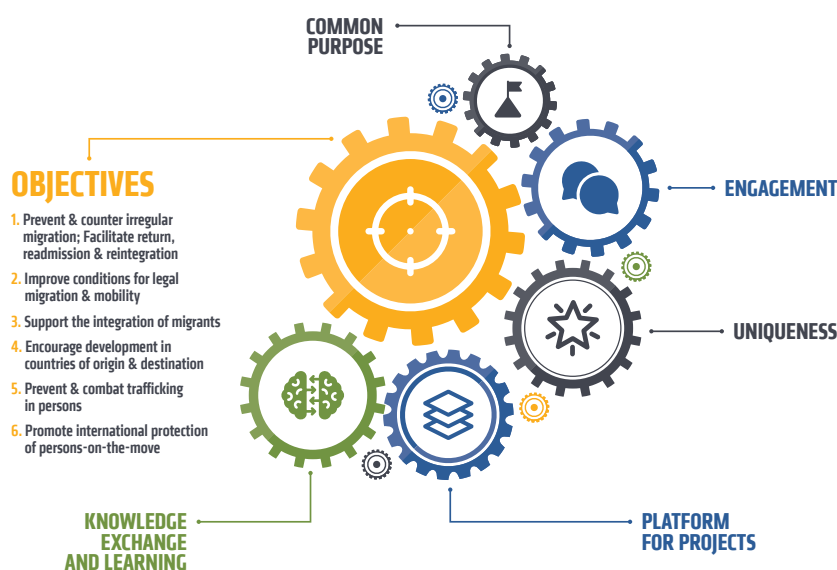
In the last three decades, the Budapest Process has become a well-known and respected dialogue on migration. Since 2010, the dialogue has focused on the Silk Routes Region, with a special focus on Afghanistan¹, Bangladesh, Iran, Iraq, and Pakistan. This regional attention in the dialogue has been coupled with projects under the umbrella of the dialogue, which have been instrumental to what the dialogue has become today. In general, the BP’s activities are geared towards (1) promoting safe, legal migration, (2) countering irregular migration and (3) developing the role of migration in the economic development of the Silk Routes countries.

Understanding the BP’s contribution and impact on its objectives is of timely importance for policymakers. Since the 1980s, frameworks for dialogue on migration have become integral parts of international migration cooperation in several parts of the world, as growing migration flows and the politicisation of migration have compelled governments to find novel approaches to key issues such as: international protection, irregular migration, return, readmission and reintegration, migrant smuggling and human trafficking, and labour migration, as well as myriad developmental aspects of migration.

The ways in which **the Budapest Process contributes to governance and achieves members’ objectives are organised according to five of its notable characteristics**, incrementally added since 2010: *uniqueness, engagement, common purpose, projects, and learning*. These five characteristics are then combined to offer the theoretical framework shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. How the Budapest Process contributes to migration governance

FIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BUDAPEST PROCESS



1 Due to fall of the government in August 2021 and ensuing take-over of the country by the Taliban, Afghanistan is currently not part of the Budapest Process





UNIQUENESS

The BP is *unique* in terms of its participating states, **organisational structure and flexibility**, resulting in :

1. participation by some of the world's main countries of migration origin, transit, and destination
2. collaboration between governments that—without the BP's flexible but formal structure—would lack the trust, incentives, or infrastructure to do so
3. governance beyond the possibilities of bilateralism without threatening the autonomy of participating states.

ENGAGEMENT

It facilitates **continuous, constructive, high-level engagement by participant countries**, resulting in :

1. greater understanding, trust, and respect between participant countries
2. deeper and more specialised relationships and networks
3. incremental long-term progress towards increasingly advanced joint agreements, meetings, and declarations, with the BP increasingly a well-known “brand” among participating states for dealing with migration governance issues in the region.

COMMON PURPOSE

As such, the BP has created a **sense of common purpose amongst participating states**—in terms of a common approach, terminology and “team spirit” between the officials of the participating states and organisations—resulting in:

1. an “epistemic community”
2. a greater willingness and ability to compromise
3. movement from consensus to common policy goals.

PLATFORM FOR PROJECTS

With these three characteristics in place, the BP acts **as a platform for and jointly administers projects**, on-the-ground operational activities and tools for policy advancement and institutional capacity building, on-demand technical assistance and projects dedicated to protecting migrants' rights and enhancing cooperation on migrant smuggling and trafficking in persons. These have resulted in :

1. measurable impact towards the BP's objectives, such as discouraging irregular migration and raising awareness of legal and safe options and assistance
2. more advanced cross-border cooperation on migration governance
3. stimulus for innovative solutions, for which the BP acts as a testing ground.

KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE AND LEARNING

Finally, the BP facilitates **peer-to-peer learning, knowledge and data exchange** and continuous tracking of the progress of activities and processes, resulting in

1. open and comprehensive documentation and data collection and exchange
2. continuous improvement of the dialogue
3. better trained front-line and decision making officers and greater migration governance expertise.

Looking beyond these five characteristics as of 2023, the future of the Budapest Process will be reliant on the extent to which its impacts—both towards the goals of destination and origin country objectives—can be robustly demonstrated, with **the impact assessments of the innovative Migrant Resource Centres** and other projects acting as starting point. With further demonstrable impact, the Budapest Process and its participating countries will be able to retain and expand the resources and organisation that make the BP already today far more than simply a dialogue and instead a unique, “flexible but formal” platform for bilateral and multilateral migration governance, common policy objectives and on-the-ground projects.

