

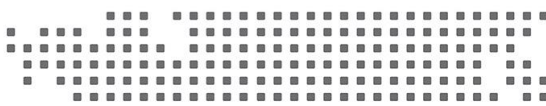
## Budapest Process

### Annual Senior Officials Meeting

Online, 2 December 2021

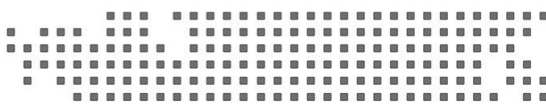
#### Summary

1. The Annual Senior Officials Meeting of the Budapest Process (BP) gathered **97 participants from 31 countries** – Albania, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iran, Iraq, Italy, Latvia, Netherlands, Norway, Pakistan, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Serbia, Slovenia, Slovak Republic, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom – as well as the the European Commission, the Council of the European Union , the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX), the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Regional Support Office to the Bali Process, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).
2. **Dr. Savaş Ünlü**, President of the Presidency of Migration Management at the Ministry of Interior of Turkey opened the Senior Officials Meeting, representing Turkey as Chair. He noted his appreciation of the progress achieved on all fronts under the BP. He reiterated Turkey’s commitment to implement the BP Call for Action. **Mr. Gábor Tóthi**, Head of Department for European Cooperation at the Ministry of Interior of Hungary, as Co-Chair, stressed that cooperation between countries is the key for tackling international challenges but noted with confidence that BP will continue to serve as an effective platform for the needed partnership. **Ms. Alexandra Sá Carvalho**, Deputy Head of Unit in the Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs at the European Commission, appreciated the role played by the BP in terms building trust and facilitating cooperation between a large number of countries across several regions. In 2020, the EU began implementing EU’s new Pact on Migration and Asylum. Elaborating on relevant parts of the Pact, she touched upon initiatives such as the renewed Action Plan against Migrant Smuggling, Pathways for Legal Migration to the EU, and the EU Strategy on Voluntary Return and Reintegration. Finally, **Mr. Martijn Pluim**, Director for Migration Dialogues and Cooperation at ICMPD, pointed to the full spectrum engagement of the Silk Routes region that has been achieved under the BP umbrella via EU and other donor funded projects. He appreciated the ability of the BP and its participating countries to continually adapt to difficult circumstances such as the pandemic.
3. All of the opening speakers highlighted their concerns regarding the situation in Afghanistan, urging the international community to step up its humanitarian response to prevent further displacement and instability.
4. In order to reflect on the BP activities in 2021, **Turkey** as BP Chair and Chair of the Silk Routes Region Working Group, took the floor again and stated that in 2020 and 2021, BP has focussed on Priority Goals 1 and 2 of the Call for Action<sup>1</sup>. In this regard, the Chair commended the BP network for the range of activities that had been conducted so far. The Chair also recognised the deepened relationship with Silk Routes countries over the course of the past ten years evidenced by several successful projects executed, ongoing and in the pipeline. **Hungary**, as Co-Chair, underlined the importance of preventative measures to reduce irregular migration, such as effective border protection and management and information/awareness raising campaigns. At the same time, it argued that project frameworks should be adapted to the new realities with a primary objective of providing help for unstable regions, but also to continue to support stable allies. **Bulgaria** took the floor as Chair of the Black Sea Working Group of the BP. Appreciating the work of the BP in the past several years, Bulgaria noted the increasing importance of the BP as a platform to address emerging issues like the displacement from Afghanistan. It was at the *thematic meeting on countering smuggling* held in June 2021 that a proposal to establish a *Community of Law Enforcement Practitioners* was brought forward. Bulgaria welcomes the realisation of this proposal into a project and wishes to take a leading role. **Sweden** presented its findings from the *Thematic Meeting on Vulnerable Groups on the Move* held in November 2021. A core finding is that *Vulnerability* is a cross-cutting issue, hence there is a need to work across the Whole-of-Route, Whole-of-government, Whole-of-Society, and at



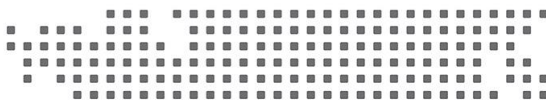
all stages of the migration process in order to be able to promote a rights-based approach in the future. Accordingly, Sweden suggests that vulnerability and gender-sensitive approaches be cross-cutting themes in BP's work or alternatively a project be designed to address the topics.

5. The **BP Secretariat** took the floor to present the **achievements of the BP as a dialogue and its two flanking EU-funded projects**. As the pandemic continued to have its impact felt, new challenges emerged as well. The Secretariat highlighted how the BP kept its focus on priority goals 1 and 2 of the Call for Action, continuing to hold virtual meetings and commissioning the development of knowledge outputs. Both EU projects implemented under the BP also kept conducting activities, like providing institutional, policy, and capacity building support to governments as well as non-government stakeholders. The link between the projects' and the BP Call for Action was highlighted as well, specifically action points under priority goals 1, 2, 4 and 6 as well as cross cutting actions. Moreover, the BP set-up a **Reference Group** (comprising 15 countries from within the BP network) in spring 2021 to provide a red thread between meetings and develop opportunities for deepened engagement for the dialogue. The participants of reference group assessed three project proposals and agreed to endorse them for implementation. The **three proposals** cover – the promotion of regional law enforcement cooperation, joint vocational training for demand based labour migration, and inclusive, rights-based and sustainable return and reintegration. All three projects would focus on cooperation between Silk Routes and European countries.
6. **Dr. James Dennison**, Professor at the Migration Policy Centre at the European University Institute, has been supporting the BP in developing a framework for a results based learning tool, and as a first step of this initiative, he presented a framework composed of 6 overarching characteristics that enable the BP to contribute to the objectives of its participating states.
7. The Hungarian Co-Chair opened the **plenary for interventions by states**. The plenary served as a 'tour de table' to allow countries and organisations to make statements by sharing their work in 2021 and focusing on how their priorities and activities tie into the BP Call for Action. Overall, countries highlighted how cooperation on migration remains a priority for them and shared how they adapted to the new regional realities in the Western Balkans, the Black Sea or the Silk Routes regions. Most notably, priority goals 1, 2, 5 and 6 were mentioned by the countries.
8. **Austria** emphasised the need to work against organised crime groups and networks that are growing in scale and scope of operation; it emphasised the need to enhance its international partnerships, especially in the Silk Routes, in this light, it recognises that the situation in Afghanistan will require rapid mobilisation of resources to provide protection and livelihood to displaced Afghans. **Azerbaijan** has streamlined its asylum and protection procedures allowing for a more flexible and digitalised migration management system. The country continued to pursue bi-/multilateral cooperation, such as working with its partners to establish a Regional Training Centre to improve training and capacity building on migration in the region. **Bangladesh** passed regulations and took tangible steps to secure better reintegration of returnees, while a reintegration policy is also being developed. In its 5-year plan (2022-2027) Bangladesh would seek to digitalise migration services and governance, while its Migration Act is going to be amended to keep up with new challenges; labour migration is a major focus. **Bulgaria** is actively engaged in law enforcement cooperation with its neighbours and would like to extend this cooperation to other countries, hence it is very interested in the COLEP platform. Bulgaria is ready to host a *thematic meeting on migration data management and analysis for evidence-based migration policies* with Georgia, on behalf of the Black Sea Region Working Group. **The Czech Republic** has been paying special attention to Afghanistan by allocating funds and taking efforts to identify its humanitarian needs for joint action by the international community; counter smuggling and illegal migration remains a focus. **Germany** considers it important to address the nexus between climate change and displacement as well as the impact of the pandemic. Apart from desiring more effective return and reintegration cooperation with countries of origin, Germany has taken tangible steps to address the plight of Afghans in the Silk Routes region and is providing substantial aid to humanitarian organisations. **Hungary** places a preference on Priority Goals 1 and 5 and would also like to enhance support to origin countries to create stable and secure local conditions, and better reception and reintegration facilities. Hungary plans to co-organise a *thematic meeting on anti-trafficking* in Budapest in the second half of 2022. **Italy** has developed a national plan on Afghanistan, which involves humanitarian assistance, structural response to a potential flow of refugees, organising training initiatives and providing



scholarships to Afghan students, human rights initiatives, and political/diplomatic initiatives with neighbouring countries and INGOs. **Iraq** is a CoO, CoT, and CoD, as such, it is having to deal with a huge number of irregular migrants transiting its territory. Iraq is taking steps to secure legal pathways and counter illegal/irregular migration and criminal networks/groups, while it has also taken urgent measures to secure the return and reintegration of its nationals from Belarus and the EU. **Norway** is proud to be supporting the MRC in Baghdad and is interested in exploring other concrete projects in the region as well as enhancing protection for people on the move as per its revised migration policy. **Pakistan** being a CoO, CoT, and CoD faces a unique set of challenges, including facing the burden of hosting millions of Afghan refugees and lately many Rohingya as well. Pakistan would like to work more on its reintegration infrastructure and policies, meanwhile the country has been actively trying to alleviate the dire situation in Afghanistan by providing aid, safe passage and protection to thousands of displaced Afghans. **Russia** adapted its migration policies and regulations by allowing almost 1 million migrants to reside and work in Russia during the pandemic. Combatting irregular migration remains a priority for Russia and it seeks to work more with bi/multi-lateral partners in this regard. **Sweden** has been providing significant humanitarian support to the Afghan people and the region at large. Beyond humanitarian assistance, Sweden considers access to basic services as crucial to halt the process of internal displacement. As per a revision in its migration policy, Sweden is issuing more temporary residence permits, albeit with new rules. **Switzerland** plans to increase its ongoing efforts in supporting the vulnerable populations in Afghanistan, as well as programmes in Pakistan and Iran. Switzerland's will also focus on strengthening the migration management capacity of countries along the routes. **Spain** has been focusing on combating irregular migration and supporting legal migration and the country faces an increase in migratory pressure from Africa. Spain has streamlined its protection system especially regarding vulnerable groups. **Turkey** retains its focus on Priority Goal 1 and desires for the BP to pay more attention to Priority Goal 6. The country has taken several operational steps in the past year, including more effective and modern border management as well as better coordination with its neighbours. The situation in Afghanistan is of great concern to Turkey, given the likelihood of a disproportionate impact on Turkey in case of a large crisis.

9. The Chair gave the floor to international organisations. **The European Commission** emphasised how the new Pact on Migration and Asylum aims to cover objectives in five main areas - fight against irregular migration, fight against smuggling and saving lives, protection of borders, return and readmission, international protection, and legal migration. The Pact also puts emphasis on strengthening comprehensive, balanced and tailor-made partnerships with third countries, the Silk Routes countries belonging to one of the main priorities. **UNODC** spoke of the EU funded GLO.ACT project, which engages Silk Routes countries and promotes law enforcement cooperation, policy and capacity development (especially of female officers). **EASO** is working extensively on programmes that offer international protection to displaced populations and vulnerable groups as well as legal pathways and resettlement support. EASO will soon transform into the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) resulting in a substantially enhanced mandate – the agency may deploy liaison officers in third countries, with an expressed interest to work in the Silk Routes. **Frontex** has been focusing on monitoring and providing assistance with the situations in Afghanistan and Belarus. The agency has increased its support to the BOMCA project in Central Asia and is keen to enhance its ongoing cooperation with Silk Routes countries like Iraq and Pakistan. **UNHCR** works across the spectrum of BP participating states in order to facilitate their commitment to international protection (BP Priority Goal 6) and the GCR; the UNHCR expressed serious concerns at the persistent occurrence of pushback on the EU's external borders.
10. The BP Secretariat then presented the **next steps for 2022** as well as suggestions for projects in the Silk Routes to complement ongoing activities. The Chair invited participating states to endorse the plan for 2022. It was decided, based on the feedback received from the Chair, Co-Chair and participating states that the focus of the BP would be retained on priority goals 1 & 2 with an added focus on priority goals 5 & 6; the situation in Afghanistan would be a horizontal theme; the reference group would continue to meet and three projects would be kick-started in 2022 (see point 5 above).
11. In **concluding remarks**, the Hungarian Co-Chair thanked all participants for their engaged discussions and assured to follow-up on some of the points raised in plenary. Hungary thanked Turkey as Chair and the European Commission for their support and the Secretariat for the continued support and preparation of the meeting.



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<sup>i</sup> The "[Call for Action](#) - a five-year plan" lists actions under the **six priority goals** (PG) identified for cooperation:

PG 1. Prevent and counteract **irregular migration**, facilitate return and readmission of irregular migrants, and combat criminal networks involved in smuggling of migrants;

PG 2. Better organise and improve conditions for **legal migration and mobility**;

PG 3. Support the **integration** of migrants and counteract discrimination, racism and xenophobia;

PG 4. Strengthen the positive impact of **migration on development**, both in countries of origin and of destination;

PG 5. Prevent and combat **trafficking in persons**, address its root causes and provide adequate protection and support to trafficked persons;

PG 6. Promote **international protection** and the respect of the rights of refugees, in line with international standards