



MARRI - Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative  
**STABILITY PACT**  
FOR SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE

Vienna, 7 April 2004

## **Summary Report of the Expert Meeting Herceg Novi, 6 April 2004**

### **Regional Forum**

The first meeting of the Regional Forum was convened by the SEECP in Herceg Novi, Montenegro, 5 - 6 April 2004. The ministerial SEECP meeting decided to establish a political and professional Regional Forum for the five Sap countries. The Regional Forum will be composed of Ministers and Senior Officials responsible for migration, asylum, border management, visa and refugee return or settlement. It will aim at exchanging information, experiences, lessons learned, best practices as well as to discuss and resolve issues of common interest and concern and develop a common vision for the region. For further information please see the attached Joint Statement of the meeting in Montenegro.

### **MARRI Regional Center**

During the Regional Forum meeting it was also decided to establish an administrative/supportive structure, the MARRI Regional Center, to support the Forum. The Regional Center will be located in Skopje and the Government of Macedonia will provide facilities, running costs and the required institutional framework for the center. It was agreed that the Regional Center should be composed of a majority of experts seconded by the countries of the region and supported by international experts as appropriate. The meeting approved the Terms of Reference for the Regional Center. For further information please see also the attached the Terms of Reference for the Regional Center.

### **Presidency**

At the meeting it was decided by consensus that from 1 April 2004 to 31 March 2005 Albania would hold the Presidency of the Regional Forum. In the period from 1 April 2005 - 31 March 2006, the Presidency of the Forum will be held by Serbia-Montenegro, through the Republic of Montenegro.

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### **Frequency and level of meetings**

The meeting agreed that the Regional Forum should organize two meetings (two days) per year. There will be a one-day high-level meeting per year for ministers and senior officials followed by one-day expert meeting. In the second yearly meeting the first day should be an expert meeting and the second day a meeting for sub-committees/working groups.

### **Procedure to appoint an executive secretary**

An executive secretary to the Regional Forum shall be appointed as soon as possible. It was agreed that the Presidency of the Regional Forum together with the Friends of the Regional Forum, currently represented by the Chairman Soren Jessen-Petersen, would nominate an executive secretary. The Political Directors of SEECF should officialize the decision/appointment.

### **Competence of the Regional Forum**

The meetings of the Forum shall take place at an informal level; i.e. the Forum and its sub-committees will provide a platform for internal consultations and recommendations, but without binding decisions being taken by the Forum. The authority of taking decisions remains with the national governments.

### **Institutional Framework**

The Regional Forum shall work within the framework of SEECF, but with separate meetings (Regional Forum) for the five SAp countries and with its own presidency based upon rotation among the five SAp countries.

### **Relations with International Institutions, Member States of the Stability Pact and International Organizations**

The Regional Forum will seek support and advice of the International Community through "the Friends of the Regional Forum" which should be convened by the Presidency of the Regional Forum twice per year.

### **Relations with the Stability Pact**

As consequence of the transfer of responsibility from the Stability Pact to regional ownership, the Forum and the Regional Center are not part of the Stability Pact. However the Regional Forum and the Regional Center shall have a special link to the Stability Pact as "associated initiative to the Stability Pact" and thereby being invited to the Stability Pact Regional Table Meetings. In these meetings the Regional Forum and the Regional Center will inform the Stability Pact about the ongoing activities. A Liaison Officer responsible for the liaison between the Stability Pact and the Regional Forum/Regional Center shall be assigned to the Stability Pact in Brussels.

### **MOU for the Regional Forum**

The MARRI Secretariat will draft a MOU in close cooperation with experts selected from the SAp countries to cover all legal aspects needed to operate the Regional Forum and the Regional Center. In accordance with the decision of the meeting, the five SAp countries should sign this MOU not later than 30 June 2004.

### **CARDS Regional Project**

The Project Director of the CARDS Regional Project, Mr. Thomas Birath, introduced the features, objectives and planned activities of the project.

### **Visa Issues**

The MARRI Expert on Visa and Border Control, Colonel Friedrich Krachler introduced the subject by making reference to the decisions taken by the ministerial meetings and made references to:

- the present situation as regards visa policies within the region
- need to develop a comprehensive approach to build a visa free zone covering the different aspects of:
  - border management,
  - police co-operation,
  - readmission agreements,
  - expulsion,
  - regional co-operation,
  - document security,
  - alignment of visa policy
- legal prerequisites on the administrative and penal level
- migration risks (as a country of origin, as a country of transit)
- fight against organized crime and corruption
- information of the public about the nature of visa free travelling

### **Access to Rights**

Mr. Kilian Kleinschmidt, Head of Service, MARRI Brussels introduced the Access to Rights (ATR) program which has the aim at achieving unimpeded and non-discriminatory access for all remaining displaced citizens of the region (5 SAp countries) to their basic human, economic and social rights. This process will involve governments, civil society and international organizations at the regional and national level. The program will enhance transparency, self-monitoring and promote an inclusive and constructive dialogue about access to rights.

At the end of 2004 an inventory and analysis - agreed by all actors involved - of the legal situation and implementation of rights will be presented. International and European standards and best practices will be the reference.

### **Regional Information Exchange**

Mr. Kilian Kleinschmidt reported on the program, which has the objective to facilitate cross border exchange of data. Support mechanisms are in place and capacity building at the national level (so far Bosnia Herzegovina) is ongoing. Mr. Kleinschmidt underlined the important issue of data protection in this context. He outlined possibilities to link the programme implementation to the Regional Center.

### **MARRI initiatives linked to Irregular Migration and National Action Plans**

Mr. Karl-Hans Schlosstein reported on the past and ongoing activities needed for the completion and implementation of the National Action Plans that are planned to be officially approved before/by the end of the year. Mr. Karl-Hans Schlosstein also made reference to the planned Workshop on National Action Plans.

Mr. Jose Pires, IOM Special Representative introduced the two projects being implemented by IOM with the financial support from the Government of Norway:

- Workshop with SAp countries and Accession countries of Central Europe to exchange information and lessons learned in the field of reducing irregular migration.
- Setting up of a regional mechanism to support negotiations with source countries, transit countries and countries of destination with the aim to reduce irregular migration.