



Funded by the European Union's Asylum,
Migration and Integration Fund



CROATIAN EMN PRESIDENCY E-CONFERENCE REPORT

**Challenges of Irregular Migration on the Eastern
Mediterranean – Western Balkan Route in the time of COVID-
19**

24 June 2020



Conference background

The Eastern Mediterranean – Western Balkan Route is one of the main migratory paths into Europe. Despite downward trends on other routes towards the EU, arrivals on the Eastern Mediterranean route have been increasing up until the outbreak of COVID-19. For the past several months COVID-19 has had an impact on all types of migration into the EU.

The e-Conference “**Challenges of Irregular Migration on the Eastern Mediterranean – Western Balkan Route in the time of COVID-19**” took place as a webinar, and aimed to share knowledge, experience and views among representatives from Member States, EU institutions and international organisations on future challenges and solutions for dealing with irregular migration into the EU in the time of COVID-19. The emphasis was on the Eastern Mediterranean – Western Balkan Route but also on the link to the challenges of irregular migration and migrant smuggling in the EU in general.

The event was Chaired by the national coordinator for the European migration network in Croatia, **Ms Lidija Pentavec**, while panel discussions were moderated by **Professor Goranka Novak Lalić**.



***Ms Lidija Pentavec**, Head of Section in Division for Illegal Migration, Border Police Directorate, Ministry of the Interior and the EMN Croatia Coordinator*



***Ms Goranka Novak Lalić**, Profesor, Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb*

Opening remarks

In his opening remarks, **Mr Zoran Ničeno**, Head of Border Police Directorate, in the Ministry of the Interior, Republic of Croatia, noted that the Eastern Mediterranean - Western Balkan route has for many years been one of the main entry paths into Europe. Migration pressure remained high with large number of migrants travelling through this corridor.



The spread of the COVID-19 pandemic had halted the number of entries, but as from May 2020 the migration pressure has intensified again, and increasing numbers of migrants were expected to cross into the EU. Also, the reinforced border control and difficult terrain have led to a growing number of migrants becoming stranded in the region and, as a consequence, a sharp increase for smuggling services is present. The whole migration perspective demands a comprehensive approach to migration and activities related to irregular migrants need to be aligned with international and EU standards of fundamental rights protection.

Mr Zoran Ničeno, born on 1 April 1966 in Split, graduated in 1991 from the Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb. Since 2017, he has been the Chief of the Border Police Directorate and Assistant to the General Police Director. He started his career in 1992 in the Police Administration Zagreb as a police officer for the criminal police, and continued in the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Croatia as a police officer for the reserve police. From 1994 to 1995 he was the head of the Department of Defense Preparations, and from 1995 to 2001 he was the head of the Maritime and Airport Police Department in the General Police Directorate.

He was Assistant Chief of the Border Police Directorate (2006), Head of the Maritime and Airport Police Department in the General Police Directorate (2006-2008), and Chief of the Police Directorate (2008-2010). From 2010 to 2012, he was the Chief of the Police Academy, and from 2012 to 2017, he was the Assistant Chief of the Border Police Directorate.

Mr Johannes Luchner, Director of the Strategy and General Affairs Directorate, DG HOME, European Commission, reflected that in 2019, Europe had faced fewer arrivals at the EU borders overall, however, the numbers of arrivals from the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Balkans routes had increased and had accounted for 46% of migrant arrivals in the

EU. The spread of the COVID-19 virus had slowed down asylum, resettlement and return procedures; and had placed additional pressure on reception and detention facilities. On request of the EU Member States, the European Commission was playing a coordination and guidance role. The speaker also noted the work of the EMN in this context, which had been monitoring impacts in order to provide information to policymakers.

Mr Luchner noted that the Commission's new Pact on Migration and Asylum was to be adopted soon. The aim of the Pact was to find a fair and effective way of fostering solidarity amongst Member States, with legal migration as a key priority. There was a need also for a reformed and sustainable common asylum system, with asylum and return procedures needing to operate seamlessly - Member States must provide support for granting asylum plus ensure the return of those whose applications were unfounded. Protection of the EU external borders was also a key priority, and the EU would continue to support those Member States of first entry, thus the interoperability of border systems would be crucial. The Pact envisaged strengthening partnerships with countries of transit and return, increase the fight against human smuggling, foster return and open new legal pathways for migration. The aimed to embed a migration policy in full respect of fundamental rights, human

dignity, freedom and solidarity, which were at the core of EU values and commitments.



Johannes Luchner is an Austrian national who joined the European Commission in 1996. He holds a Master's degree from the University of Vienna and a Ph.D. from Penn State University. Before joining the European Commission, he worked as a free journalist and in the Austrian diplomatic service. He started his career in the Commission as desk officer for development cooperation. Mr. Luchner subsequently worked in the cabinet of Vice-President Kinnock, in DG Industry and Enterprise, the DG for Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) as well as a Member of the Task Force for Greece in DG ECFIN. In April 2020, Mr. Luchner joined DG HOME as Director for Strategy and General Affairs.

Panel 1:

General Overview of the Eastern Mediterranean – Western Balkan Route

The context for the first panel of the e-Conference was the continuing issue of high migration pressure on the Eastern Mediterranean and the Western Balkans.

Due to its geographical position, the route is exposed to irregular movement both through land and sea borders. Moreover, the Joint Report provided by EBCGA/Frontex, Europol and EASO indicates that “the Western Balkans region is a key transit area for irregular migrants entering the EU via this Route and trying to continue their journey deeper in the EU by land.” In most cases, irregular migrants had no intention to seek asylum – even those who may have been in need of international protection. Instead, they tried to continue their journey towards other EU Member States. Frequently, applications for international protection were made to avoid detention and return, which indicates that the asylum system is often misused. Additionally, the volume of secondary movements of third country nationals who enter irregularly with the help of migrant smugglers, or who stay irregularly upon legal entry, pose a major challenge for the EU as an area of freedom, security and justice.

Western Balkan countries face a number of challenges in terms of reception and registration capacities, border management capacities, return capacities and lack of readmission agreements with countries of origin, lack of detention capacities resulting in an insufficient use of detention, amongst others.

With the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the pressure on the Greek-Turkish border decreased, as migrants from the border area were moved to isolation to prevent the spread of the disease. With the end of the pandemic, it is expected that the pressure on the Greek border will continue and probably result in a stronger influx of illegal migrants via the Western Balkan route.

The restrictive measures adopted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic had exacerbated difficulties in delivering humanitarian assistance to vulnerable irregular migrants travelling along this route. The European Commission provided guidance on how to ensure unhindered continuation of asylum and return procedures during the health crisis.

Pannelist 1:

State of play and foresight on the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Balkan Route

Carsten Simon, Head of Risk Analysis Unit, FRONTEX

Mr Carsten Simon highlighted the close links between the Eastern Mediterranean and the Western Balkans routes. In 2019, some 75 000 migrant arrivals were recorded on the Eastern Mediterranean land and sea routes to Greece and Bulgaria, the majority to the Eastern Aegean Islands; A total of around 79 000 illegal border crossings by non-regional migrants were reported on the



Western Balkans route in 2019. Arrival levels were sustained in the first quarter of 2020. The adoption of restrictive measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic considerably reduced migrants' mobility and pressure at the border until mid-May. A re-routing of migrants was observed resulting for instance in an increased number of asylum requests in Kosovo¹. However, Turkey continued to host several millions of people displaced mostly from Syria. While they experienced travel restrictions during the pandemic, it was expected that the pressure to move onwards would soon resume. Increased migration pressure was

¹ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

already recorded at the North Macedonian and Albanian borders, following the lifting of travel restrictions in the second half of May 2020.

Presentation:

Overview of the migratory situation in the Eastern Mediterranean / Western Balkans area 2019-May 2020

Carsten Simon joined Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, as Head of Risk Analysis Unit in 2019. At the agency's headquarters in Warsaw, he manages a team of analysts who assess the risks to EU's border security by building up a picture of trends and patterns in irregular migration and cross-border crime at the external borders.

Mr Simon started his professional career in 1993 at the German Federal Police, where he occupied different post as Commander and in Police Training. From 2010-2012 he was the Head of the Federal Police Inspectorate Offenburg at the German-French Border.

He subsequently gained experience in an international environment while working in the Palestinian Territories between 2013-2016, leading an international team that established the Palestinian Officers Academy and a Leadership Training Course based on international standards. He later became Senior Adviser in Ramallah, supporting the Palestinian Ministry of Interior and the Civil Police in security

matters and developing training courses for local police officers.

Before joining Frontex, Mr. Simon served as Deputy Head of the Strategic Analysis Center on Irregular Migration at the Federal Police Headquarters in Germany, where he was responsible for an area of activities ranging from the analysis of irregular migration towards Europe and Germany, the development of the national integrated border management strategy, through to the creation of new risk analysis products.

Pannellist 2:

COVID-19 impact on migrants in an irregular situation – A humanitarian perspective

Naile Busemann, Regional Protection Coordinator for the Western Balkans, International Committee of the Red Cross



Ms Naile Busemann spotlighted the humanitarian outlook of some of the consequences the COVID19 pandemic and

restrictive measures adopted to limit its spread entailed for migrants in an irregular situation. The pandemic was an example how challenges on the migratory route could exacerbate already existing vulnerabilities

or create new ones. Restrictive measures included the closure of borders, the suspension of the asylum procedures, encampment and movement restrictions in closed settings. In some situations, the measures led to migrants spending longer periods of time in inadequate boats or in overcrowded centres and having reduced access to support services and economic activities. At times, tensions and violence in the centres and camps had increased; this was in part a consequence of a general feeling of uncertainty regarding their future prospects (including legal status), and in part a result of the reduced space and resources which had escalated conflictual relations among different ethnic groups. The ICRC listed some of the measures put in place by MS to mitigate the impact of the adopted restrictions (e.g. online asylum applications, extension of residence permits).

Presentation:

COVID-19 impact on migrants in an irregular situation – a humanitarian perspective

Delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) since 2007, Naile Busemann has been working in the humanitarian sector for over 15 years, mainly in the field of protection in emergencies, displacement, migration and

detention settings. She is currently holding the position of Regional Protection Coordinator for the Western Balkans based in Belgrade, Serbia, since 2018.

Her previous assignments were in various countries in Asia, Africa, Middle East and Europe.

A lawyer by training, Naile Busemann holds a Masters in Humanitarian Assistance and a post-graduate diploma in Contemporary Diplomacy.

Pannellist 3:

EU response-Guidance on the implementation of relevant EU provisions in the area of asylum and return procedures and on resettlement – with emphasis on return

Francisc Gaztelu Mezquiriz, Head of Unit C1, Irregular Migration and Return Policy, Europea Commission



Mr **Francisco Gaztelu Mezquiriz** (Head of the Irregular Migration and Return Policy Unit, DG HOME, European Commission) discussed the guidelines published by the

European Commission to support Member States in running asylum and migration procedures during the sanitary crisis. Specifically concerning return, the Commission guidelines had covered all aspects of the return procedure. Return operations would follow specific protocols to ensure safety for the migrants and the personnel involved. In the planning of return flights, cooperation with third countries was recommended. In the pre-return activities, several recommendations were advanced including: the extension of the period for voluntary return; the preferential use of alternative to detention; the respect of specific protocols in detention facilities on social distancing, quarantine, and access to healthcare for detainees.

Mr Mezquiriz stressed the future importance of reinforcing cooperation with third countries through the conclusion of readmission agreements and through cooperation on prevention of irregular migration and dismantle smuggling networks. The return system would also benefit from stronger border return procedures and from increased detention capacities. Mr Mezquiriz also highlighted the critical role of Frontex in improving the effectiveness of return operations.

Francisco Gaztelu Mezquiriz is an engineer and a microeconomist. He currently serves as the Head of the Irregular Migration and Return Policy Unit at DG Migration and

Home Affairs. His previous posts include Head of Unit for MFF, Budget and Agencies, Assistant to the Director General of Asia Pacific, Deputy Head of Unit of the Middle East and Deputy Head of Cabinet of the Vice president for the internal market, defence and space.

Panel 2:

EU Engagement to Prevent and Fight Migrant Smuggling

Enhanced border control activities throughout the Western Balkans hinder illegal border crossings and make it more difficult for irregular migrants to leave the region. The limited reception capacities of the countries of the region have put the migration and asylum systems under considerable pressure.

The second panel evidenced that the smuggling activities in the Western Balkans were conducted by well organised criminal networks using means that subjected migrants to high risks. This criminal activity was hard to eradicate, as it was a highly profitable with relatively low detection risks. Cooperation with third countries was essential to implement a cross-cutting, holistic and structured response to turn the smuggling of migrants on the Western Balkan route into a high risk – low profit business.

Pannelist 1:

Modus operandi of migrant smugglers: presentation of Croatian experiences

Dejan Dretar, Head of Organized Crime Unit, Criminal Police Directorate, Ministry of the Interior, Republic of Croatia



Mr Dejan Dretar presented statistical data on smuggling, noting that during the first five months of 2020, the reporting of criminal offences had decreased by 24%. Illegal border crossings were usually done on foot or by car. The crossings were extremely dangerous for the migrants, especially when concealed in specially designed hiding places in cars and vans, cargo planes and in sealed containers; the smugglers were less concerned about the well-being of the migrants than about the financial viability of the smuggling activities. Smugglers were ready to constantly adapt and change their approaches to circumvent controls; this made the network difficult to trace. A main challenge to detection victims of smuggling was through identifying their status as economic migrants or as potential assylum

seekers because frequently they were travelling without identity documents.

Presentation:

Migrant Smuggling – Croatian Experiences

Dejan Dretar is a police officer in Criminal Police Directorate for last 9 years working on International and National level regarding investigations on Organized crime and specially smuggling of migrants.

During his work in fighting smuggling of migrants he participated and led numerous number of investigations connected and linked with smuggling of migrants. After finishing Police Academy and Criminology he started his professional career as a police officer in police station, building his way to a position that he is today.

He is Croatian representative in FII EMPACT priority and he was representative in THB EMPACT priority in EU Policy Cycle. For the last 3 years he is the Head of Organized Crime Service on National level in Croatia.

During 2013. he finished International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) in Budapest in „Law enforcement and leadership development 2 (LELD)“ & „Law enforcement tactical and street survival (LETSS)“, participant and expert in CEPOL courses and he is also an FBI National Academy (FBINA) graduate.

Pannelist 2:

Developing and maintaining good cooperation between Member States and third countries

Alvaro Rodriguez Gaya, Head of Strategy and Outreach, EUROPOL (EMSC)



Mr Alvaro Rodrigez Gaya highlighted that migrant smuggling was in the top three criminal areas (out of 25) according to Europol's

data. Migrant smuggling activities had continued to be reported to Europol during the COVID-19 crisis. The speaker reiterated the point that smuggling was a very profitable business. The benefits were generally reinvested in real estate projects in third countries, therefore strong external actions and cooperation with third countries was essential to tackle the smugglers' networks. To this end, Europol had established cooperation arrangements with Western Balkans countries and sought to develop similar cooperation with African countries too, although some challenges were identified due to limited institutional capacities. At EU level, Frontex and Interpol were the key actors to facilitate links between operations and investigations. Some national activities were also started as the [Western Balkan Task Force](#), which was initiated by Austria. Western Balkan Task Force presents regional initiatives

designed to improve information and intelligence exchange both at strategic and at law enforcement level. Mr Gaya also stressed the importance of meeting both national and EU interests of Member States throughout cooperation and joint action.

Alvaro Rodriguez Gaya has 15 years of professional experience in the law enforcement industry, security-oriented educational background, and is professionally focused in international security, migration and multilateral cooperation. Responsible for the implementation of complex projects at EU level.

He is a Spanish attorney, having Master studies, who have been in charge, as Project Manager, of the Europol's department dealing with Facilitation of Illegal Immigration, 4 years as responsible of the Strategic and Outreach area in the European Migrant Smuggling Center and since 1st June 2020 the Head of the Operational coordination in the EMC. For 6 years being the support manager and co-driver of the EU priority under the EU Policy Cycle (Facilitation of illegal immigration).

Previously he was working for the Spanish Ministry of Interior as Senior Inspector of the SP National Police Force. Also, he worked in the international field as Spanish Liaison Officer at Europol's HQ in The Hague (NL) representing Spain (2009-2015).

He is a teacher in the Alfonso X El Sabio lecturing in two specialized master' studies focused on security in the international context (In EN) and human rights.

Pannelist 3:

EU policies addressing migrant smuggling - next steps

Francisco Gaztelu Mezquiriz, Head of Unit C1, Irregular Migration and Return Policy, DG HOME, European Commission

Mr **Francisco Gaztelu Mezquiriz** stressed that the fight against smuggling would be prioritised by the Commission under the new Migration Pact. The EU action plan also had an important focus on anti-smuggling, especially on operational cooperation, exchange of information, and cooperation with third countries. Three key tools were considered critical to the Commission's actions. Firstly, the Common Operational Partnerships (COP) which brought together small teams of law enforcement experts from all partners, including third countries; the COPs so far have focussed on Africa, but they had been opened up to the Western Balkans and other routes. Secondly, prevention and information campaigns which would create counter-narratives to those of the smugglers. Finally, the Immigration Liaisons Officers (ILO), especially in Western Balkans, who were helping to build

stronger relations with national authorities in third countries.



Francisco Gaztelu Mezquiriz is an engineer and a microeconomist. He currently serves as the Head of the Irregular Migration and Return Policy Unit at DG Migration and Home Affairs.

His previous posts include Head of Unit for MFF, Budget and Agencies, Assistant to the Director General of Asia Pacific, Deputy Head of Unit of the Middle East and Deputy Head of Cabinet of the Vice president for the internal market, defence and space.

Panel 3:

Protection and Promotion of Fundamental Rights in the Context of Irregular Migration

The EU and its Member States are committed to upholding human rights of all migrants, regardless of their status. The EU *acquis* calls for strong EU external border protection in compliance with human rights law, as enshrined by EU legislation and international instruments. These obligations are transposed in national laws and practices.

At operational level, national authorities sometimes face challenges in finding ways to conduct migration management, while at the same time ensuring human rights protection.

The last panel focused on the key fundamental rights at stake in border controls and procedures; these especially related to ensuring protection from *refoulement* and mass expulsion; access to international protection; and the right to life and security. Recent changes in the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) had opened-up a new understanding of a State's obligations on border procedures especially regarding push-backs. In practice, the enforcement of human rights safeguards fell mostly on border guards, who would benefit from

practical guidance on these issues in their day-to-day work.

Pannelist 1:

What is the connection between the Greek-Turkish border situation, the Western Balkans route and the ECtHR's judgment in N.D. and N.T.?

Iris Goldner Lang, Professor in Law at the Faculty of Law of the University of Zagreb



Ms Iris Goldner Lang argued that there is a clear link between the political and practical reactions to the attempt of thousands of migrant to cross the Greek-Turkish border in February and March 2020, on the one hand, and the behaviour of the two European courts and the 2015/2016 Western Balkans route, on the other hand. She maintained that the developments at the Greek-Turkish border can only be understood as the result of the interaction of Member States' experience of the 2015/2016 Western Balkans route and their fear of its reoccurrence, Member States' fear of turning into hotspots, the

Luxembourg Court's decisions on the EU-Turkey Statement and the ECHR's decision in N.D. and N.T. In contrast with its previous jurisprudence, in its judgement in [N.D. and N.T. versus Spain](#), the European Court of Human Rights concluded that the expulsion of irregular migrants without an individual assessment of their situation was not in breach of the prohibition of mass expulsion (art. 4, additional Protocol 4 ECHR), if two conditions were met: that the state provided "genuine and effective access to means of legal entry, in particular border procedures for those who have arrived at the border" and that there was an "absence of cogent reasons why the applicant did not make use of official entry procedures, which were based on objective facts for which the respondent state was responsible". In this context, questions were raised regarding future evolutions on the prohibition of push-back at border crossings: would the Strasbourg Court reconfirm this new approach in future judgements, for instance if it were to decide on a case related to the facts at the Turkish-Greek border? What criteria would the Court develop in future decisions to define mass arrivals or to assess the level of security threat? And would the Court of Justice of the European Union follow this same approach if confronted with a similar situation?

Presentation:

[The Greek-Turkish border situation, the Western Balkans Route and N.D.&N.T](#)

Iris Goldner Lang is a Jean Monnet professor of EU law and the holder of the UNESCO Chair on Free Movement of People, Migration and Inter-Cultural Dialogue at the University of Zagreb – Faculty of Law. She works at the Department of European Public Law, which she chaired from 2013 until 2015. She was a John Harvey Gregory Visiting Professor of Law and World Organization and a Fulbright Visiting Researcher at Harvard Law School in 2015/2016. Prof. Goldner Lang was a Visiting Researcher at University College London (summer 2017) and at Harvard Law School (summer 2018), where she held a series lectures at Harvard Immigration and Refugee Clinic. She was also an invited lecturer at the Court of Justice of the European Union, European Parliament, LSE, University of Stockholm, University of Vienna, Boston University, etc. She is one of the academic coordinators of the Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence “EU’s Global Leadership in the Rule of Law”. She has been the leader of two Jean Monnet Modules on “EU Migration Law and Policy” and “EU Internal Market Law”. She is the president of the Croatian Society for European Law (FIDE branch), the Croatian representative in the Odysseus Academic Network for Legal Studies on Immigration and Asylum in Europe and a member of the Board of Trustees of the Academy of European Law (ERA). She is the Editor-In-Chief of the Croatian Yearbook of European

Law and Policy and a member of the ERA Forum Advisory Board. She is the editor of three books and the author of numerous articles, chapters in books and an authored book.

Pannelist 2:

Controlling land borders in compliance with fundamental rights – practical guidance

Tamas Molnar, legal research officer at the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)



Mr Tamas Molnar highlighted that the practical implementation of human rights obligations fell largely on the officers operating at border crossing

points and along the green borders. Therefore, the FRA prepared a practical guidance entitled “Border control at external land borders and fundamental rights” targeting specifically border-management staff in the European Union. The guidance tool lists ten ‘dos’ and ‘don’ts’ to support border officials in the implementation of the fundamental rights safeguards of the Schengen Borders Code (Regulation (EU) No. 2016/399) and related EU law instruments in their daily work, when carrying out controls at external land

borders. [The guidance](#) was published at the end of July and later on further translations to other EU official languages might follow.

Presentation:

Controlling land borders in compliance with fundamental rights – FRA practical guidance

Dr Tamás MOLNÁR (1980) studied law in Budapest and Brussels (LLM on EU law), and holds a PhD in public international law (Budapest). He also passed the bar exam in Hungary. Since September 2016, he has been working as a legal research officer on asylum, migration and borders at the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) in Vienna. His areas of expertise with respect to the FRA's work include: fundamental rights of irregular migrants; return and readmission; immigration detention; anti-smuggling; EU asylum acquis and visa policy as well as horizontal issues of public international law, including artificial intelligence and international law. Before joining FRA, he worked for a decade in various ministries in Hungary in the fields of international and EU migration law and their domestic implementation (drafting legislation; negotiating in EU Council Working Parties; preparing international agreements). He is also a visiting lecturer on international (migration) law at the

Institute of International Studies at Corvinus University of Budapest and the Faculty of Law at the University of Szeged. He has published widely in the fields of international law, EU migration law and relationship of legal orders, with over 80 journal articles, book chapters and a monograph (see at <https://vm.mtmt.hu//search/slist.php?lang=0&AuthorID=10032231>).

Concluding remarks:

Mr Magnus Oviilius (Head of Agencies and Networks Coordination Sector and Chair of the European Migration Network, DG HOME, European Commission) concluded



by noting that the one key word for migration and for migrants was 'predictability'. If a person comes to Europe, they should have the right to claim asylum; if they come with a job offer, they should expect a residence permit; if they come irregularly, they should expect to be

returned. The outcome should be predictable.

People were still on the move even during the pandemic. Smuggling had not disappeared in the lockdown, and more people would be likely to cross to Europe over summer, from countries where COVID-19 was still prevalent, and where health service were less developed.

Capacity building in the Member States and information exchange, all remained important for the future. The Commission supported better cooperation with the countries of the Western Balkans, and other third countries, irrespective of their link to the EU, and the speaker noted that enhanced cooperation could also take place in the future through the engagement of Western Balkans countries in the European Migration Network. It was essential that the EU's values and principles were defended and shared with third countries, whilst tackling irregularity and opening legal pathways. It was also important that the EU and Member States continued to learn from their practises; whilst the new EU Migration Pact would provide the framework for the future, the Member States would still need to apply what they had learned through their past experience.

Magnus Ovilius is Head of Sector Agencies and Networks Coordination in DG HOME, European Commission. DG HOME works with 6 EU de-centralised Agencies

(FRONTEX, eu-LISA, EUROPOL, CEPOL, EASO and EMCDDA) and manages close to 30 EU wide Networks in the area of migration and security. Magnus Ovilius is responsible for the management of the sector including the related internal/external Agency and Networks Communication. He is responsible for horizontal coordination and cooperation in liaising with DG HOME Agencies, Networks, Policy and Resources Units as well as other Commission Services. Magnus Ovilius is also responsible for the management of the European Migration Network (Chair) and the European Migration Forum including finance and human resources. He is responsible for the management of the European Migration Network-Information exchange system (EMN - IES (legal migration, legal residence permits, return, voluntary return, statelessness, ILO Network, migration smuggling, information campaigns etc).

Magnus Ovilius has held various management positions in the private sector and EU Commission ranging from fight against terrorism to irregular migration including having worked as a Diplomat for the EU.

Magnus Ovilius holds a Degree of Master of Laws, LL.M. from the University of Lund, Sweden. He has also served with the military in the Swedish Royal Coastal Artillery as officer achieving the rank of First Lieutenant.

Contact:

EMN NCP Croatia

Ministry of the Interior

Ulica grada Vukovara 33, Zagreb

Email: emn@mup.hr

Web: <https://emn.gov.hr/>

