

October 2024 - Newsletter #1

## ”Strengthening the regional cooperation on migration management between Western Balkans and neighbouring EU Member States in accordance with EU Acquis and international standards – MIRCO“



The project is implemented by the Swedish Migration Agency of the Kingdom of Sweden, as a Lead Partner in close collaboration with the partner the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration of the Republic of Serbia.

The project will contribute to enhanced regional cooperation on migration management, strengthen good neighbourly relations and the implementation of the common European asylum system's external dimension in the WB region.

### Project duration:

24 months - 15 May 2024 until 14 May 2026.

### Project beneficiaries\*:

- Ministry of Interior of Montenegro,
- Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina,
- Ministry of Interior of North Macedonia
- the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration of the Republic of Serbia.

### Associated project partners:

- Ministry of Interior of Slovenia,
- Ministry of Interior of Austria,
- Ministry of Migration and Asylum of Greece

The EU and its partners will work together to support strengthening the migration management and asylum system in the Western Balkans.

\*If the migration authorities of Albania and Kosovo\* <sup>1</sup> express a wish to join the project, they will be included.

<sup>1</sup> This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/99.



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## The Opening Conference: A New Chapter in Regional Cooperation

Date: 25<sup>th</sup> September, 2024

Location: Hotel Metropol, Belgrade, Serbia

On 25<sup>th</sup> September, the project kicked off with a vibrant opening conference at the Hotel Metropol in Belgrade. With the presence of all project partners and beneficiaries, the event marked a significant milestone in fostering commitment to the project's objectives and visibility among stakeholders. A diverse group of 53 participants from various institutions and organizations across the Western Balkans and the EU gathered to share insights and aspirations for the project's future.

The conference began with **inspiring opening speeches** from prominent representatives, including:

**Swedish Ambassador Charlotte Semelin**, who expressed her optimism that the MIRCO project will enhance regional cooperation in the Western Balkans. She emphasized the importance of providing effective tools for managing irregular migrations and ensuring the proper reception of migrants.

**Elvira Angulo Rodriguez** from the **EU Delegation in Serbia** highlighted the project's role in transforming the Serbian Commissariat's migration training center into a regional hub. According to her, individuals from across the region will come to Serbia for specialized training.

**Svetlana Vemirovic, Deputy Commissioner for Refugees and Migration of Serbia**, stated that this project represents a continuation of efforts to build capacity in Serbia in the area of migration management. She reminded that, in previous years, the establishment of training centers in the field of migration had begun and that relevant actors in the region should have the appropriate knowledge to adequately protect migrants, first of all, and then help their return and integration as a priority.

Following the introductory remarks, **Katarina Mlekov** from the Swedish Migration Agency and **Danijela Nedjc** from the Commissariat for Refugees and Migrations presented in more details the project's goals and planned activities.

Ms Mlekov outlined the overarching objectives, focusing on strengthening regional cooperation in migration management between the Western Balkans and neighbouring EU Member States. She said that the project will strengthen the partnership with the Western Balkans, in light of their unique status with the EU accession perspective and their continued efforts to align with the EU acquis;



Activity Spotlight – Opening Conference



Activity Spotlight – Opening Conference



Ms Nedic provided in-depth insights into specific activities designed to establish a sustainable regional training center, tailored to the needs of Western Balkan partner countries. She said that one of the main goals of the project is to increase institutional and digital capacities that will lead to better preparedness of the countries of the Western Balkans for new migration flows and crisis management.

The opening conference not only raised awareness about the importance of regional cooperation in migration management but also celebrated the official launch of the MIRCO project. Together, participants are poised to embark on a collaborative journey towards a more effective and compassionate approach to migration in the region.

**Stay tuned for updates as we move forward in our mission to strengthen migration management across the Western Balkans!**

## Establishment of cooperation and a network of international migration training centres from Azerbaijan, Africa, Malta, Sweden and Türkiye

Dates: 25-26th September, 2024

### Location:

DAY 1 – Commissariat for refugees and Migration of the RS, Belgrade

DAY 2 – Migration Training Centre Plandiste, Serbia

The goal of this activity was to forge strong ties among regional and international Migration Training Centres in Sweden, Malta, Azerbaijan, Turkey, and Tanzania. By establishing a collaborative network, participants aimed to enhance the exchange of information, experiences, knowledge, and operational practices—especially regarding countries of origin.

This dynamic two-day event took place at the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration in Belgrade and the Migration Training Center in Plandiste, Serbia. The first day aligned with the project's Opening Conference, fostering a dialogue among stakeholders, with 21 participants from beneficiary countries, associated project partners, EU member state institutions, and representatives from regional



*Day one at the Commissariat for Refugees and Migrations of RS, Belgrade, Serbia*

and international training centers gathered, including an online participant from the IOM African Capacity Building Center in Tanzania. The kick-off meeting in Belgrade set the stage for cooperation among migration training centers. Opening remarks from **Svetlana Velimirovic** and **Katarina Mlekov** highlighted the importance of collaboration. Representatives from Malta (**Adrian Cooper**), Sweden (**Daniel Fredriksson**), and Tanzania (**Jonathan Martens**) showcased their missions, practices, and operational methodologies, providing valuable insights into their work.

On the second day, the group visited the Migration Training Center in Plandiste to present the center and its work to relevant stakeholder involved in migration management in the WB region and the EU. Ms Velimirovic led a presentation on the center's technical and operational

capacities, discussing achievements, ongoing activities, and future goals. Participants engaged in a fruitful tour, interacting with Commissariat staff and discussing daily operations and methodologies. This visit highlighted the center's potential to be transformed in the regional training center and host future regional training events. The development of a Regional Migration Training Centre, with the e-learning platform following EU standards will have a significant beneficial impact on the whole sector of the region and EU.

This two-day activity laid a strong foundation for ongoing collaboration, the exchange of best practices, and the organization of joint training sessions. To build on this momentum, it is crucial to continue establishing a network among regional migration training centers, aligning efforts to achieve project goals.



*Day two at the Training Centre Plandiste, Plandiste, Serbia*



## Visibility and communication material developed for project promotion in WB

We're excited to share our progress in developing and disseminating impactful visibility and communication materials aimed at promoting project with SCRM and our Western Balkan beneficiaries, in collaboration with EU experts.

A dynamic working group has created essential visibility materials that project partners and beneficiary institutions can use to effectively promote our initiatives. This effort includes contributions from EU experts, the project team in Belgrade, and PR specialists and experts from SCRM. The working group has developed informative materials in line with EU guidelines, including leaflets, posters, newsletters, roll-ups, folders, notebooks, and various promotional items. These materials will ensure comprehensive dissemination of project-related information and enhance visibility for our initiatives.

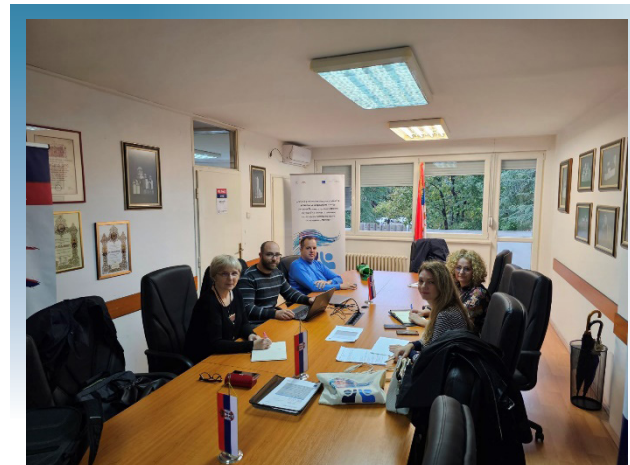
We are thrilled to announce that our printed materials have been distributed during the Opening Conference of the Project and at subsequent project activities!



## Increased institutional and digital capacities will lead to better preparedness of Western Balkans countries for migration flows and crisis management

A needs assessment to identify the requirements of Western Balkan partners for IT and supplementary technical equipment—such as computers, laptops, and video conferencing tools—has been completed, and the next step in the procurement process is underway. This equipment will enhance digital regional, EU, and international cooperation.

The needs assessment was conducted in collaboration with the IT departments of the beneficiary institutions, including the Ministry of Interior of Montenegro, the Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Ministry of Interior of North Macedonia, and the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration of the Republic of Serbia. Strengthening the institutional capacity of WB countries will lead to improved services and enhanced protection for migrants.



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