

December 2024 - Newsletter #2

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## **”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 is co-funded by the European Union and contracted by ICMPD through the Migration Partnership Facility.



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# Successful Workshop Strengthens Synergies and Cooperation in Migration Management across the Western Balkans

Date: 16-17 October 2024

Location: Belgrade Project Office and Online via Webex

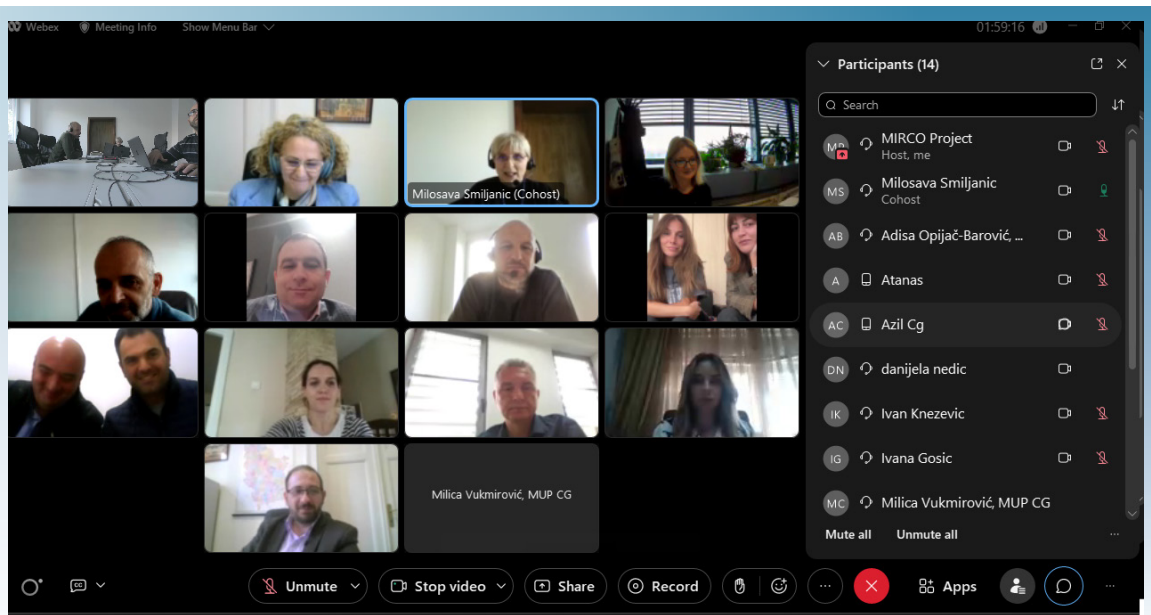
On October 16–17, 2024, an online workshop brought together key stakeholders in migration management across the Western Balkans. The event aimed to foster collaboration, exchange knowledge, and explore opportunities for coordinated regional efforts. Participants showcased ongoing projects and initiatives, emphasizing the importance of synergy and avoiding duplication of efforts. A special focus was placed on migration-related training programs and capacity-building initiatives tailored to the needs of the region.

During the project preparation phase, an initial identification of existing initiatives in the Western Balkans was conducted which involved consultations with institutions and organizations such as the EU Agency for Asylum (EUAA), Frontex, the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to ensure alignment and effective coordination.

The workshop attracted 33 participants, including representatives from key organizations like IOM, UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF, the Joint Coordination Platform (JCP), and ICMPD. Beneficiary country representatives also shared insights into capacity-building projects designed to strengthen migration management in the region.

Following the workshop, the project team continued their research, compiling a comprehensive overview of migration management training initiatives to guide future actions.

This workshop marked a significant step toward enhanced cooperation and alignment of efforts to improve migration management in the Western Balkans. The MIRCO project remains committed to working closely with EU delegations in the region, EU agencies, and international organizations to deliver effective, coordinated solutions for developing regional training programs.



# Western Balkans Beneficiary Institutions Equipped with Technical Tools to Strengthen Migration Management Training

December 2024

Location: Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Montenegro

Within the framework of the MIRCO project, efforts in December ensured that beneficiary institutions across the Western Balkans are well-equipped for sustained e-learning and regional digital cooperation beyond the project's conclusion. The initiative provided essential IT and video conferencing equipment, including laptops, conference cameras, and software licenses. These upgrades aim to enhance the region's capacity to adopt modern digital practices in migration management. By providing these institutions with the necessary tools to enhance their online training and conferencing capabilities, the project will help foster greater cooperation and improve migration management systems across the region.

This initiative marks an important step toward enhancing the digital infrastructure of the Western Balkans, enabling institutions to stay connected and work closely with international and EU counterparts. By increasing the technical capacities of WB institutions, the project will provide sustainable solutions for ongoing joint regional and EU actions in migration management, ensuring that these institutions can continue to collaborate effectively in the future.



## Training Needs Assessment Conducted Among Western Balkans Project Beneficiaries to Enhance Migration Management

November 2024

Location: Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Montenegro

In November, as part of the MIRCO project, a comprehensive training needs assessment was conducted of beneficiary institutions in the Western Balkans. The assessment involved representatives from 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. The assessment aimed to identify the institutions' needs for developing training programs that would enhance their capacity to manage migration effectively, in line with set priorities in EU acquis. During the assessment, a series of workshops were held, where participants co-developed a detailed questionnaire to identify the specific training needs of these institutions.

This process resulted in the identification of 16 priority training topics by the Western Balkan beneficiary institutions, including: Global and Regional Migration Governance, Human Rights and Migration, Prevention of Torture and Protection of Migrants' Rights, Smuggling of Human Beings in Mixed Migration Flows, Preventing and Combatting Irregular Migration, Protection of the Rights of Victims of Human Trafficking, Migration and Security, Migration and Development, Migration and Gender, etc.

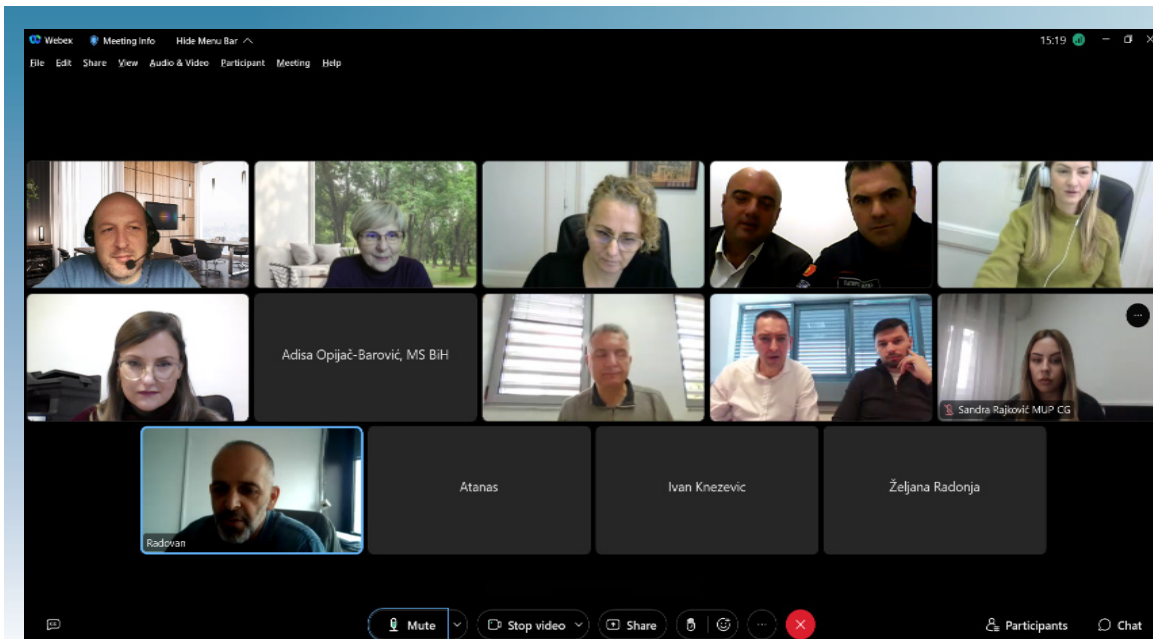
Key findings revealed that most survey participants had moderate training experience, which future training programs developed within the project aim to enhance. The analysis provided an overview of the specific skills that survey participants consider essential

for improving their job performance across different countries. Key training areas identified included crisis management, decision-making, legal knowledge, communication skills, and technical skills. Notably, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, crisis management and decision-making were highlighted as top priorities. In Serbia, North Macedonia, and Montenegro, communication and technical skills were more prominently emphasized. Additionally, all countries, to varying degrees, recognized the importance of legal knowledge as a crucial area for improvement in migration management.

Major migration-related challenges identified were “irregular migration,” “border security and management,” and “return and reintegration” of migrants, particularly in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia.

In Montenegro and North Macedonia, asylum procedures were a more pressing issue. A significant trend across all countries was the increasing demand for training in the field of legal migration pathways and labor mobility, highlighting the need for enhanced regional cooperation.

This assessment will play a crucial role in shaping regional training programs that directly address the identified needs of these institutions. At the beginning of 2025, working groups will be established, comprising relevant institutions, to begin the development of the training programs. The tailored training will provide the necessary support to strengthen the migration management capacities in the Western Balkans, paving the way for more effective regional cooperation and policy implementation.



## Study Visit to Swedish Migration Agency Enhances Capacity Building Strategies for Western Balkans Institutions

Date: 10-13 December 2024

Location: Swedish Migration Agency, Norrköping and Stockholm, Sweden

Multiple project activities and coordination efforts took place during a study visit to Sweden from December 10–13, 2024. As part of the visit, the MIRCO project team participated in an Open Day event at the Swedish Migration Agency headquarters in Norrköping. The team presented the project's activities

to their Swedish colleagues, showcasing its progress and objectives. The Mirco project team was in the position to exchange knowledge and experience with the colleagues working in the headquarters, especially in the area of training program development.





*Project Coordination Team meeting, 11 December 2024*



*10 December, Norrköping, Sweden*

On the following day, a Project Coordination Team meeting was held with the participation of project partners and beneficiary institutions. During the meeting, participants reviewed the project's progress and planned future activities and coordination efforts. They discussed 16 priority training topics for the development of training programs aimed at beneficiary institutions in the Western Balkans, considering plans for their implementation. The team also explored the most effective modalities for these training programs to ensure they would be beneficial for the entire Western Balkans region.

In a significant step toward enhancing migration management capabilities in the Western Balkans, the next two days, from December 12-13, 2024 were dedicated to a study visit to the Swedish Migration Academy in Stockholm. The two-day visit provided a platform for exchange of strategies, practices, and materials aimed at strengthening capacity-building efforts in the region.

Seventeen participants, including representatives from WB beneficiary institutions, associated project partners – representatives from Federal Ministry of Interior of Austria and Ministry of Migration and Asylum of Greece, and members of the SMA Academy, attended the visit.



*Activity Spotlight – Swedish Migration Agency in Stockholm*

The study visit proved highly beneficial, with participants expressing satisfaction over the knowledge exchange and practical insights gained. They appreciated the detailed presentations and the opportunity to engage directly with SMA experts on topics ranging from Swedish migration policy to the development of digital training tools. The discussions laid a solid foundation for future collaboration, particularly in designing training curricula and developing digital training solutions for the Western Balkans.



*Swedish Migration Academy in Stockholm*

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