

**VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA  
TO THE FIRST REGIONAL REVIEW ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GLOBAL COMPACT FOR  
SAFE, ORDERLY AND REGULAR MIGRATION**

**1. Methodology for preparing GCM Review**

In line with UN Resolution 73/195 and in accordance with UNECE and UN Network for Migration invitation to the member states to submit voluntary input to contribute to the Regional Review for the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), the Republic of Serbia undertakes activities in order to prepare the national review.

As a public authority established by the Law on Migration Management to perform tasks in the field of migration management, monitoring of the implementation of the migration policy and preparing reports to the Government, Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (CRMS) coordinated review process and preparation of the National Voluntary Contribution. With the assistance provided by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Mission to Serbia, inputs from relevant stakeholders were collected and report prepared and validated between 1 September and 31 October 2020.

GCM review process in Serbia has been implemented through consultations with broad array of stakeholders engaged on national level in order that the information on the status of implementation of all 23 GCM objectives could be reviewed and reported on. The wide engagement of state institutions, UN Country Team, CSOs, academia and donor community representatives has been enabled through several phases of the review process.

Initially, the survey questionnaire on GCM implementation structured in four clusters of GCM objectives has been designed and distributed among all stakeholders. In addition, direct interviews focusing on collecting statistical and qualitative data were held with relevant state authorities: Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry for Labor, Employment, Veterans and Social Affairs, Ministry of Youth and Sports and Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia. Relevant information was gathered on the most significant migration policies and measures, changes or issues Serbian government faced in putting them in place, including the possible consequences of regional dynamics as well assessment of their impact on the achievement of GCM objectives. Additionally, the questionnaire sought information on critical difficulties in reaching GCM objectives and focused on trends, successes, challenges, emerging issues and lessons learned as well as actions that have been taken to address these challenges in Serbia.

In person interviews were complemented with extensive desk review of migration-related legislation, strategic documents, national reports and recent research in the Republic of Serbia.

To ensure a whole of society approach, the on-line survey that reflects the same questions as stated in questionnaire was sent to non-governmental organizations active in the field of migration in Serbia as well as to UN Country Team, prominent researchers and academia representatives that cover migration-related topics. Special consideration has been given to interlinkages between GCM objectives and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) based on *Voluntary National Review of the Republic of Serbia on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

## **2. Policy and enabling environment**

While there has been no specific implementation plan developed for the GCM in the Republic of Serbia, its principles and objectives are well integrated into Serbia's national policy documents. This is accompanied by the process of accession to the European Union as a priority for the Republic of Serbia. Government has developed sectoral strategies and adopted laws harmonized with EU standards in order to meet the Rule of Law criteria. GCM-relevant policies mainly fall under provisions of negotiating Chapter 24: Justice, freedom and security and Serbia is implementing the Action Plan which was adopted in 2016.

The main driver for strong commitment lays in complex migration situation in Serbia. Migration trends in Serbia are complex in their nature and they imply the increase in the level of intra-regional migration, high level of emigration of young and mostly highly educated citizens and transit of huge number of refugees and migrants toward Western Europe countries through so called Western Balkan migratory route. Such situation has resulted in tremendous burden in providing durable solutions for refugees from the region, resolving the problems of internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Kosovo and Metohija and in protection of vulnerable irregular migrants on the territory of Serbia.

Currently, there are still more than 25.000 refugees from the region in the process of integration, almost 197.000 IDPs and over 7.000 migrants in irregular position on its territory. According to Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) statistics, the emigration from Serbia reached its peak in 2015 when 60,000 of Serbian citizens immigrated into OECD member states, thus ranking Serbia the 31<sup>st</sup> country on the list of countries with highest emigration rate in the world<sup>1</sup>. More recent statistics of EUROSTAT indicate that in 2018, the total of 52.049 Serbian citizens obtained residence permit in the countries of EU for the first time, which is almost 12,000 Serbian citizens more than in 2017<sup>2</sup>. The statistics of the Central Register of Mandatory Social Security for 2018 indicates that the total of 15.503

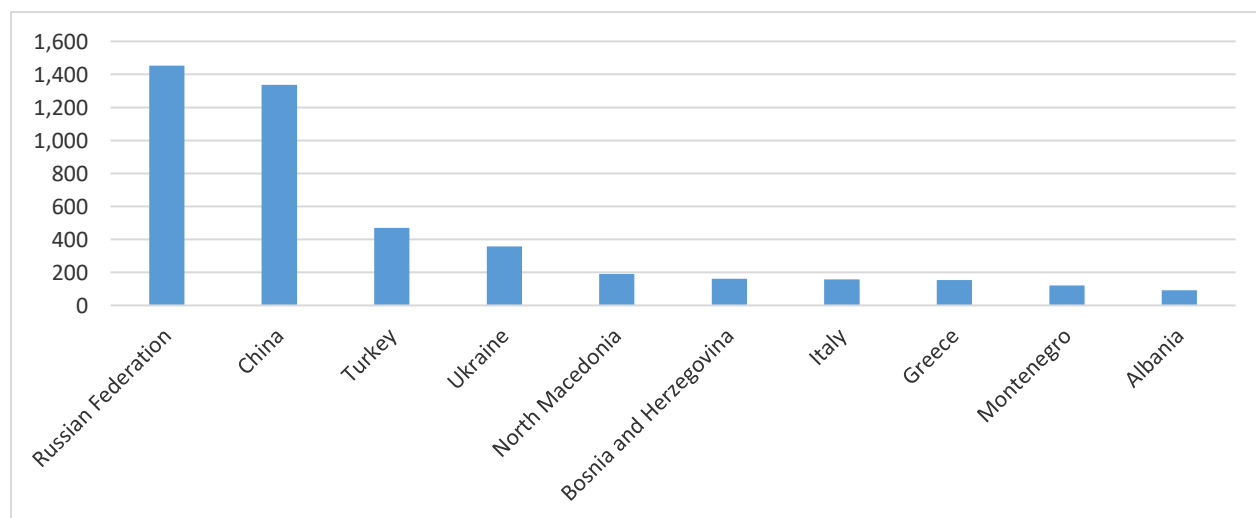
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<sup>1</sup> International Migration Outlook : <https://www.oecd.org/migration/international-migration-outlook-1999124x.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Eurostat- Statistics Explained: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Main\\_Page](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Main_Page)

workers has been posted to temporary work in 107 countries where Germany and Slovakia have the highest share of workers (5,205 and 3,704 respectively). Based on the reports of employment agencies, the total of 6,688 Serbian citizens was employed abroad in 2019.

*Migration Profiles* in the period between 2016 and 2019 show permanent highest numbers of immigrants from PR China and the Russian Federation in Serbia, followed by the citizens of Romania. The most recent trend perceived in 2019 in comparison to 2018 is almost doubled percentage of immigrants from China when measured on the basis of share in total immigration (from 16,1 % in 2018 to 32,5% in 2019). When compared on the basis of grounds for approval of temporary residence permits, another emerging trend in 2019 is evident, i.e. there is an increase in the number of permits issued on the grounds of work – from 44,7% in 2018 to 69,6% in 2019 – followed by family reunification (20,1%) and education.



Foreigners residing in Serbia on the grounds of employment, Migration Profile of the Republic of Serbia for 2019

As per National Employment Service, the number of issued work permits for foreigners holding temporary residence permit significantly increased in 2016 and continued to rise until 2019, when the total of 13,809 permits were issued. It is estimated that the number of foreigners working in Serbia is bigger than the number of working permits issued, since they can be engaged as self-employed, be members of steering boards in international companies and similar.

There is an increase in the number of expressed intentions to seek asylum in 2019 (12,935) in comparison to this number in 2018 (8,410). Out of mentioned numbers, only 251 persons in 2019 and 341 persons in 2018 submitted the request, i.e. filed the asylum application. Approx. 40% in 2019 and approx. 60% of asylum applications in 2018 are filed by the citizens of Iran and Afghanistan. Figures in first nine months of 2020 show decreasing trend both in the number of

persons registered their intention to seek asylum and those who formally lodged application (2,466 and 64 respectively). This data implies that majority of asylum seekers abscond from the asylum procedure and continue to move forward towards EU, without even having the first instance decision on their status in Serbia made.

In 2019, the Asylum Office has granted asylum to 19 persons and subsidiary protection to 17 persons and in 16 international protections in 2020.

Country of Origin	Number	%
Afghanistan	3.843	29,71
Pakistan	2.767	21,39
Syria	1.975	15,27
Iraq	1.560	12,06
Bangladesh	849	6,56
Other	1.941	15,01
<b>Total</b>	<b>12.935</b>	<b>100</b>

Number of expressed intentions to seek asylum in the Republic of Serbia as per country of origin in 2019, Migration Profile of the Republic of Serbia for 2019

During 2018, on the basis of readmission agreements, 2,489 Serbian citizens were returned to Serbia, with the majority of them from Germany. The same statistics for 2019 shows that 1,455 Serbian citizens returned, again with majority of them returning from Germany while in the period between January and June 2020, 498 citizens of the Republic of Serbia and 209 third country nationals were returned to Serbia<sup>3</sup>.

In June 2015, the Government of the Republic of Serbia established the *Working Group on Mixed Migration Flows*, which played a significant role in the successful response to the great migration wave that passed through Serbia that year.

*Coordination body for monitoring flows in the field of economic migration*, established in 2019, steers the work of state administration bodies so as to review the situation in the field of economic migration. It also finds solutions to improve this area aiming to prevent further emigration of RS citizens and encourage the return of expert diaspora, creating a business and economic environment for the arrival of foreign experts as well as proposing new solutions in terms of improving regulations in the field of economic migration.

In order to improve effectiveness and efficiency and coordinate endeavor of different state and non-state stakeholders in fight against THB, national *Council for the Fight against Human Trafficking* has been established in 2017.

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<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Serbia

*Inter-Ministerial Working Group for the Implementation of United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* was established at the end of 2015. It consists of 26 ministries, state bodies and agencies. The first *Voluntary National Review of the Republic of Serbia on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* was produced in 2019.

In terms of Serbian Government's integration of GCM implementation into the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the interlinks can be found between all GCM objectives (except for Objective 6 and Objective 22) and SDG Target 10.7. SDG Target 10.7 most specifically calls for facilitating orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.

In order to improve collecting and dissemination of relevant data Migration Profile of the Republic of Serbia has been produced regularly. Additional data are included based on the reports on the indicators in the context of the migration and asylum specific targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In that way, Migration Profile looks at the dimension of sustainable development and migration in an integrated way, with focus on those sustainable development goals and targets in which this dimension is sufficiently specific to be effectively reported on, monitored and ultimately implemented.

*The Regional Housing Programme (RHP)* is a joint initiative by Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia. The aim of the RHP is to contribute to the resolution of the protracted displacement situation of the most vulnerable refugees and displaced persons following the 1991-1995 conflicts on the territory of former Yugoslavia, including internally displaced persons in Montenegro from 1999. As per the Joint Declaration, the RHP aims to benefit close to 74 000 people or 27 000 households and its cost is estimated to be approximately EUR 584 million, with indicative cost for Serbia of approximately EUR 335 million. The largest donors are the EU, represented by the European Commission and the United States. 5.152 housing solutions were provided for the six year of implementation.

Within Regional Project financed by EU "Regional Support to Protection-sensitive migration management in the Western Balkan and Turkey" Serbia actively cooperates and contributes in improving capacity of the countries in the region in the field of migration management with special focus on respecting and protecting human rights.

Currently, significant challenge to the implementation of migration related initiatives is posed by the COVID-19 outbreak. State of emergency was proclaimed on 16 March 2020 and lasted until 6 May 2020 with certain health protection measures still in force. At the beginning of the state of emergency, approx. 5,900 persons were accommodated in centers. The Government made a number of decisions in order to prevent spread of virus including those related to the

limitation of the movement for citizens together with asylum seekers and irregular migrants accommodated in reception/asylum centers. This resulted in the increase in the number of migrants/asylum seekers in these centers to approx. 9,100. Since February 2020, the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration has taken all preventative measures in order to prevent spreading of the disease in the centers and appropriate instructions for accommodated persons were prescribed, as well as directives for employees in accordance with the national algorithm for prevention and treatment in case of infection. Thanks to the timely measures taken, no positive cases of SARS-cov-2 virus were recorded in the centers in the first peak of outbreak<sup>4</sup>.

Apart from migrants and asylum seekers, the impact of the pandemic has been perceived on the refugees and IDPs. Both categories live in the situation of protracted displacement and share the same challenges as nationals during the outbreak like loss of employment. In addition, finalization of the different projects aiming to provide durable solution to their housing problems is delayed. Overall assistance programmes, both from donors' and state budgets are significantly influenced due to pandemics.

### **3. Progress on GCM objectives**

#### **3.1. Ensuring that migration is voluntary, orderly and regular**

**Relevant GCM Objectives and SDG Targets: GCM Objectives (2, 5, 6, 12, 18) and SDG Targets (All, 3.C; 10.7, 8.8, 17.18, 5.2, 5.4, 8.3, 8.5, 8.7, 8.8, 16.3, 16.6, 16.9, 17.18, 4.4, 4.8, 8.5, 8.6)**

In order to facilitate fair and ethical recruitment and safeguard conditions that ensure dignified work, as well as to strengthen security and predictability in migration procedures for proper recruitment, assessment and referral, bilateral agreements on the employment of Serbian citizens have been signed with Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Slovenia. In 2001, the Republic of Serbia signed a bilateral agreement with the Federal Republic of Germany on posting of its employees to temporary work in the Federal Republic of Germany, and on the basis of an agreement on the posting of workers based on a contract on performing of works in the Federal Republic of Germany (so called detachment).

Following the adoption of the *Law on Conditions for Posting Employees to Temporary Work abroad and their Protection* that entered into force in 2016, the number of workers posted abroad has steadily increased.

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<sup>4</sup> Commissariat for Refugees and Migration of the Republic of Serbia

Employment of foreigners in the Republic of Serbia is regulated by the *Law on Employment of Foreigners* as well as the *Rulebook on Work Permits*.

The subject of mutual recognition of skills, qualifications and competences has been institutionalized through the establishment of state Qualifications Agency and the adoption of the *Law on National Qualifications Framework (NQFS) in the Republic of Serbia* in 2018. With the adoption of the NQFS Law, Serbia has institutionalized a system of qualifications acquired through formal and non-formal education. This system provides easier mobility of the workforce, the implementation of the concept of lifelong learning and defines the institutional framework for the participation of the economy and the world of education in the creation of qualifications. The Republic of Serbia has also established the National Qualifications Framework, which is fully aligned with the European Qualifications Framework.

The Republic of Serbia adopted *Strategy on Economic Migration of the Republic of Serbia for the Period 2021-2027* which should mitigate the impact of emigration, promote circular migration and transfer of knowledge of the diaspora, contribute to creation of professional trainings and regulations on the labor market, balanced regional development, as well as development of the private sector as important aspect of state development.

### **3.2. Protecting migrants through rights-based border governance measures**

**Relevant GCM Objectives and SDG Targets: GCM Objectives (4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 21) and SDG Targets (10.7, 16.9, 17.18, 16.1, 16.4, 17.16, 5.2, 8.7, 16.2, 16.3, 9.1, 9.A, 16.3, 16.6)**

Smuggling of migrants – The assumption of relevant EU institutions (EUROPOL and FRONTEX) is that the greatest number of irregular migrants reached their destination countries by the aid of smuggling networks. Although there was an observable decline in the number of criminal charges filed for this criminal offence since 2015, there was a high increase of 60% in this number in 2019<sup>5</sup>.

In response to above trends, several structural reforms and operational activities of the Ministry of Interior (Mol) have been undertaken such as the transfer of competencies to combat human smuggling from the Border Police Directorate to the Criminal Police Directorate. Also, in March 2019, by the order of Prosecutor for Organized Crime, Task Force for Suppressing Human Smuggling has been established and includes public prosecutor for organized crime deputy, the representatives of Border Police and Criminal Police of the Mol, Ministry of Finance, Customs Office, Money Laundering Directorate and Security Information Agency.

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<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Serbia

By amendments to the Criminal Code, stricter punitive measures for smuggling-related offences were introduced in 2017 and now allow for increased penalties not only for smuggling offences, but also for assisting in the smuggling of migrants.

In 2018, under its tasks related to suppressing human smuggling, Criminal Police initiated five criminal charges against organized criminal groups and in 2019, one criminal charge against organized criminal group.

Trafficking in persons in the context of international migration - Trafficking in Persons Report for 2020 recognizes that Serbia is making significant efforts in meeting the standards for the elimination of trafficking. The Government adopted standard operating procedures for the identification, referral, and support of trafficking victims and adopted the 2019-2020 national action plan, allocating resources towards this plan<sup>6</sup>.

During 2019, Center for Protection of Victims of Human Trafficking has received 27 suspicion reports on trafficking in persons in mixed migration flows out of which number three persons were identified as victims - nationals of Pakistan, Afghanistan and the Republic of Mali<sup>7</sup>.

In the period between 2018 and 2020, the Republic of Serbia has improved many legal acts so as to include human trafficking and its consequences, some of them being *Criminal Code of the Republic of Serbia, Law on Free Legal Aid, Law on Foreigners, Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection and Law on the Employment of Foreigners*.

The Action Plan for 2019 and 2020 for the implementation of the *Strategy for Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Humans, Especially Women and Children and Protection of the Victims from 2017 to 2022* has been adopted and incorporates GRETA recommendations requiring urgent action.

Managing borders – Western Balkan region is one of the key transit areas for irregular migrants who try to reach Western Europe passing through Serbia as well. High increase in irregular migratory flows continued and resulted in 20,221 prevented illegal border crossings in 2019 (which include two categories of persons: the persons who gave up the attempt to cross the border and the persons who were intercepted at the border)<sup>8</sup> which makes 2,4 times crossings more than in the previous year. This increasing trend has remained the same in 2020, and during the first eight months of this year 23,065 persons have been prevented from illegal

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<sup>6</sup> Trafficking in Persons Report, 20<sup>th</sup> Edition: <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/2020-TIP-Report-Complete-062420-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Serbia

<sup>8</sup> Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Serbia



border crossing<sup>9</sup>. *Standard Operating Procedures for Border Police on Humanitarian Border Management*<sup>10</sup> were jointly developed by MoI Border Police Directorate and IOM. Protection on human rights of migrants at the border is further ensured by the provisions of the new Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection.

Republic of Serbia manages its borders in an integrated and coordinated manner and its *Strategy for Integrated Border Management* and corresponding Action Plan is adopted for the period 2017-2020. The most challenging issue of foreigner identity determination, particularly when the category of irregular migrants is concerned, has been somewhat overcome by creating a single biometric database used by the police for identifying and registering biometric data of foreigners are recorded and harmonized with international police records.

*Strategy for Combating Irregular Migration in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2018-2020* with the corresponding Action Plan has been adopted and provides both for coordinated actions toward prevention of irregular migration and for the protection of human rights of migrants who find themselves in an irregular situation.

*Obtaining legal status and access to asylum procedure* – The new *Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection* aimed to make the asylum procedure more efficient and better defining the rights and obligations of foreigners in the Republic of Serbia.

Return, readmission and reintegration - The EU-Serbia Readmission Agreement, which is in force since January 2008, is facilitated by implementing protocols concluded with 21 EU Member States. Serbia has 11 bilateral readmission agreements, including with Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Montenegro. Negotiations to sign readmission agreements with Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Turkey, Georgia, Belarus and Argentina are ongoing. As initiatives to conclude readmission agreements with Afghanistan, Pakistan, Algeria, Morocco, Iran and Iraq that were launched in 2017 were re-launched in 2019.

In order to complete legal framework for the return process, *Regulation on the Establishment of the Program in Support of Assisted Voluntary Return of Foreigners in the Period 2019-2021* is adopted. This regulation enables implementation of Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) program in close cooperation with International Organization for Migration (IOM).

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid

<sup>10</sup> Humanitarian Border Management - Standard Operating Procedures for Border Police:  
<https://serbia.iom.int/sites/default/files/publications/documents/Humanitarian%20Border%20Management.pdf>

### 3.3. Supporting the integration of migrants and their contribution to development

**Relevant GCM Objectives and SDG Targets: GCM (Objectives 14, 15, 16, 19, 20, 22) and SDG Targets (10.7, 16.3, 16.6, 17.16, 1.3, 1.4, 3.7, 3.8, 4.1, 4.2, 11.1, 16.B, 17.8, 10.2, 11.B, 16.7, 16.8)**

Basic services to migrants - Currently, five asylum and fourteen reception centers for migrants are operational in Serbia<sup>11</sup> and they host total of 6,024 persons. Majority of them are migrants in transit to Western Europe refusing both to regulate their stay in Serbia and to benefit from AVRR programs. Serbia has invested huge efforts in the form of human resources, finances and infrastructure to deliver an appropriate response to the situation and provide adequate services to migrants. This includes accommodation and access to basic services including health care, free education (elementary and secondary level) as well as protection of persons with special needs.

*Standards for Provision of Services (psychosocial support, non-formal education and legal aid) to Asylum Seekers, Migrants and Refugees Accommodated in Asylum/Reception Centers in Serbia* are developed in 2018 in order to ensure quality control and further coordination of service provision.

Asylum seekers and persons granted asylum have access to the national health care system in an equal manner to Serbian nationals. The costs of health care for asylum seekers and persons granted asylum are covered by the Ministry of Health. Migrants in irregular position have full access to urgent health service. Woman and children have same access to health services as nationals regardless of their legal status.

With joint efforts of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, UNICEF, CRMS and other international and non-governmental organizations, all asylum-seeking and migrant children are included in mainstream education irrespective of their status or the status of their parents. A practical challenge proved to be regular school attendance and limited number of interpreters.

Integration and Social Cohesion – Responding to the trend of increased mixed migration flows, Serbian Government adopted two legal acts regulating this field. *Decree on the manner of inclusion in the social, cultural and economic life of persons granted asylum* enables this inclusion through timely information on rights, opportunities and obligations of persons granted asylum, their obligation in respect of learning Serbian language and getting acquainted with Serbian history, culture and Constitutional order. It defines the assistance provided to

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<sup>11</sup> Commissariat for Refugees and Migration: [http://www.kirs.gov.rs/wb-page.php?kat\\_id=50](http://www.kirs.gov.rs/wb-page.php?kat_id=50)

them with inclusion in the educational system, assistance to exercise the right to health and social protection and assistance with inclusion in the labor market.

The second act - *Regulation on criteria for determining priorities for accommodation of persons who have been granted the right to refuge or granted subsidiary protection and conditions of use of residential space for temporary accommodation* stipulates that person who has been granted asylum shall be provided with accommodation according to the capabilities of the Republic of Serbia for a maximum of one year from the validity of the decision granting him/her the right to asylum, unless he possesses his own monetary funds.

The refugees from former SFRY and IDPs from Kosovo and Metohija enjoy same rights as nationals. Provision of durable solutions for these persons is national priority.

Diaspora engagement –Official data on the total number of Serbian diaspora and Serbs in the region do not exist, while earlier estimates speak of more than five million people. These estimates refer to citizens of the Republic of Serbia living abroad and Serbian nationals, emigrants from the territory of the Republic of Serbia and the region and their descendants. It is estimated that the most numerous Serbian diaspora is in the USA, Germany, Austria, Canada, France, Switzerland and Australia.

Office for the Cooperation with Diaspora and Serbs in the Region is within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and it mainly carries out the activities and projects that pertain to the preservation of Serbian national and cultural identity and support to learning of the Serbian language abroad. It is estimated that there are more than 1,300 organizations and associations in the world today, including various organizational forms within the Serbian Orthodox Church, whose activities are mostly focused on preserving the national and cultural identity of the Serbian people abroad.

The 2019 initiative funded by the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia in - *the Serbian Science and Diaspora Collaboration Program: Vouchers for Knowledge Exchange*, aims to establish scientific cooperation, knowledge exchange, joint work on projects, scientific papers, researches and patents, planning and widening of the collaborative network between researchers from Serbia and their counterparts from diaspora. During last two years, initiated by Serbian Prime Minister, conferences were held in order to create incentives for Serbian talents to return to Serbia (*Talents Gathered*), representing parts of broader platforms that try to attract highly skilled returnees to Serbia.

Remittances – According to the World Bank estimates, the share of remittances in Serbia’s GDP was 8.2% in 2019<sup>12</sup>. Official remittance flow calculations are likely underestimated due in large part to informal flows, which are underreported and hard to measure. The informal flows of remittances’ transfers are a traditional way of sending money from Serbian emigrants abroad. In 2019, the National Bank of Serbia has published *Financial Guide for Returnees*<sup>13</sup> which aims to improve the availability of information for Serbian citizens wishing to come back to the Republic of Serbia and facilitate their return and faster integration, as well as their money disposal.

### **3.4. Improving value-driven and evidence-based policy making and public debate and enhancing cooperation on migration**

**Relevant GCM Objectives and SDG Targets: GCM Objectives (1, 3, 7, 17, 23) and SDG Targets (10.7, 17.18, 1.5, 5.2, 5.4, 8.7, 8.8, 10.3, 16.B, all)**

Data and evidence – In terms of institutional framework, three major bodies in Serbia can be deemed relevant sources of migration-related data: Ministry of Interior, the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia and Commissariat for Refugees and Migration of the Republic of Serbia (CRMS). Apart from them, data from the National Employment Service are important as well. The main gap in migration data is lack of reliable data on emigration. This is in part been compensated by using existing immigration data in the receiving countries. A current initiative of the Serbian Statistical Office pertains to the official request sent to 51 countries in the world requiring the data on Serbian immigrants in their respective countries for 2018 and 2019. The feedback was received from 40 countries. European countries which are deemed to be main destination countries for Serbian emigrants (i.e. Germany, Switzerland, Slovenia, Sweden, France and Norway) fully responded to the submitted request.

For the tenth year in a row, the Republic of Serbia has been independently developing the *Migration Profile of the Republic of Serbia*. Data on different categories of migrants are collected from competent institutions, which enable regular updates and publishing of the profile on annual level. Migration Profile tends to present data in accordance with the *Regulation 862/2007 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 July 2007, on Community statistics on migration and international protection*.

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<sup>12</sup> <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.DT.GD.ZS?locations=RS>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.dijaspora.gov.rs/en/financial-guide-for-returnees>

Provision of accurate and timely information – Seven *Migrant Service Centers* in cities across Serbia have been created by the National Employment Service of the Republic of Serbia in order to promote orderly migration flows and awareness raising on regular channels of migration.

Competent authorities in cooperation with NGOs which provide free legal aid invest significant efforts to provide accurate information to migrants in mixed flows through Serbia. Recently, there have been two initiatives that aim to improve information toward migrants: CRMS Daily Bulletin in accommodation centers providing relevant information on COVID-19 and MLEVSPA application providing information on labour market for foreigners granted asylum.

Addressing and reducing vulnerabilities – Refugee and migrant children and women are accommodated in reception centers that provide basic needs, including specialized and community-based psychosocial support. Child friendly spaces in reception/asylum centers were set up where children could access structured and recreational activities, mother baby corners were established for provision of counseling on breastfeeding to lactating mothers, as well as support to pregnant women and mothers on infant and young child feeding. The Government established *Minimum Standards on Infant and Young Child Feeding* which are integrated into the Ministry of Health preparedness plan. As of 2019 and following the withdrawal of CSO partners, the CRMS has overtaken child friendly spaces having staff duly trained by UNICEF prior to this takeover and mother baby corners supported by local health centers.

Additionally, Standard Operating Procedures of the Republic of Serbia for *the Prevention and Protection from Gender Based Violence against People Involved in Mixed Migration* have been adopted in 2019 and prepared to respond to the challenge of providing protection to persons affected by the crisis, who are in transit, displaced, or temporarily living in Serbia irrespective of their legal status. Another operating procedure that was developed by MLEVSP in coordination with UNICEF and UNHCR and adopted in 2016 - *Standard Operating Procedures for Protection of Refugee and Migrant Children* were recognized by Council of Europe as one of the good practices in terms of child-friendly approaches in the area of migration in their report in 2019.

International Cooperation – As relevant to GCM's comprehensive and integrated approach to managing migration, the Government of the Republic of Serbia has established cooperation and takes active role in numerous international organizations on global and regional level. Apart to the UN and its bodies and specialized agencies, Serbia is active in Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Council of Europe, the Global Forum on Migration and Development, the Budapest Process, the Prague Process, the Regional Cooperation Council and the Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative. Serbia is a member of the European Network of Information Centers and National Academic Recognition Information Centers network.

In the area of migration, Serbia continued to significantly contribute to the management of the mixed migration flows towards the EU by playing an active and constructive role and cooperating effectively with its neighbors and EU Member States<sup>14</sup>.

#### **4. Means of implementation**

The achievement of GCM objectives is pursued within several sectoral policies and incorporated into Serbia's coherent migration policy as part of the country's EU accession process. As such, these activities are supported by various means of implementation.

Capacity building – Continuous improvement of capacity and knowledge of civil servants, CSO partners and migrants themselves through trainings, peer to peer support, exchange of good practices and similar activities will produce conducive environment for the implementation of GCM objectives. Tailored activities will be implemented in this regard.

Strategic planning, legal improvements and further harmonization with EU standards – in line with EU accession process, regular updating of relevant documents and incorporating EU standards in national procedures is national commitment. In addition, other frameworks like *The United Nations Development Partnership Framework (UNDAF)* will be appropriate setting for the prioritization of different areas of relevance to the implementation of the objectives of the GCM.

Finance – As presented, number of strategies, action plans and legal acts were adopted in recent years that embedded GCM objectives. It means that financial effects and resources needed are assessed and accepted by the relevant legislative and executive branches. Apart from the national budget, significant resources are provided through EU Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) and other development partners active in the field of migration like Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, GIZ and other partners. Budgetary restrictions due to the COVID-19 could have significant impact on the funding of different activities, especially those related to investments in durable solutions (return and integration).

Monitoring and evaluation – regular monitoring and evaluation of implemented activities including data collection and following performance and outcome indicators will lead to the decision making based on accurate information.

Partnership and coordination - established migration partnerships and strengthened cooperation and coordination at the global and regional level will facilitate implementation of planned activities aimed to reach GCM objectives. In addition, inter institutional coordination and cooperation with non-governmental sector and academia could sustain governmental

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<sup>14</sup> EC Progress Report 2020

efforts in this sector. Special consideration will be given to the cooperation and joint activities with competent UN agencies especially in the field of protection of migrant rights.

## **5. Next steps**

By means of the voluntary national review, the Government of the Republic of Serbia reconfirms its commitment towards managing migration in orderly, safe, regular and responsible way. The analysis of the findings outlined throughout this report conclusively confirms that whole of Government and whole of society in Serbia are committed to the values and the principles of the Global Compact for Migration. The improvement of policy architecture for balanced integration of cross-cutting and interdependent guiding principles (such as people-centered, international cooperation, national sovereignty, rule of law, sustainable development, human rights, gender responsive, child-sensitive) is in progress and well reflected in numerous national policies aligned with the international law and EU Acquis Communautaire. Taken as a whole and so far, the Republic of Serbia demonstrated through the practices and cooperation among all actors involved in migration management that it addresses the challenges of migration in all its dimensions and that will remain committed to fulfilling all objectives of GCM.

To that end, through implementation of national migration policies defined in numerous strategic documents and further implemented within national legal framework, the Republic of Serbia will continue to achieve the objectives of GCM. The focus of their achievement will remain on strengthening legal pathways for migration, border management, protection of human rights and integration of migrants into society.

Combating trafficking in human beings will be priority not only in the areas of investigation and prosecution, but its prevention shall continue to be cross-cutting element in national social, education and health system. Special emphasis will be put on migrants in vulnerable position as well as promotion of migrants' rights and implementation of the measures aimed to mitigate negative narrative around migration.

Republic of Serbia actively works with local self-governments, particularly in the field of developmental aspects of migration. Establishing attractive environment for diaspora engagement in national development as well as to implement recently developed Strategy for Economic Migration is of utmost importance for Serbian economy and demography.

The Republic of Serbia will continue to implement measures supporting the reintegration of nationals returning under readmission agreements but in parallel it will work on the creation of a system for return of third country nationals in full compliance with human rights standards.

The Republic of Serbia has already made significant progress in providing for evidence based policy and decision making in the field of migration. Nevertheless, further improvement of administrative capacity by development of robust training system for knowledge gaining and sharing based on experience and valid data will be an important task. Further enhancement of monitoring and evaluation capacities will be mainstreamed within regular reporting mechanisms.

However, since the country is under protracted migratory pressure caused by tens of thousands of migrants transiting through its territory in order to reach Western Europe, it is crucial to make various solidarity schemes available to EU countries to become available to the Republic of Serbia as well. Serbia will closely cooperate with neighboring countries, countries in the region and with countries of origin and destination in order to contribute to creating conditions for safe, orderly and regular migration.



## **Annex I**

### **List of stakeholders involved in the collection of data for the voluntary review**

#### **Ministries and bodies of the Government of Serbia**

- Commissariat for Refugees and Migration of the Republic of Serbia (CRMS)
- Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Serbia (Mol) - Ministry of Labor, Employment, Veteran and Social Policy (MLEVSP)
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)
- Ministry of Youth and Sports (MYS)
- Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia

#### **UN Country Team in Serbia**

- UN Resident Coordinator Office in the Republic of Serbia
- The office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
- United Nations Development Program in the Republic of Serbia (UNDP)
- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
- United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Serbia (UNODC)
- International Labor Organization (ILO)
- International Organization for Migration (IOM)

#### **Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)**

- Group 484
- Belgrade Center for Human Rights (BCHR)
- Info Park
- Crisis Response and Policy Center (CRPC)

#### **Donor community**

- Embassy of Switzerland – Swiss Cooperation Office in Serbia
- Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH in Serbia

#### **Academic institutions**

## **Annex II**

### **List of documents reviewed**

#### **Strategies**

- Strategy on Economic Migration of the Republic of Serbia for the Period 2021 – 2027 (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia No. 21/2020-45*)
- Strategy for Combating Irregular Migration in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2018-2020 (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia No. 105/2018*)
- Strategy for Integrated Border Management for the Period 2017-2020 (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia No. 9/2017*)
- Strategy to Prevent and Suppress Human Trafficking, especially Trafficking in Women and Children and Protection of Victims for the period 2017-2022 (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia No. 77/2017*)

#### **Laws and regulations**

- The Law on Conditions for Posting Employees to Temporary Work abroad and their Protection (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia No. 91/15*)
- Law on Foreigners (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia No 24/18 and 31/19*)
- Law on Employment of Foreigners (*Official Gazette RS, No. 128/14 and 113/17*)
- Law on Migration Management (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia No 107/12*)
- Law on National Qualifications Framework in the Republic of Serbia (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia No. 27/2018 and 6/2020*)
- Criminal Code of the Republic of Serbia (*Official Gazette No. 85/2005, 88/2005 - corr., 107/2005 - corr., 72/2009, 111/2009, 121/2012, 104/2013, 108/2014, 94/2016 i 35/2019*)
- Law on Border Control (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia No. 24/2018*)
- Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia No. 24/18*)
- Law on Prevention of Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing (*Official Gazette of RS No. 113/2017 and 91/2019*)
- Law on Central Population Register (*Official Gazette No. 17/2019*)
- Regulation on the Establishment of the Program in Support of Assisted Voluntary Return of Foreigners in the Period 2019-2021 (*Official Gazette No. 10/2019*)

- Regulation on criteria for determining priorities for accommodation of persons who have been granted the right to refuge or granted subsidiary protection and conditions of use of residential space for temporary accommodation (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia No 63/15, 56/18*)
- Standards for Provision of Services (psychosocial support, non-formal education and legal aid) to Asylum Seekers, Migrants and Refugees Accommodated in Asylum/Reception Centers in Serbia
- Decree on the manner of Inclusion in the Social, Cultural and Economic Life of Persons Granted Asylum (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia No. 101/16, 56/2018*)

### **Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)**

- Standard Operating Procedures of the Republic of Serbia for the Prevention and Protection from Gender Based Violence against People Involved in Mixed Migration: [https://serbia.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/SOP\\_brochure\\_ENG\\_web.pdf](https://serbia.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/SOP_brochure_ENG_web.pdf)
- Standard Operating Procedures for Protection of Refugee and Migrant Children: <https://www.unicef.org/serbia/media/1151/file/Standard%20operating%20procedures%20publication.pdf>

### **Other documents**

- Migration Profile of the Republic of Serbia for 2018: [http://www.kirs.gov.rs/media/uploads/Migracije/Publikacije/Migracioni\\_profil\\_2018.pdf](http://www.kirs.gov.rs/media/uploads/Migracije/Publikacije/Migracioni_profil_2018.pdf)
- Migration Profile of the Republic of Serbia for 2019: [http://www.kirs.gov.rs/media/uploads/Migracije/Publikacije/Migracioni\\_profil\\_Republike\\_Srbi.%20godinu.pdf](http://www.kirs.gov.rs/media/uploads/Migracije/Publikacije/Migracioni_profil_Republike_Srbi.%20godinu.pdf)
- Voluntary National Review of the Republic of Serbia on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development : <https://serbia.un.org/sites/default/files/2019-08/VNR%2C%20eng.pdf>
- Report on the Inclusion of Indicators in the Context of Migration-Specific and Migration-Related Targets of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be Reported through the Migration Profile of the Republic of Serbia, Yulian Tsolov, UNDP, SDC, IOM 2017
- Report on the Preparation of National Indicators for Asylum Seekers and Persons Granted Asylum in the Republic of Serbia within UN 2030 Agenda and SDGs, Yulian Tsolov, Commissariat for Refugees and Migration of the Republic of Serbia