

# Second Regional Review of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Region

## Indicative set of questions for UNECE Member States and stakeholders to prepare for the Regional Review

The UN Network on Migration (Network) is proposing a set of questions to assist UNECE Member States and stakeholders in preparing for the second Regional Review of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), scheduled to take place on 11 March 2024 at the Palais des Nations, Geneva<sup>1</sup>.

In doing so, the Network builds on the findings and recommendations outlined in the summary report of the first Regional Review of the implementation of the GCM for Member States and with participation of relevant stakeholders of the UNECE Region<sup>2</sup>. The Network further takes into account the recommended actions to accelerate the implementation of the GCM as outlined in the International Migration Review Forum (IMRF) Progress Declaration<sup>3</sup>.

Member States and stakeholders are encouraged to prepare and submit feedback to the questions listed below. Considering the limited speaking slots during the one-day Intergovernmental Conference, Member States and stakeholders are encouraged to submit their written inputs **one week** ahead of the Conference (4 March 2024) to [GCMReviewsUNECE@iom.int](mailto:GCMReviewsUNECE@iom.int). The submissions will be posted on the [UN Network on Migration website](#).

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<sup>1</sup> Most updated Concept note and Agenda accessible here: <https://migrationnetwork.un.org/europe-and-north-america-2024>

<sup>2</sup> [unece - regional review of the gcm - summary report final updated.pdf](#)

<sup>3</sup> [A/RES/76/266](#)

**Response Form:**

<p>Member State <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Stakeholder<sup>4</sup> <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Name of agency or department: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of North Macedonia  Country represented: North Macedonia  Country active in (in case of stakeholder): _____  Name and title: Igor Djundev, Ambassador, Director for Multilateral Affairs</p>
<p>a. Has your government developed a GCM national implementation plan or integrated the GCM and its guiding principles into existing frameworks, plans and policies? If so, please elaborate on the process. If not, please indicate whether your government has plans to do so, and what the envisaged process is. (max. 500 words)</p> <p>The principles of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration have been integrated into the new Resolution on Migration Policy of the Republic of North Macedonia 2021-2025. When conceptualizing the Resolution of the migration policy for the period 2021-2025, the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia committed to designing a comprehensive, integrated, and consistent policy and remained committed to respecting the recommendations of international organizations, especially the International Organization of Migration, for the management of migrations, as well as the positive experiences of other countries. In addition, as a signatory to the Global Agreement on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), the Republic of North Macedonia was also guided by a comprehensive and multidimensional approach to improving migration management, illustrated by the 23 goals and the large number of proposed activities that enable adaptation the specifics of each country in the area of migration. The new Migration Policy Resolution 2021-2025 is based on the following basic principles that are correlated to GCM goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A comprehensive policy based on evidence, which has been developed in close cooperation with relevant partners. Implementation of a comprehensive and coherent national migration policy, conceived on the basis of relevant knowledge, with the participation of all government institutions and in close cooperation with the offices of international organizations in the country, as well as the engagement of relevant partners at the national and regional level (government agencies, scientific institutions, non-governmental organizations, etc.).</li> <li>- Respect for international standards, human rights, and protection of migrants according to international law, especially for vulnerable categories of migrants, and international standards related to migrant workers. This principle also implies the suppression of xenophobia, racism, and discrimination, as well as the incorporation of gender equality in migration policy.</li> <li>- Respecting the specifics of legal and illegal migration, especially the changes in the volume and structural characteristics of migrants, its conditionality and impact on socioeconomic development, as well as the necessity of applying appropriate (adapted) approaches in the management of migration processes.</li> <li>- Addressing the socio-economic needs of the country. Support of labor migration (temporary and circular migration), inclusion of migration in development processes (by reducing the costs of transferring foreign exchange remittances and their productive use) and encouraging brain-gain. Integrating new migrants and reintegrating returnees, as well as ensuring access to health and social services for all migrants.</li> </ul>

<sup>4</sup> As defined in the GCM Resolution para 44: migrants, civil society, migrant and diaspora organizations, faith-based organizations, local authorities and communities, the private sector, trade unions, parliamentarians, National Human Rights Institutions, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, academia, the media and other relevant stakeholders

- Access to legal migration through transparent and efficient application of migration legislation and implementation of an efficient visa regime. Ensuring regular channels for migration in accordance with the national development policy. Collecting reliable and timely information on migration flows and disseminating appropriate information on migration policies and procedures so that migrants can make decisions based on relevant information. Ensuring reliable, flexible, and cost-effective access to services for migrants.
- Coordination of migration policy with sectoral policies and other strategic documents of the Republic of North Macedonia in the field of migration.
- A policy that is adaptable and can respond to challenges in times of crisis (caused by natural disasters, health, and other reasons), that is, to mitigate the risks associated with mass migration flows. In this regard, the interaction of the migration policy with the policies related to crisis management is of special importance.

In addition, the Resolution on migration policy of North Macedonia and its Action Plan, which covers specific areas/aspects in the area of legal and illegal migration, make a direct connection between the foreseen measures and activities with the specific GCM goals (several examples):

- Strategic area 3: MANAGEMENT OF LEGAL MIGRATION, specific objective 5. Minimizing adverse drivers and structural factors that force people to leave their country of origin permanently, is in direct correlation with GCM Objective 2,
- Strategic area 3: MANAGEMENT OF LEGAL MIGRATION, specific objective 7. Encouraging return flows, developing skills, and facilitating mutual recognition of skills, qualifications, and competences, is in direct correlation with Correlation with GCM / Objective 18,
- Strategic area 4: CONTROL AND MANAGEMENT OF ILLEGAL MIGRATION, specific objective 17. Strengthening the capacities of integrated border management for efficient and effective securing of the state border and dealing with mixed migration movements, is in direct correlation with GCM Objective 11,
- Strategic area 5: BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION, specific goal 20. Strengthening international cooperation and global partnerships for safe, orderly, and regular migration, is in direct correlation with GCM Goal 23.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, i.e. the Department for Border Affairs and Migration, which has its own competences in border operations and migration, has been working for the past period to transform, advance and improve the work capacities, in accordance with the Schengen standards and the exchange of the best European practices. The European Commission, through its own projects and with expert assistance, significantly supports and helps policies for investment and development of institutions' capacities. Of particular importance for the work of the border police are the adopted Resolution on the migration policy in the Republic of North Macedonia 2021-2025, the Migration Profile in the Republic of North Macedonia from 2021, as well as the National Strategy for Integrated Border Management adopted in November 2022.

The border police has the authority to carry out border checks, supervision and control of irregular migration, illegal crossing of the state border and stay in the territory of the country, and to detect and prevent cross-border crime. The National Coordination Center for Border Management is responsible for "coordinating activities and facilitating the exchange of data and information between state authorities that have competences in border management." The Standard Operating Procedures are important documents for the work of the border police, but also for other institutions working in the field of migration. They contain the instructions for dealing with unaccompanied children – foreigners; and the Standard Operating Procedures for dealing with vulnerable categories of persons, foreigners, for which the text is being revised, it is in a working version and yet to be adopted. Substantial progress in the work is represented by the SOPs for identification of migrants,

SOPs for dealing with unaccompanied children - foreigners, SOPs for dealing with a vulnerable category of persons - foreigners, SOPs for victims of human trafficking.

The promotion of policies for the residence of foreigners and the readmission of foreigners, the visa regime and the visa policy, as well as the opportunities for inclusion and social cohesion of foreigners is an important part of the Resolution on the migration policy in the Republic of North Macedonia 2021-2025. Improving the established asylum system and increasing its efficiency and effectiveness are assumptions and investments for better development of skills and facilitating the recognition of skills, qualifications and competences are part of the strategic goal.

b. How has or will your government integrate the recommended actions to accelerate the implementation of the GCM as set out in the IMRF 2022 Progress Declaration into their relevant national policies and plans and reflected in their engagements in relevant international fora (e.g. High-Level Political Forum, Regional Forum for Sustainable Development, COP Climate Change Conference, etc.)? Furthermore, please indicate how the whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches were implemented and/or advanced in this regard. **(max. 500 words)**

The actions that the Government has taken to accelerate implementation of the GCM as set out in the IMRF 2022 Progress Declaration into their relevant national policies and plans and in their engagements in relevant international fora are the following:

1. Enhance data collection and exchange in line with the EU and international standards. In addition to the developed Migration Profile of North Macedonia and Migration Governance Index 2021, in 2023 the State Statistical Office of North Macedonia has piloted the first ever Migration Module in the Labour Force Survey. The survey report included information and data (for both men and women) about the reasons for emigration, education, employment status, countries of destination and reasons for the return of country nationals and other.

More than 500 government officials from various institutions have built their capacities and systems for effective and comprehensive migration data collection, exchange, analyses, and alignment with the EU standards. The focus of the trainings was on usage of futures and foresight methodologies and big data for policy development, and remittances. The government has access to migration data collected through the IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix Initiatives to track mobility and evolving needs of the population groups on the move.

2. Enhance development impact on migration, in particular through collaboration with the Diaspora, initiatives for productive usage of remittances, transfer of know-how from Diaspora and other actions.

The government supported the diaspora engagement initiatives, that involved return of highly skilled diaspora for transfer on knowledge and skills, capacity building for development of diaspora engagement initiatives among the national and local authorities. Also, 169 government officials from various institutions built their capacities and systems on the subject of remittances, with a focus on comparative analysis of remittances and opportunities to collect information on remittances through research.

3. Enhance the legislative framework and procedures for employment of foreigners.

The governments of North Macedonia, Serbia and Albania signed Protocols for Free Access to the Labor Market in the countries of the Open Balkans, for free access or citizens to the labor market in these countries, starting from March 2024. In addition, review of the Law on employment and work of foreigners have been initiated and its level of alignment with the EU acquis.

4. Collaboration and mainstreaming the migration policy with other sector policies to boost the implementation of the GCM objectives and Resolution of Migration Policy 2021 – 2025.

The government has incorporated the migration aspects in the newly developed National Development Strategy (NDS) 2022-2042 that is expected to be adopted in 2024. Areas such as outmigration, brain drain, diaspora engagement and others have been included in the NDS.

5. Enhance stakeholder engagement and migrants' inclusion in GCM implementation, follow-up, and review.

The government institutions play active role of the UN Network on Migration (UNMN) in North Macedonia, and its actively involved in the follow-up and reviews of the GCM implementation through regular provision of status reports. The international organizations and NGOs that work with migrants also contribute to the process of preparing the GCM implementation reviews.

c. Please list some examples of achievements, promising practices and lessons learned that relate to national, inter- and sub-regional collaboration to the implementation of the GCM. **(max. 500 words)**

On national level, the Government of North Macedonia has established inter-governmental body for development and implementation of the Resolution on Migration Policy and its Action Plan that assured GCM objectives correlation to specific objectives set in the policy document.

At the regional level, the Republic of North Macedonia continuously nurtures bilateral and international cooperation in the field of migration, and remains committed to building new partnerships. As a signatory country to the Global Agreement for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, North Macedonia strives to intensify international cooperation with the aim of mutual assistance and support in the process of implementing this agreement. Building these partnerships is also very significant in terms of providing accurate and timely information at all stages of the migration process. North Macedonia has established partnerships with the United Nations and with other regional and international organizations in the implementation of the goals of the Global Compact on Migrations-United Nations. They provide support to the state in its implementation, through the increase of international and regional cooperation, as well as in the implementation of the Agenda for Sustainable Development 2030.

Through the project "Regional support for migration management aimed at protecting the rights of migrants in the Western Balkans and in Turkey", financed through the IPA 2 program, and implemented in partnership between IOM, Frontex, EASO and UNHCR, regional cooperation in the direction of achieving safe, orderly and regular migration. The project, through the foreseen activities, contributes to the achievement of several goals of GCM.

In November 2022, the new Strategy for Integrated Border Management was adopted, in which special attention is given to the strengthening of partnership, stability, economic growth, but also to the reduction of security risks, especially with regard to the suppression of illegal migration and cross-border crime, but also the cooperation of all institutions that are part of the IBM (integrated border management). In order to further strengthen the work capacities of the Border Police, the Ministry of the Interior in partnership with representatives from Slovakia and Slovenia has been implementing the twinning project "Harmonization of national systems with EU and Schengen border management requirements", supported by the EC, since 2018. The project is based on two components: 1. Preparation of a Roadmap for the adoption of legislation related to Schengen, upgrading of the

legislation in the area of integrated border management and preparation of the Schengen Action Plan, and 2. Strengthening of administrative and technical capacities in the area of integrated border management. This project builds on previous projects from the EC - CARDS I Twining programs and ensures continuity in creating sustainability in border management in an integrated, secure manner.

At the same time, the national, interregional and sub regional cooperation of the border police is not excluded. The European Border and Coast Guard Agency - Frontex is significantly present in the work of the border police in the Republic of North Macedonia. Its institutional capacities and expertise have a strong influence in strengthening the capacities of domestic institutions and in supporting regional projects related to more effective integrated border management (new Status Agreement was signed with Frontex in 2022). On April 19, 2023, the Frontex Joint Operation JO North Macedonia 2023 began, which meant the official end of the international operation on the southern border that began in 2015 and which in the past 8 years has become a true example of effective operational cooperation. An additional benefit from the Joint Operation is the possibility of continuous exchange of experiences and knowledge with police officers from the so called "Standing Corps" of Frontex and also from EU Member States, as well as the fact that the realization of such an operation is a confirmation that the border police works in accordance with EU standards and with respect for fundamental rights.

North Macedonia has bilateral cooperation agreements with other countries in order to prevent the smuggling of migrants. There is a regular exchange of information and cooperation between the working group in the Ministry of Interior and other countries to implement effective measures to combat migrant smuggling and organized crime. The working methodology of the border police is based on continuous contacts with the police from each of the neighboring states and from the countries along the migrant route. Direct cooperation with neighboring countries is usually achieved through joint border centers. The exchange of information and data is through regular contacts at all three levels and through the JCC for police cooperation (with the competent services of neighboring countries) and through the use of common platforms for the exchange of information, meetings, participation in international events, forums and initiatives and regular video conference meetings (with EU agencies and competent services of other countries, including neighboring ones).

In January 2024, North Macedonia, Serbia and Albania signed Protocols for Free Access to the Labor Market in the countries of the Open Balkans, which will enable free access of their citizens to the labor market in these three countries from March 2024. This correlates to Objective 5 of the SDG "Enhance availability and flexibility of pathways for regular migration" as well as with Objective 23 "Strengthen international cooperation and global partnerships for safe, orderly and regular migration".

d. What are the main gaps and challenges in existing inter- and cross-regional collaboration on the implementation of the GCM? **(max. 500 words)**

1. There is a need to further strengthen cooperation to address smuggling of migrants and trafficking in human beings

The migration situation in the Western Balkans remains complex, testing institutional capacities, particularly in the context of mainstreaming protection and combatting smuggling of migrants and trafficking in human beings. Migrants and asylum seekers undertaking risky journeys along the Eastern Mediterranean Route are vulnerable to violence, exploitation, and abuse – with increased risks for minors and women. As the Western Balkans continue to experience mixed migration flows, all efforts must be made towards leveraging risks and vulnerability analyses to improve identification of migrants in vulnerable situations and inform operational response.

Effective prevention, prosecution and protection strategies can only be achieved through partnerships, including operational and judicial cooperation, as well as rights-based and victim-centered approaches. Institutions must have the tools, knowledge, and resources to enable rapid action and exchange of information. Due to the transnational, poly criminal and ever more sophisticated nature of these crimes, steps towards enhancing cooperation mechanisms for smuggling and trafficking prosecution and victim-centered investigation have been identified.

2. There is need to increase access to regular pathways to harness the potential of migration

Regular pathways can sustainably address challenges related to irregular movements and help harness the benefits of migration and human mobility. The potential benefits for North Macedonia and Western Balkans partners include more effective and selective processes through which the rights of the persons and the interest of the receiving community can both be served. While regulatory frameworks are in place to facilitate labour mobility and help employers attract and retain workers in key sectors, administrative barriers and gaps in migration statistics or labour market analysis continue to hinder workers recruitment in the region. In this context, adopting and implementing measures to address labour market needs through regular pathways can positively contribute to shift regional migration dynamics.

Advancing rights-based actions to expand access to regular pathways for vulnerable categories, including unaccompanied or separated children, victims of trafficking or gender-based violence, will require effective and individualized case determination processes and optimized use of existing regulations.

3. To support progress towards a holistic return management approach

As mixed migration movements become an enduring feature in the Western Balkans, cooperation to facilitate the return of migrants to their countries of origin emerges as a key policy area. In the Western Balkans, concrete steps have been taken to further operationalize return processes, and to discuss regionally coherent return systems and practices as applicable. However, complying rights-based and process-driven systems and procedures for effective return management frameworks implies further actions and cooperation between Western Balkans partners.

e. Outline areas (GCM objectives and/or guiding principles) where the region would benefit from strengthened cooperation in terms of finance, capacity-building, policy advice, data gathering and analysis, technology, multi-stakeholder partnerships, etc. (max. 500 words)

In relation with Skopje Declaration adopted during the Sustainable Governance in the Western Balkans conference in 2022 and its 2023 Sarajevo Action Plan the following areas (GCM Objectives) where the region would benefit from strengthened cooperation in terms of finance, capacity-building, policy advice, data gathering and analysis, technology, multi-stakeholder partnerships are identified:

GCM Objective 1: Collect and utilize accurate and disaggregated data as a basis for evidence-based policies.

GCM Objective 2: Minimize the adverse drivers and structural factors that compel people to leave their country of origin.

GCM Objective 5: Enhance availability and flexibility of pathways for regular migration.

GCM Objective 7: Address and reduce vulnerabilities in migration.

GCM Objective 9: Strengthen the transnational response to smuggling of migrants.

GCM Objective 10: Prevent, combat, and eradicate trafficking in persons in the context of international migration.

GCM Objective 16: Empower migrants and societies to realize full inclusion and social cohesion.

GCM Objective 17: Eliminate all forms of discrimination and promote evidence-based public discourse to shape perceptions of migration.

GCM Objective 18: Invest in skills development and facilitate mutual recognition of skills, qualifications, and competences.

GMC Objective 19: Create conditions for migrants and diasporas to fully contribute to sustainable development in all countries.

GCM Objective 20: Promote faster, safer, and cheaper transfer of remittances and foster financial inclusion of migrants.

GCM Objective 23: Strengthen international cooperation and global partnerships for safe, orderly and regular migration.

Any other comments or inputs

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Please return this form to [GCMReviewsUNECE@iom.int](mailto:GCMReviewsUNECE@iom.int) by 4 March 2024.