

**Interdepartmental Review
of the
Swiss Migration Partnership Strategy for the
Western Balkans 2016-2019**

April 2019

Author: Alexandra Sagarra

Executive Summary

Background

In light of increasingly globalised migratory flows Switzerland pursues a comprehensive approach to migration encouraging cooperation with partner countries and close collaboration among the competent federal administration offices (WOGA). Migration partnerships with individual countries are one of the successful tools employed to implement Switzerland's foreign policy on migration.

Building on a long history of bilateral cooperation in the Western Balkans region, Switzerland has concluded migration partnerships with Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Kosovo. With six areas of intervention and a budget of more than CHF 10 million, the Swiss Migration Partnership Strategy for the Western Balkans 2016-2019 stands as the interdepartmental strategic framework of reference for migration partnerships in the region.

At the end of 2018, an interdepartmental review of the Swiss Migration Partnership Strategy for the Western Balkans 2016-19 took place. It was designed as a participatory internal process to learn from experience and to determine which follow-up modality could improve future cooperation on migration in the region. A four step approach was developed to achieve this: data research; field work; interdepartmental peer review; and validation by management.

Findings, Lessons Learned and Recommendations

The review team established that the Strategy 16-19 successfully embodies the three principles that form the basis of Switzerland's comparative advantage in migration: the partnership model; close interdepartmental cooperation (WOGA) and a comprehensive approach to migration. The Strategy 16-19 also brings additional value to national strategies by approaching migration from a regional perspective, with much-needed flexibility in terms of geographical focus, thematic priorities and allocation of funding.

Its areas of intervention are in line with partner countries' needs and priorities. The first two objectives of the Strategy 16-19 have been met, while progress on achieving objective three is less clear: On one hand, partner countries are better equipped to handle domestic migration policy challenges and make use of the development potential of migration, while Swiss foreign migration policy interests have been asserted and WOGA promoted. On the other hand, regional cooperation has remained insufficient. In spite of the availability of funding and functioning regional platforms, without national ownership and a commonly shared agenda, regional cooperation remains a challenge.

The role of the strategy and its ownership was unclear for some; it is used by SEM and Swiss representations in the region (e.g.SDC). However, when used proactively, it has proved to increase the visibility of migration and WOGA.

Migration partnerships and the areas of intervention they cover in the region should continue, with a special focus on migration dialogues to foster the two prerequisites for regional cooperation: national ownership and a common agenda for the countries in the region. WOGA must carry on in Switzerland and be promoted in partner countries.

A future document should retain its regional approach and flexible design; as well as be clear about the links, synergies and complementarities with other agencies.

Way Forward

Six possible scenarios were envisioned: no strategy at all; the status quo (a similar document to the present one); a lighter version of it; a full-fledge strategy (with detailed budget and an outcome oriented monitoring system); the integration into an existing Swiss national cooperation strategy; and a joint Swiss Western Balkans Strategy.

The review team recommends the light version, since it will not demand a disproportionate level of efforts from WOGA actors; it offers the benefits that the current Strategy has provided (e.g. regionality and flexibility); it could easily tackle the shortcomings highlighted in this review, while not overburdening SEM internal processes.

Management Response

Date: 25.06.2019

Subject: Management Response to the Interdepartmental Review of the Swiss Migration Partnership Strategy for the Western Balkans 2016-2019, conducted by Ms Alexandra Sagara

1. Introduction and main findings

The second strategy for the Swiss Migration Partnerships in the Western Balkans (hereafter “the strategy”) covers the period 2016-2019. An interdepartmental review of the Strategy took place with the aim to learn from experience, improve results at strategic level and determine a possible strategic follow up modality. The review was completed in April 2019 and shall be used to determine the main aspects of the next strategic framework for 2020-2023.

2. Overall response to the Report and Review Process

All the federal administration offices involved were very satisfied with the process of the review, the structure and quality of the report as well as the main findings. The work of the consultant added value to the process and the findings and recommendations will be used to develop the new Strategy 2020-2023. It is apparent that the regional aspect of the strategy is of high importance. This aspect has been reflected in four out of the nine recommendations.

The appreciation and thanks have been communicated to the consultant, Ms Alexandra Sagara. We also express gratitude to all the colleagues participating in this participatory internal process for their availability and contributions.

3. Response on the specific recommendations

Review findings and recommendation	Management response
<u>Migration partnerships:</u> <u>Recommendation 1</u> Migration Partnerships (MPs) should continue in the region. The areas of intervention are still valid and should be integrated in a future MP strategic framework.	<u>Agree</u> The MPs are the main instruments of Switzerland in the cooperation with Serbia, BiH and Kosovo in the field of migration and have so far proven effective. The areas of intervention cover the main aspects of migration management and continue to be valid. <u>Measures:</u> - The present MPs will continue and the corresponding dialogues be maintained. - The areas of intervention will be maintained, and, where necessary, refined. - Assess the possibility and value added of initiating dialogues and partnerships with

	further countries in the region.
<u>National and regional cooperation: Recommendations 2, 4, 5 and 7</u> R2: Migration dialogue platforms must remain the key tool to promote dialogue at national level and to foster regional cooperation (e.g. from national to regional level). As the context becomes more politicised, they offer a timely framework to shift the focus from operational discussions to policy concerns and to exchanges with experts.	<i>Agree on national level/partly agree on regional level</i> The migration dialogues are the main pillar of the MPs and will continue every 1-1,5 year. We agree that regional cooperation is essential and a big challenge at the same time. It needs to be assessed if the migration dialogues are the best platform to promote regional exchanges. Potentially, regional platforms would be more conducive. Discussions during migration dialogues take place on policy and operational levels; we see therefore no need to shift the focus as suggested. Experts from both sides participate at the meetings. It is not planned to invite external experts to the dialogues, however, expert knowledge shall be used where it can add value. <u>Measures:</u> - Concrete proposals for regional cooperation shall be identified and discussed during migration dialogues. In order to get a consensus on the options, a regional migration dialogue shall be considered as an additional measure. - Look into where expert inputs are needed and would be valuable.
R4: Follow the sequence “from national to regional” and coordinate both, since the first prerequisite for regional cooperation is national political commitment.	<i>Agree</i> <u>Measures:</u> - Develop concrete ideas and promote such possibilities for regional cooperation during bilateral dialogues.
R5: Identify common goals for the countries in the region, since the second prerequisite for regional cooperation is a commonly-shared agenda. Common goals should be sufficiently ambitious to ensure joint commitment, but specific enough to ensure tangible results. They should focus on knowledge sharing (e.g. expert level) and operational activities (e.g. define entry points with shared priorities and support programmes/projects in these areas).	<i>Agree</i> Topics of mutual interest for a regional dialogue have been identified through an assessment in 2018. They are: 1. Prevention of trafficking and smuggling and protection of victims; 2. return and reintegration; 3. diaspora contributions/cooperation; 4. circular/labor migration (Kosovo and BiH) <u>Measures:</u> - Identify concrete proposals for regional activities based on the common denominators identified, promote these during migration dialogues with the objective of obtaining the political commitment to implement these measures.

	- A possible regional activity are trainings offered for representatives of all countries of the region (as was done in 2015).
R7: Retain the regional dimension, but define the nature and level of ambition of regional cooperation.	Agree Migration as a regional issue requires a regional dimension when addressing it. As already mentioned, there are serious challenges at national level. The concept of regional cooperation is over-used and remains vague (including in Switzerland's strategic documents) <u>Measures:</u> - Make an assessment on what can realistically be done at this level. - Refine use of "regional cooperation" in future documents and discussions
<u>WOGA: Recommendation 3</u> A concerted and coherent approach by all federal agencies involved in migration, under the form of WOGA, should continue and be promoted in PCs. If the funding is available, additional links with FedPol should be promoted to tackle the challenges emerging from the Balkan route (e.g. internal security and migration).	Agree WOGA is one of the main strengths of CH and will be continued and promoted. At the migration dialogues, different ministries of both countries are usually represented. Furthermore, CH finances projects that promote WOGA in the PCs (for example the project MIMAK in Kosovo). Security aspects are increasingly important in the region. A possible increased involvement of FedPol needs to be discussed. <u>Measures:</u> - Evaluate possible new projects to actively promote WOGA in the partner countries (f.ex. Bosnia and Herzegovina). - Discuss a future increased involvement with Fedpol.
<u>Design and modality of the new strategy document: Recommendations 6 and 9</u> R6: Keep its broad and flexible design in terms of areas of intervention, country focus, financial allocation, and a wide definition of migration.	Agree We fully agree on the need of flexibility in emergencies that can arise any time. <u>Measures:</u> - Keep the next strategic framework broad and flexible and find the right balance between being broad and flexible vs having defined objectives and a possibility to measure and evaluate progress (see recommendation 9)
R9: If the follow-up modality is a strategic framework comparable to the current one or a full-fledged strategy, an outcome-oriented Monitoring and Evaluation system should be put into place to ensure that objectives are measurable (e.g. sub-	Partly Agree <u>Measures:</u> - We suggest to add a simple outcome-oriented monitoring and evaluation system

objectives at national level, qualitatively and/or quantitatively indicators).	as well as main objectives, means and indicators as an annex (for internal use only) - For external communication, CH objectives may be put in the context of the national goals.
<u>Coherence between documents:</u> Recommendation 8 Increase coherence between existing strategic documents (including reporting): Start by mapping the existing ones, update them to harmonise objectives, reorganise their architecture so they are linked and contribute to one another. Efforts should be made to clarify and be more explicit about the links, synergies and complementarities of the different Swiss agencies (e.g. improving the narrative rather than mentioning indirect budget contributions).	Agree <u>Measures:</u> - Conduct a mapping of the existing strategic documents (incl. reporting) and elaborate on how they are linked and contribute to each other.

4. Possible Scenarios and Way Forward

The consultant suggested six options regarding the elaboration of the next strategy.

On the two extremes, option 1 is to have no strategy, options 5 and 6 are to integrate migration into the existing Swiss national cooperation strategies or to develop a common Western Balkan strategy. These three options have been ruled out for the following reasons: We consider necessary to have an overall strategic approach to the region, including the regional approach, providing a framework of our engagement and a useful communication tool towards the partner countries. On the other side, options 5 and 6 would demand a significant increase of the resources dedicated to the development of the strategy. Furthermore, the contributions that aim directly at improving migration management in the region are small compared to the overall financial involvement of the other federal departments and risk losing their relevance when included in the existing Swiss strategies.

The further options suggested are to develop the next strategy similar to the current one (option 2), to develop a lighter strategy without a budget or monitoring/steering mechanism (option 3) or a strategic framework including a detailed budget and result framework (option 4).

We suggest a combination of these three options, which is to develop a light strategy (as suggested by the consultant), adding an indicative and flexible budget and define main objectives and indicators for each area of intervention. M&E mechanisms will complement the strategy and be developed for internal use.