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EU and Western Balkans agree new priorities for migration and asylum cooperation through 2030



EU and Western Balkan partners have endorsed new priorities for strengthening migration and asylum systems across the region, including joint work on returns, international protection, and crisis preparedness for the period 2027–2030. The commitments were agreed at a Regional Steering Committee meeting in Budva, Montenegro, bringing together the European Commission, all six Western Balkan partners, and programme implementing agencies Frontex, EUAA, IOM, and UNHCR.

Over two days, delegates reviewed progress under the current programme and endorsed workplan priorities across four areas: mixed migration, international protection, returns and alternatives to detention, and contingency planning. They also began consultations on priorities, expected impact, and activities for the next phase of the programme, covering 2027 to 2030.

The meeting took place against a backdrop of ongoing geopolitical challenges that have reinforced the relevance of regional cooperation on migration. Although the programme was first established over a decade

ago, its focus on building resilient border management and asylum systems in the Western Balkans remains as pertinent as ever.

The meeting was held under the EU-funded regional programme “EU Regional Support to Protection-Sensitive Migration Management Systems in the Western Balkans, Phase III,” funded through the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA). The programme supports Western Balkan partners in strengthening migration and asylum systems in line with EU and international standards as part of the EU accession process.

Over the past decade, the programme has contributed to more effective and rights-based border and migration management across the region, supporting capacities in border identification, registration and referral, asylum procedures, reception, returns, and contingency planning.

The Budva meeting brought together participants from across the Western Balkans alongside representatives of the European Commission (DG ENEST and DG HOME), the European External Action Service, and EU Delegations from the six Western Balkan partners. The programme’s implementing partners, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA), the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), also participated.

By fostering regional cooperation and joint ownership, the programme continues to support safe, orderly, and rights-based migration management systems that benefit people on the move, persons in need of international protection, host communities, and institutions across the Western Balkans.

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