

“Changing Realities of Migration and Asylum” – EMN Conference in Stockholm

On 15th November, the Swedish EMN National Contact Point hosted the National Conference on the topic “Changing Realities of Migration and Asylum” with the aim to identify recent trends and changing patterns of migration and asylum in the EU from a comparative perspective. Two representatives of the Croatian EMN National Contact Point attended the conference, as well as the representative of the Ministry of Interior.

The topic of the Conference was linked to the findings of two EMN studies – the 2017/2018 Study on the changing influx of asylum seekers and the 2018 Study on the impacts of visa liberalization.

At the beginning of the Conference Mikael Ribbenvik, Director General of the Swedish Migration Agency held the introductory presentation on the 2015 migrant influx, government’s actions during that time and changes in Sweden since.

Following the introduction, the first panel dealt with the results of EMN Study “Changing influx of asylum seekers” – National responses to the refugee situation in 2014 – 2016”. Speakers explained what has changed since 2015, and how new migratory trends influences various legal and policy changes in the Member States and at the EU level.

Swedish case study was presented by **Bernd Parusel** from the Swedish Migration Agency, **Julia Rutz** from International Organization for Migration in Vienna presented the case study of the Austrian situation, and **Johanna Väänänen** from Finnish Immigration Service in Helsinki, presented the Finnish case study. In all stated examples, there was a dramatic increase of asylum applications in the autumn of 2015, and then from 2016 until today the number has been decreasing. Legislative changes took place in each of these states, mostly involving temporary reducing the asylum standards to minimal EU standards.

The Second panel focused on different perspectives related to new realities in 2018. **Holger Fabian Sahl** from the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) held the presentation covering the migration situation at the external borders of the European Union and provided statistical data on migrants and information on different migrant routes to Europe. **Ms Margarita Kalaitzaki** from Greek Asylum Service in Athens talked about the changing refugee situation in Greece. **Laura Bartolini from IOM Rome** presented the Displacement Tracking Matrix, a flexible information system used by the IOM to capture and monitor displacement, collect data and track mobility. **Teddy Wilkin** from the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) presented the latest asylum trends in EU and provided statistical information about the secondary movements in EU.

Third panel focused on the results of the EMN study on visa liberalization. **Peter Van Costenoble** from the Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (CGRS) presented the Belgian case, and **Jonas Hols** from Swedish Migration Agency presented the Swedish case. They stated some challenges (high initial increase of asylum seekers, increased document fraud) and some positive impacts of visa liberalization (on tourism, on foreign trade, diplomatic relations, cooperation on readmission, political) in their countries.

Conference ended with a **panel discussion** with **Alice Petrén** a migration journalist from Radio Sweden, **Madeleine Seidlitz** from the Amnesty International and **Joacim Waara**, Policy advisor from the Region Västra Götaland. Some topics of discussion included the question of moral responsibility of the EU, criminalization of solidarity toward migrants, the question of brain drain from the

countries of origin. During this discussion MS Seidlitz reminded the participants of the enormous importance of the Global Compact for Migration and the New York protocol.