



EVALUATION BRIEF

31/01/2024

MID-TERM EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT “ADDRESSING MIXED MIGRATION FLOWS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS”

This evaluation brief presents a summary of the key findings, conclusions, and recommendations, as identified by the evaluator(s) for use by key stakeholders, including internally by IOM staff and externally by project partners. More details can be found in the full evaluation report.

Evaluation type:	External mid-term evaluation
Evaluator(s):	Srdjan Vujovic & Bojan Pavlovic, EBD International
Field visit dates:	06-11 November 2023
Final report date:	31 January 2024
Commissioned by:	IOM Mission in BiH
Managed by:	Jasna Panjeta, AVRR Coordinator

Evaluation purpose: This evaluation aims to assess project results and sustainability, providing recommendations based on progress and likely impact. This summative assessment not only informs internal stakeholders, such as IOM teams, about lessons learned and best practices but also offers donors a comprehensive analysis of the project's impact, allowing various stakeholders to assess progress, organizational effectiveness, and the project's relevance and accountability to intended beneficiaries.

Evaluation criteria: Relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability

Evaluation methodology: Document review (120+ documents); Interviews with 47 individuals, including institutional partners, beneficiaries, donor and IOM representatives; 5 Focus Group Discussions, and On-site direct observation.

PROJECT SUMMARY

Since the beginning of 2015, the Western Balkans (WB) region has emerged as a major crossroads for migrants attempting to reach the EU. Migrants arrivals in 2022 saw a substantial uptick of nearly 60% across the region compared to 2021, while fast changes in the context also challenged the adequate response.

The overall objective of this project is **to ensure that vulnerable migrants in the WB are better protected and have access to safe and dignified return assistance**, through the following project outcomes:

Outcome 1: The project is utilizing IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) tools to **systematically collect and analyze migration movements data, providing crucial information on migrants' locations, profiles, vulnerabilities, and needs**. This enhanced data empowers national institutions and humanitarian actors to improve risk profiling, protection-sensitive responses, and overall management of humanitarian and migration efforts, contributing to a unified and systematic assessment of current migrant flows.

Outcome 2: The project enhances protection-sensitive **assistance to migrants in transit by increasing accommodation and reception capacities** in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Kosovo* and Montenegro. This involves supporting existing facilities, providing migrants with access to essential services, and addressing COVID-19 challenges within the migrant and refugee response.

Project information:

Geographical coverage:	Western Balkans
Project type:	Migrant response
Project code:	DP.0970
Gender marker:	0
Project period:	1 December 2021 - 30 November 2025
Donor:	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Justice of Norway
Budget:	37,500,000.00 NOK

Outcome 3: In BiH, Kosovo*, Montenegro and Serbia, the project aims to **facilitate Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR)** by offering information, counselling and outreach to migrants, enabling informed decisions and access to return pathways. By identifying vulnerable migrants in need of protection, the project aligns with IOM's mission to ensure safe, secure, and dignified migration.

Outcome 4: In addition to emergency response efforts, the project contributes to **building social cohesion** in target communities in BiH's entity of Republika Srpska, by supporting projects improving health and social services structures. Grants are available for small-scale initiatives enhancing social cohesion, community dialogue, and awareness of migrants' experiences.

The project was initially planned for a 24 months duration, and later extended, with additional funding, to 48 months.

KEY FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS

The evaluation concluded that the project has been highly successful in meeting its intended goals and positively impacting the response to mixed migration throughout the Western Balkans.

Relevance: The project demonstrated high relevance, as the majority of activities directly contributed to the overarching objectives. The project attained an alignment score of 9.5/10, signifying a strong link between the activities and intended outcomes. Stakeholders satisfaction was notably high once informed about project components, ensuring that the project aptly addressed diverse needs.

Coherence: The coherence of the project with IOM's ongoing programs and strategic directions was significant. The project interventions were well integrated with IOM's thematic areas, with all outputs designed to complement and enhance the impact of other initiatives. The project demonstrated a strong commitment to aligning not only with national policies and IOM guidelines but also with IOM strategies at both sub-regional and country levels, in addition to emphasizing alignment with national strategies. This underscored the project's strategic integration.

Effectiveness: The evaluation highlights the project's exceptional management of complexities, surpassing expectations with its responsive and beneficiary-centered approach. Stakeholder satisfaction, from individuals, and institutional partners to donors, underscores the project's transformative impact and successful outcomes achieved within set timeframes. Noteworthy adaptability to economic challenges, political tensions, and dynamic migrant flows further exemplifies the project's commitment to responsiveness and impactful execution.

Efficiency: The project exhibited remarkable efficiency in resource utilization, with minimal variance between actual and projected costs. Stakeholder satisfaction with time management and project execution was rated at the highest levels, indicating effective use of time and expertise.

Impact: The project made significant strides, denoting positive changes in both institutional practices and individual beneficiaries' lives. The intervention showcased robust impact, with no significant negative or unintended effects detected. Measures taken to mitigate potential risks were effective, enhancing the overall value of the project.

Sustainability: The engagement levels from stakeholders and their involvement in the project's lifecycle were notable, with high satisfaction reported. However, the sustainability of the project outcomes raised concerns regarding the preparedness of partners to continue activities without IOM's direct involvement, especially post-2025.

GOOD PRACTICES

The evaluation highlights several good practices identified in the project implementation, including the importance of planning project flexibility for fast-changing contexts and involving donors directly in achieving project goals. Practices like collaboration with NGOs and CSOs, matching protection and AVRR activities, and a sensitive approach toward institutional partners are also emphasized as crucial practices with a high potential to contribute to the project goals.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Enhance project coordination by developing a digital interactive platform for two-way information exchange, ensuring stakeholder access to project details, alignment with national strategies, and transparent communication.
2. Establish a sustainability roadmap, integrating continuous project monitoring, fostering ownership among stakeholders, aligning project outcomes with national strategies, and implementing risk mitigation and contingency planning.
3. Prepare for project phase-out by developing comprehensive phase-out plans, engaging non-governmental partners, emphasizing evidence-based decision-making, and facilitating knowledge transfer to local institutions.
4. Strengthen monitoring mechanisms for Social Cohesion outputs, focusing on assessing the impact of mini-projects, gathering beneficiary feedback, and understanding the application of enhanced capacities.
5. Clearly define the role of the social cohesion component in contributing to project impact and sustainability, including follow-up meetings, donor acknowledgment, collaboration with partners, and setting clear expectations for their contributions.