

A decorative graphic consisting of a grid of grey dots of varying sizes, with several dots highlighted in red. The dots are arranged in a pattern that roughly outlines the shape of the map of Europe.

# Managing migration – the OSCE's response

**DAVID BUERSTEDDE**  
December 2016

## Foreword

There can be no doubt that the refugee crisis possesses a security dimension. Armed conflicts with scant prospect of speedy resolution are driving people to seek refuge abroad. Their growing numbers represent an enormous challenge for a string of states – from the immediate neighbourhood with its gigantic refugee camps through the transit countries to the Member States of the European Union. What does this mean for the European security order and its central actors, first and foremost the United Nations (UN), the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union (CSDP) and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)? How does the crisis affect the German armed forces, facing increasing demands at home on top of growing obligations abroad? How does the refugee crisis alter the role and self-perception of the security institutions, and what influence does it exert on ongoing strategy processes?

The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung has asked renowned experts to analyse the impact of the refugee crisis on the UN, the CSDP, the OSCE and the German armed forces. The publication series started with »Caught in the Crossfire – United Nations Security and Policy Perspectives on the Refugee Crisis« by Claire Hajaj and Tuesday Reitano, published in June 2016. It had been followed by the analysis »New Thrust for the CSDP from the Refugee and Migrant Crisis on the EU's Common Foreign and

Security Policy (CSDP)« by Steven Blockmans, published in July 2016 and by the analysis in the role of the German armed forces »Schnelle Hilfe durch die Bundeswehr« by Hans-Peter Bartels (only available in German), published in September 2016.

The present – and last – analysis of the series looks at how the OSCE perceives its evolving role as an actor in the field of migration. Migration has so far not been central to the OSCE's political agenda, but in his analysis »Managing Migration – The OSCE's Response«, David Buerstedde describes how that may be about to change. OSCE participating States meanwhile agree that migration is a major security challenge – not only now, but also for the foreseeable future. Buerstedde provides an insight into the concrete and partly quite far-reaching proposals that have surfaced during discussions in an informal working group convened under the German OSCE Chairmanship this year. Against the backdrop of strong divisions on European security and divergent interests on the issue of migration, the December 2016 OSCE Ministerial Council in Hamburg, Germany, may not be in a position to provide strong impetus for an enhanced OSCE role in the management of migration in Europe. But the fact that OSCE has entered a structured debate now should be read as a strong indicator that migration will henceforth keep a prominent place on the Organization's political agenda.

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## 1. Introduction

Migration has emerged as an increasingly prominent issue on the OSCE agenda in light of the massive influx of refugees and migrants flooding into Europe. Yet this was not initially the case. Unlike specialised agencies such as the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) which undertook humanitarian efforts on the strength of their specific operational capabilities and expertise, the OSCE had no direct role in addressing the immediate challenges presented by the 2015/16 surge in the refugee and migrant flows in the OSCE region. The closest the OSCE came to frontline involvement was along the so-called Balkan route. Here, OSCE Field Operations, in particular the Mission to Skopje and the Mission to Serbia, monitored the impact of the migrant and refugee flows on the security, human rights and rule of law situation in their host countries and acted as a conduit of information between people on the move, citizens, civil society organisations and national authorities, including law enforcement agencies.

With the crisis in and around Ukraine occupying centre stage on the OSCE agenda last year, the OSCE foreign ministers who gathered in Belgrade in December 2015 for the annual Ministerial Council were not quite prepared to embrace the migration issue politically within the OSCE context, precluding the possibility of assigning any particular role to the Organization on that occasion. Given the OSCE’s diverse membership and the consensus rule for decision-making, a more visible, timely and strategic OSCE response to these unprecedented developments was simply not in the cards.

This position began to shift in 2016 with the realisation that the management of migration and refugee flows and their impact will be a defining global and European security challenge for many years to come. Following an internal stock-taking of existing OSCE migration-related activities and a comprehensive discussion within a dedicated format, OSCE participating States have developed greater awareness of the OSCE *acquis* covering migration and relevant OSCE expertise that could potentially help to address a variety of short-, medium- and long-term migration-related challenges. In anticipation of further guidance by the OSCE participating States, the OSCE Secretariat, Institutions and Field Operations have adapted their work on migration-related

issues, adding emphasis where this seems opportune and offering perspectives on possible future engagement in this area. They have done so in many ad hoc ways but keeping within their existing mandates and seeking synergies with relevant external partners along the way. There is now much broader understanding that the OSCE can and should contribute to addressing the challenges of migration. As a result, the OSCE’s role is likely to come into clearer focus in the coming months as the Organization defines its place alongside other multilateral actors.

## 2. Migration in the OSCE context

The impact of the current migrant and refugee flows on individual OSCE participating States is different from one to the other, but the political, social and economic repercussions are being felt throughout the entire OSCE area and carry significant risks for regional and global stability. Populist movements and nationalist political groups are spreading fear and xenophobia, polarising societies and making it even harder for European governments to find adequate, responsible and co-ordinated responses. People smuggling and trafficking of human beings continue to put individuals at great risk and provide organised crime with huge profits.

The 57 OSCE participating States and 11 Mediterranean and Asian Partners include key countries of origin, transit and destination. Among those most affected, Turkey is still hosting the world’s largest refugee population of more than 2.5 million people. Germany, among the preferred destination countries, has given refuge to over 1 million; Sweden and Austria have proportionately taken in slightly more in relation to the size of their population. Meanwhile, Greece, in the midst of an existential economic and financial crisis, continues to struggle with providing adequate accommodation for refugees and migrants who continue to arrive but are now barred from moving on to other destinations. Italy has recently seen a resurgence in the numbers of those arriving on its coastlines. In 2015, OSCE participating States along the so-called Balkan route processed hundreds of thousands of migrants moving across their borders. Since the closure of the border between Greece and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to most categories of refugees in February 2016 and the EU-Turkey deal in March, the influx has been reduced significantly, but refugees and

migrants resorting to people smugglers continue to find ways to circumvent border controls.

Within the geographic boundaries of an area stretching from Vancouver to Vladivostok, other migration flows remain significant. They are part of the overall picture, though much less discussed. Migration from Latin America to the United States and Canada has played hardly any role in OSCE debates. However, the influx of migrant workers from Central Asia into Russia has on occasion been raised as a concern, in particular since this movement has gone into reverse due to the economic downturn in Russia. Hundreds of thousands of migrant workers have in recent years returned to their countries of origin, depriving these economies of much-needed remittances and investment and adding fears to existing concerns about growing instability in parts of Central Asia. Most attention currently remains fixed on the Mediterranean and Balkan routes into Western Europe, as well as on the wars, political upheaval and crisis-prone areas in the Middle East and Africa. Even though OSCE participating States may have very diverse perspectives and experiences of the immediate impact of the phenomenon on their own societies, there is a growing sense that concerted efforts offer the best hope for managing the security issues related to migration and thereby maintaining security and stability across the region.

The first reference to migration in OSCE documents can be found in the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, which included a section on »economic and social aspects of migrant labor.« The 2005 Ljubljana Ministerial Council Decision on Migration<sup>1</sup> and the 2009 Athens Ministerial Council Decision on Migration Management<sup>2</sup> focused squarely on the effective governance of labour migration, which has since developed into an important part of the OSCE’s work.<sup>3</sup> However, labour migration is only one highly relevant area of OSCE engagement. The OSCE participating States have adopted commitments and the OSCE has accordingly developed specific expertise on migration-related issues such as human trafficking, cross-border criminal activities, border management and

police co-operation but also on protecting human rights and promoting tolerance and non-discrimination. The latter are particularly significant in order to ensure that responses are centred on the needs and rights of the individuals concerned. More broadly, the OSCE has a track record of working to address sources of insecurity that are the root causes of displacement and migration, including conflict, poverty and human rights abuses, but also climate change and environmental degradation. In various places, whether in the Western Balkans, the Southern Caucasus or parts of Central Asia, the OSCE has a long-standing track record of working with internally displaced people (IDPs) and refugees, supporting political frameworks and projects of reintegration and return.

### 3. Developing a shared perspective of the OSCE’s role

#### 3.1 Engaging in a structured debate

The German 2016 OSCE Chairmanship is pushing for an OSCE ministerial decision or declaration on migration at the OSCE Ministerial Council in Hamburg (8–9 December 2016) that would acknowledge the link between migration and security and could spell out the OSCE’s role in addressing migration-related challenges with greater clarity. At last year’s Ministerial Council in Belgrade, the OSCE participating States came close to agreeing on a ministerial declaration. Interest was high and the Serbian 2015 OSCE Chairmanship spared no efforts to build consensus in negotiations that continued to the very end but eventually proved unsuccessful. Apart from issues of substance, the overall political climate in the context of continued fighting in Eastern Ukraine played its part, but so too did completely unrelated matters that were thrown into the negotiation mix and could not be resolved in the final hours of the meeting. A stronger recognition of the multi-faceted challenges and a better understanding of existing OSCE engagement in migration-related areas might have helped participating States to tackle their remaining differences earlier in the negotiation phase.

The lesson from Belgrade was precisely that a more structured process for discussion would be needed to prepare the way for a more positive outcome the next time around. This process was kick-started by an OSCE Security Days event on »Refocusing Migration and Security –

1. OSCE, 2005, Ljubljana Ministerial Council Decision on Migration: <http://www.osce.org/mc/17339>

2. OSCE, 2009, Athens Ministerial Council Decision on Migration Management: <https://www.osce.org/cio/40711?download=true>

3. For more information on the OSCE’s work in support of labour migration governance, see: <http://www.osce.org/publications/migration>

Bridging National and Regional Responses» hosted by the Italian Foreign Ministry in Rome on 4 March 2016.<sup>4</sup> A Track II conference series introduced by OSCE Secretary General Lamberto Zannier in 2012, OSCE Security Days inject fresh perspectives into the OSCE security debate on emerging trends and priorities for OSCE action. The explicit purpose of the OSCE Security Days event in Rome was to launch a broad debate about the OSCE’s role in addressing migration-related challenges. Keynote speakers included President Gjorge Ivanov of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Professor Jeffrey Sachs, the United Nations Secretary-General’s Special Advisor on the Sustainable Development Goals.

In Rome, the German 2016 OSCE Chairmanship announced its intention to set up an *Informal Working Group Focusing on the Issue of Migration and Refugee Flows* (IWG). Chaired on behalf of the Chairmanship by the Swiss Permanent Representative to the OSCE, Ambassador Claude Wild, the IWG immediately took up its work, meeting seven times between 16 March and 27 June 2016. Reflecting the OSCE’s comprehensive approach, five main themes were explored during these meetings: protection, combating crime, border management, successful integration, solidarity and partnerships. The testimony of experts and subsequent discussions involved participating States, Partners for Co-operation, relevant thematic departments and units of the OSCE Secretariat, the OSCE Office on Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM), the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFoM), the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (PA), international partner organisations, NGOs, civil society and academia. In addition to oral presentations, written contributions to the process included non-papers by a number of Delegations, a paper by ODIHR, updates on trends and activities by OSCE field operations and Secretariat Units, including on gendersensitive and long-term perspectives on migration governance, along with a full compilation of migration-related activities of the OSCE Secretariat, Institutions and Field Operations. Briefings by IOM and UNHCR, as well as a number of think-tanks, were instrumental in informing the debate.

4. For an account of the proceedings, video footage, supporting documents and final report see URL: <http://www.osce.org/secdays/2016/migration-and-security>

Complementing the discussion in the IWG, other OSCE fora such as the three subsidiary consultative bodies to the Permanent Council (Security, Economic and Environmental, Human Dimension Committees) continued to debate migration and refugee issues. Along with other major OSCE events in these three dimensions of security, the OSCE’s 2016 Annual Security Review Conference, a three-day event for security dialogue, devoted a special session to migration. In June 2016, the Office of the Co-ordinator for OSCE Economic and Environmental Affairs (OCEEA) organised an expert meeting which aimed at defining priority areas for enhancing the OSCE’s long-term approach to migration governance from the perspective of the economic dimension of security.<sup>5</sup>

Migration has also been in the spotlight at OSCE PA meetings over the past two years. In February 2016, the OSCE PA’s General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions released a report entitled »Migration crisis in the OSCE area: towards greater OSCE engagement« that was also presented at a meeting of the IWG<sup>6</sup>. This publicly available report outlines key challenges facing the OSCE area and makes recommendations for OSCE participating States, Institutions and national parliaments. Given the Committee’s remit, it focuses mainly on humanitarian and human rights-centred responses.

Civil society also provided input through various channels. With support of the OSCE Chairmanship, experts from thirty civil society organisations as well as from OSCE bodies and institutions met in Berlin in February 2016 for an expert workshop on migration that was organised by the Civic Solidarity Platform, an advocacy network of civic groups from across the OSCE region. Though not officially connected to the OSCE, the Civic Solidarity Platform has become well-known for organising civil society conferences that run parallel to OSCE Ministerial Council meetings and for addressing recommendations centring on human rights to OSCE participating States and OSCE Institutions. Most recently, the platform presented its recommendations on migration and refugees at a side-

5. OSCE OCEEA, Key findings, Expert meeting on enhancing the OSCE long-term approach to migration governance: the OCEEA contribution, June 2016.

6. OSCE PA, Migration crisis in the OSCE area: towards greater OSCE engagement, February 2016: <https://www.oscepa.org/documents/all-documents/winter-meetings/2016-vienna-1/reports-1/3159-migration-crisis-in-the-osce-area-3rd-committee-thematic-report-feb-2016/file>

event of the September 2016 OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Warsaw.

### 3.2 From self-reflection to further action

Throughout this period of reflection, different parts of the OSCE family reacted to the migration and refugee challenge by flexibly refocusing some of their programmes and activities or by intensifying activities already clearly targeting critical issues, for instance in the OSCE’s labour migration portfolio. Without spelling out a detailed list of responses or proposals for further action, the following examples give a good indication of the substantive contribution the OSCE could make if a stronger involvement was endorsed by the OSCE participating States. This year, the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings carried out a number of fact-finding visits which took her to a temporary protection facility in Gaziantep, Turkey (May 2016) and a transit facility in Busmantsi, Bulgaria (June). Together with parliamentarians of the OSCE PA, she visited reception centres in Lampedusa and Catania, Italy, in June, and migrant and refugee hotspots in Greece (September). Her visits aimed at raising awareness and gathering first-hand impressions that will help her Office to support the early identification and protection of potential victims of trafficking in mixed migration flows. Meanwhile, the Transnational Threats Department has placed added emphasis on migration-related crime and trafficking in human beings in a number of its activities, strengthening cooperation with partner organisations, including the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, IOM, Interpol, Europol and Frontex. On border management, where the Secretariat is working on creating an informal platform for the exchange of good practices on a wide array of cross-border threats and challenges, migration will feature as a key challenge. Thinking has also gone into establishing migration response teams to deliver on-site training to border law enforcement agencies.

Among the specialised Institutions, ODIHR has developed proposals for mobile teams to monitor the human rights situation at borders and reception centres. On account of its extensive experience with migration governance, ODIHR has strong potential to contribute to a concerted OSCE response, including in promoting non-discrimination and the integration of migrants and refugees into host countries. The HCNM has begun to look at the potential

implications of large-scale movements of people on societies with national minorities. On the basis of OSCE commitments such as the 2012 *Ljubljana Guidelines on Integration of Diverse Societies*<sup>7</sup>, the HCNM tries to support participating States to implement policies that promote stability and good inter-ethnic relations. The RFoM has on various occasions issued public statements expressing concern about infringements of the rights of journalists to report on matters of public interest, in this case in relation to stories and commentary on migration or refugees.

Across the board, the expansion of numerous OSCE initiatives and projects to specifically cover migrants and refugees can be envisaged. For example, the Secretariat’s Gender Section is considering establishing mentoring networks for migrant and minority women modelled on previous initiatives for women entrepreneurs in Southeastern Europe. In many cases, the OSCE Missions to Serbia and Skopje play a crucial role in the delivery of programmes and projects on the ground.

Raising awareness about current activities and possibilities for future action has been an integral part of the discussion within the framework of the IWG and in other OSCE bodies, which significantly contributed to a *prise de conscience* of the breadth of existing OSCE mandates in areas strongly related to migration (labour migration, border management, countering transnational threats and human trafficking, human rights protection, tolerance and non-discrimination). It also fostered awareness that on the basis of its comprehensive concept of security, the OSCE would be particularly well-placed to promote a holistic approach that treats the safety of people on the move and the security of states as mutually supportive goals.

The outcome of the IWG deliberations was summarised in a report by Ambassador Wild, presented to a special session of the OSCE Permanent Council on 20 July. The report, which is not a consensus document, is an important reference for internal discussion but has also attracted interest outside the OSCE and been shared with key partner organisations. It provides an overview of what the OSCE is already doing under existing mandates and advocates a comprehensive role. Its recommendations,

7. OSCE HCNM, *Ljubljana Guidelines on Integration of Diverse Societies*, 2012: <http://www.osce.org/hcnm/96883>

fifty in total, propose concrete actions at the political, institutional and technical levels, actions and measures on how the OSCE could contribute to more effective governance in current and future contexts of migration and refugee flows affecting the OSCE area. They are directed at the participating States as well as at the OSCE Secretariat, Institutions and Field Operations, which are called upon to study them carefully in terms of feasibility and consistency with existing mandates. The list of recommendations is not exhaustive; further ideas are certain to emerge. In some cases, recommendations are already being implemented but consideration could be given to strengthening relevant activities. Not all proposed actions require additional financial and staff resources but many do. Synergies as well as risks of duplication with other organisations will need to be considered. In terms of timelines for implementation, short, medium and long-term objectives need to be identified. Finally, many proposed actions require different organisational units to work in close synergy within a joint framework of clearly defined roles.

The OSCE Secretariat, Institutions and Field Operations are currently carrying out an internal assessment of the recommendations, which is steered by an ad hoc working group set up within the Secretariat in early 2015 and has provided an internal platform for exchanging information on migration-related activities and assessing OSCE options for action. The working group also provided advice and support to successive Chairmanship efforts to encourage discussion at the level of participating States, in particular this year in relation to the IWG. It is chaired by the Director of the Office of the Secretary General and, at working level, co-ordinated through a focal point within this Office. One of the Wild Report’s recommendations is to replace this ad hoc arrangement with a more formal and dedicated support structure led by a Special Representative/Co-ordinator. From a Secretariat point of view, this person would ideally be working from within the Secretariat and endowed with the authority and some resources to strengthen internal coherence and external visibility, thereby enhancing the impact of OSCE migration-related activities.

### 3.3 Strengthening partnerships

Migration has become a key topic for dialogue with the OSCE’s Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation at regular Mediterranean Contact Group meetings in Vienna and the annual OSCE Mediterranean Conference. It is also a common theme in discussions with organisations strongly focused on the Mediterranean region, such as the Union for the Mediterranean and the League of Arab States. Opportunities for sharing expertise with the Mediterranean Partners are plentiful but not always taken up. One complicating factor is that the mechanisms to promote such co-operation could be more effective if the OSCE participating States would agree to simplify their modalities. For instance, the so-called Partnership Fund is mostly used to sponsor the participation of experts from OSCE Mediterranean Partner countries in OSCE events. Without the unanimous consent by the participating States, it cannot be used to support meetings in the Partner countries themselves and the financing of such meetings through the OSCE’s Unified Budget is also precluded.

One idea for visibly enhancing the Mediterranean Partnership foresees the establishment of some sort of OSCE Centre for Mediterranean Security that would focus on a range of cross-dimensional issues, including migration. Such a centre could take on a coordination role for OSCE activities targeting the Mediterranean Partner countries, reach out to stakeholders beyond OSCE circles and develop joint projects with other regional organisations, UN agencies and non-governmental actors, including by exploring private sector involvement and support. It could possibly be established in one of the Mediterranean participating States and provide a distinct platform for engaging the OSCE’s Mediterranean Partners (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia) through dialogue, research, training activities and project development.

The establishment of an OSCE Mediterranean Centre, broadly or narrowly defined, could provide an important impetus to stronger relations across the Mediterranean. The Italian Chairmanship of the Mediterranean Contact Group in 2017 and of the OSCE as a whole in 2018 is likely to further emphasise strengthening links across the Mediterranean region. One noteworthy OSCE project, »Combating Human Trafficking along Migration Routes,« launched in Vicenza, Italy, in June 2016 in co-

operation with the Italian *Carabinieri* and their state-of-the-art training centre, provides simulation-based training to enhance co-operation among border guards, police officers, prosecutors, labour inspectors, civil society representatives and other relevant stakeholders from the Mediterranean Region. Given the generally heightened interest in fostering closer relations, this project could portend further OSCE engagement with its Mediterranean Partners on a broad array of migration and non-migration related issues.

As always, the OSCE attaches great value to maximising complementarity and cooperation with regional and international organisations as well as non-governmental organisations. For many years now, the OSCE has forged close partnerships with multiple UN organisations, UN-affiliated and other international and regional organisations. During the meetings of the IWG, representatives of some of these organisations enriched the OSCE debate with their own perspectives, in particular on protection and legal issues. On these occasions, many clearly expressed support for an enhanced OSCE role on migration issues, pointing to the specific advantages of the OSCE as a regional security organisation that can promote better migration management over the longer term but can also play an important operational role.

In certain settings, such as Eastern Ukraine, for example, the OSCE co-operates closely with UNHCR. Due to its privileged access, the SMM can indicate particular humanitarian needs and protection issues and facilitate the provision of relief through relevant agencies. A joint protection checklist<sup>8</sup>, developed by UNHCR and the OSCE in 2014, has been successfully applied in this context and is also being used by different OSCE field operations to help OSCE staff identify the protection needs of vulnerable populations, including refugees, displaced persons, returnees, stateless persons, and persons at risk of displacement.

The OSCE’s role needs to be seen in the broader context of global responses to the phenomenon of migration and refugee flows. As a regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter and drawing on its cross-dimensional expertise, flexible toolbox, presence in the

field and strong links with the UN and other international and regional organisations, the OSCE is well-placed to support the regional application of guidelines developed at the global level. At the September 2016 UN Summit for Refugees and Migrants, OSCE Secretary General Lamberto Zannier focused his intervention on the added value that regional organisations can bring to sound global migration governance.<sup>9</sup> The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants<sup>10</sup> adopted by UN Member States on this occasion will become an important reference document for the OSCE as it seeks to define its role in support of effective multilateralism. Conversely, the OSCE can make a regional contribution to the discussions that will hopefully lead to the adoption of a Global Compact on refugees and a Global Compact for safe, orderly and regular migration in 2018.

#### 4. Looking ahead

The view that the OSCE has a role to play in contributing to a more effective management of migration and refugee flows has won increasing support among OSCE participating States. At an informal OSCE Ministerial Council meeting convened in Potsdam in September 2016 by OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier to discuss the current security environment in Europe, many participants described migration as a major security challenge now and for the foreseeable future. Several ministers advocated for a holistic and multi-dimensional approach that would see the OSCE combine its many tools to better integrate migration into its overall work. More significantly, perhaps, no objections to an OSCE role in addressing migration were voiced.


This autumn the Informal Working Group is moving into negotiation mode, discussing elements of a possible Ministerial Council decision or declaration on migration, in effect the first of the recommendations contained in the Wild Report. Ambassador Wild, who remains in charge of the dossier on behalf of the OSCE Chairmanship, will need to employ all his diplomatic skills to achieve a concrete result in a political context that remains complicated. The Hamburg Ministerial

8. OSCE and UNHCR, Protection Checklist – Addressing displacement and protection of displaced populations and affected communities along the conflict cycle: a collaborative approach, 2014, available at: <http://www.osce.org/cpc/111464?download=true>

9. For the OSCE Secretary General’s speech at this event, see: <http://www.osce.org/secretariat/265496>

10. Full text of the New York Declaration: <https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/declaration>





Council will offer an opportunity to give a political signal towards more firmly anchoring migration governance in the OSCE’s work. Internally, such a document would be a welcome source of political endorsement, while externally it would demonstrate to outside partners that the OSCE means business. Beyond reaffirming OSCE principles and commitments, it could serve to highlight the OSCE’s role and possible contribution to global efforts on the governance of migration and refugee flows.

As to whether OSCE participating States will agree to entrust the OSCE with specific new tasks related to migration by making use of the Organization’s conflict prevention capacities, field presences and human rights protection mechanisms, that remains to be seen. In case additional tasks for the OSCE’s Executive Structures are foreseen, adequate financial means and enhanced staff resources would need to be found. Given the repeated reductions in the resources available to the OSCE over the past few budget rounds, effectively doing more with less is no longer a workable formula. As respectfully but clearly communicated by the OSCE Secretary General during recent budget discussions, the scope for reprioritising activities is close to zero and would leave other important areas uncovered.

Judging the overall conflicted mood inside the OSCE, expectations that the Hamburg Ministerial Council might broaden the scope of OSCE engagement or give specific operational guidance may well be premature. A number of political stumbling blocks, including seemingly unrelated factors, could derail ministerial agreement. Some participating States will want to emphasise basic tenets and values, including solidarity and burden-sharing, while others may be reluctant to commit themselves. The role of IDPs as a target group of OSCE attention and activities is a regular complicating factor in many OSCE debates, from discussions on the OSCE’s capacities to address all phases of the conflict cycle to budget negotiations involving field operations in certain conflict areas. While some will want to see IDPs as an integral part of the wider challenge and one that should warrant specific mentioning, others prefer to keep IDP issues strictly limited to relevant formats dealing with the protracted conflicts in the OSCE area. The Wild Report incidentally names IDPs as an important issue which is, however, not covered by the scope of the IWG’s remit, which was exclusively concerned with the cross-border movements of people.

Even if there should be no tangible outcome in Hamburg, the OSCE Secretariat and Institutions will continue to strive towards more coherence in their migration-related activities and consolidate the work already undertaken over the past two years. Under the scrutiny and with the encouragement of respective subcommittees of the OSCE’s Permanent Council, they are likely to focus their follow-up action on those recommendations of the Wild Report that enjoy broad support and can be accommodated within current resources and will make use of further opportunities to strengthen the impact of existing OSCE migration-related activities. Even in the absence of consensus, the incoming Chairmanships – Austria in 2017 and Italy in 2018 – have some means to add emphasis and give direction.





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The opinions expressed are those of the author alone. The author is grateful to Sandra Sacchetti, Emiliano Alessandri and Mary Albon for their helpful comments and valuable advice.

### Imprint

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This publication appears within the framework of the working line »European Foreign and Security Policy«.  
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The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung or of the organization for which the author works.

This publication is printed on paper from sustainable forestry.



ISBN 978-3-95861-686-8