Policy Brief

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Overview

Do migration partnerships improve policy and institutional coherence? Do they help countries to promote the positive effects that migration can have while addressing its challenges constructively? Do they reflect an even balance of power between partner countries? Are they a potential model for bilateral cooperation on migration? These were some of the questions explored in a recent evaluation of the Swiss migration partnerships by researchers at UNU-MERIT and its School of Governance. The findings of the evaluation point to the added-value of migration partnerships as a tool for bilateral cooperation through their promotion of reciprocal relationships, policy and institutional coherence, and holistic approaches to migration.

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Swiss Migration Partnerships: A New Tool for Bilateral Cooperation on Migration?

The Swiss migration partnerships are an instrument of bilateral cooperation on migration between Switzerland and partner countries, which has evolved within the context of a broader shift towards promoting inter-ministerial cooperation through a 'whole-of-government approach to migration' in Switzerland.

In 2008, Switzerland incorporated the instrument of migration partnerships into its legal framework. Article 100 (1) of the Federal Act on Foreign Nationals stipulates: "the Federal Council shall encourage bilateral and multilateral migration partnerships with other states. It may conclude agreements to improve cooperation in the field of migration as well as to reduce illegal migration and its negative consequences."

Later that year, the Federal Office for Migration (FOM) and the HSD (the former Political Affairs Division IV) elaborated and published a concept note outlining the main characteristics of migration partnerships. In it, migration partnerships are defined as a flexible and individually adjustable set of initiatives put in place in order to mutually address the needs and interests of Switzerland and the respective partner country on a long-term basis but without a pre-defined time-frame. The following central objectives are emphasised:

- To recognise and integrate interests of all partners in order to ensure that every partner benefits;
- To ensure the coherence of Swiss migration policy towards the partner country;
- To promote the positive effects that migration can have and address challenges constructively;
- To encourage a degree of stability and good governance in the partner country.

A migration partnership can be negotiated as a legally binding agreement, thus an international treaty, or as a non-binding agreement, thus a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) (FOM & PA IV, 2008). As flexibility is a key characteristic of the concept, it is important that also the format can be decided on depend-

ing on the individual situation and requirements (Rittener et al., 2011).

To date partnerships have been signed with Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Serbia, Nigeria and Tunisia (see Table 1 for an overview of some key statistics of each of the partner countries). In 2014, UNU-MERIT and its School of Governance conducted an evaluation of the Swiss Migration Partnerships. This evaluation, which was conducted in response to a postulate from the Swiss Parliament, presents a timely opportunity to investigate the Swiss migration partnerships, five years after the signing of the first partnership.

Evaluation Objectives & Methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to provide the Swiss Federal Administration with an evidence-based, independent assessment of the results of the first five migration partnerships in order to draw lessons and highlight areas for future improvements and to provide information to an interested public audience. Four main research questions are addressed:

Table 1: Key Statistics: Countries with Migration Partnerships with Switzerland

	Bosnia & Herzegovina	Kosovo[1]	Serbia	Nigeria	Tunisia
Total area, sq km[a]	51,197	10,887	77,474	923 768	163,610
Population (July 2014 est.)[a]	3,871,642	1,859,203	7,209,764	177,155,754	10,937,521
Country classification by income group	Upper-middle	Upper-middle	Upper-middle	Lower-middle	Upper-middle
Human Development Index (2013), HDI[b]	0.731	0.786[c]	0.745	0.504	0.721
GDP per capita (2012), PPP, current international $[c]	9,393	8,146	11,900	5,217	10235
Unemployment rate (2012) (national or ILO* estimate), % of total labour force[c]	28.1	30.9	23.9	7.5*	12.8*
Poverty headcount ratio at national poverty line, % of population[c]	17.9 (2011)	29.7 (2011)	24.6 (2011)	46.0 (2010)	15.5 (2010)
Immigrant population (2010), % of population[d]	27,800 (0.7%)	-	525,400 (5.3%)	1,127,700 (0.7%)	33,600 (0.3%)
Main origin countries of immigrants	Croatia, Albania, Ukraine	Turkey, China, Albania	BA, Croatia, Montenegro	ECOWAS countries, Chad, Cameroon	Algeria, Morocco, France
Emigrant population (2010), % of population[d]	1,461,000 (38.9%)	400,000[f] (21.5%)	196,000 (2.0%)	1,000,000 (0.6%)	651,600 (6.3%)
Main destination countries of emigrants[d] (CH if in Top 10 Destination Countries)	Croatia, Germany, Austria, USA, Slovenia Switzerland 7th)	Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Austria, USA[g]	Austria, USA, France, Macedonia, Denmark[2]	USA, UK, Chad, Cameroon, Italy	France, Italy, Libya, Germany, Israel, (Switzerland 10th)
Main push-factors for emigration	• Young population • Lack of employment and education opportunities	• Young population • Lack of employment and education opportunities	• Young population • Lack of employment and education opportunities	• Lack of employment opportunities • Political instability • Environmental factors	• Lack of employment opportunities • Political instability
Other relevant factors	• Administrative structure complex • Aligning with the EU's acquis requirements • Large border with Croatia (entry point to EU, potential route for irregular migrants and traffickers)	• Newly formed independent state (awaiting global recognition) • Formation of a new government post-election	• Aligning with the EU's acquis requirements • Increasing numbers of asylum applications	• Boko Haram • Inter-ethnical conflicts • Upcoming elections	• Arab Spring • Upcoming Elections • ISIS • Lack of policy framework for immigration

Sources: [a]CIA, 2014; [b]UNDP, 2014a; [c]World Bank, 2014a; [d]World Bank, 2011; [e]UNDP, 2014b; [f]Docquier & Marfouk, 2007; [g]Elezaj et al., 2012.

(Footnotes)
1. Kosovo is not included in many official sources of statistics owing to its disputed sovereignty. Thus, alternative sources of data have been used.
2. Data for Serbians in Switzerland are not included in the World Bank Bilateral Migration Matrix.

1. To what extent are the interests and objectives of Switzerland but also of the partner country achieved?
2. What are the perceived outcomes of the migration partnerships?
3. Do the migration partnerships provide an equitable balance between the interests of the different actors?
4. To what extent is the impact hypothesis of the instrument of migration partnerships confirmed?

Semi-structured qualitative interviews with relevant stakeholders represented the key source of data for the evaluation. In total 118 interviews were conducted with 174 participants. Fieldwork was carried out in Switzerland and the five partner countries between July and September 2014. The interviews were supplemented by desk-based research.

Major Findings & Conclusions

The main research question addressed by the evaluation was: to what extent is the impact hypothesis of the instrument of migration partnerships confirmed? The impact hypothesis of the instrument is that migration partnerships give the possibility through mutual understanding and cooperation to find constructive solutions to the challenges posed by migration, to promote opportunities as well as to create synergies between the different actors involved in migration policy within each partner country. This is based on the central objectives emphasised in the partnerships (detailed on Page 1).

Balancing Interests

To confirm whether or not the migration partnerships recognise and integrate the interests of all partners, it is necessary to consider whether the migration partnerships provide an equitable balance between the inter-
ests of the different actors. In turn, to answer this, it is first important to understand what the interests of Switzerland and the partnerships are and how this is reflected in the technical cooperation portfolio. In order to make an objective assessment of the balance of power, stated interests but also omissions and compromises have to be considered. While the mandates of different ministries translate into different interests, there is general alignment in the collective interests of Switzerland with each of the partner countries. This is generally reflected in project implementation, which can be considered the concrete manifestation of interests. Some country specific differences reflect that the partnership can be adapted to the objectives set. However there is a general set of interests that are reflected in the portfolio of projects across all of the partnerships. This points to the fact that the Swiss side has set the framework within which interests of the partnerships can be pursued. Given the broad and flexible design of the instrument, however, this need not translate into an imbalance of power and, with the exception of a minority of dissenting voices, the vast majority consider the migration partnerships to be a genuine and equal partnership. This reflects achievement with regards to the first central objective of the instrument.

Policy & Institutional Coherence

The second objective of the migration partnerships is whether they enhance the coherence of Swiss migration policy as well as the migration policy of the partner country. The evaluation finds that the partnerships have very concretely improved institutional mechanisms supporting policy coherence and identified some examples of how they have assisted in the identification of

incoherence and the subsequent development of constructive solutions to some of these challenges. However, it is too early to assert that the migration partnerships have resulted directly in more coherent policies. The main way in which the instrument has achieved this outcome is through the regular meetings and dialogues held between Switzerland and the partner countries, which bring together a plethora of actors who may not otherwise cross paths. Thus it can be said that the migration partnerships are somewhat achieving objective 2.

A Holistic Approach to Migration
While it is beyond the scope of this evaluation to really comment on impact, self-reported instances of constructive solutions being implemented aid in commenting on the extent to which objective 3 is achieved. The most commonly cited examples of constructive solutions relate to return: either through 1) the facilitation of readmission through technical support with identification and the provision of travel documents or by arranging specially chartered flights to ensure that human rights are respected; or 2) by looking at the wider context of return and reintegration to ensure that the context to which people return provides the necessary services to ensure their successful reintegration. This highlights a shift towards a more holistic view of migration, where the development context in origin countries takes centre stage in discussions. However it is also clear that much more can be done in these areas. Thus it can be said that, through recognising and integrating a broad range of interests into the migration partnerships and promoting institutional practices that support coherence, it has been possible to consider solutions to migration issues in a

more holistic way recognising both the positive and negative effects of migration. Shifting paradigms takes time, however in general it seems that the migration partnerships are making headway in achieving objective 3.

Some key findings of the research include:

- Migration Partnerships are Flexible
A broad range of interests and objectives are covered by the migration partnerships. Some country specific differences demonstrate that the partnerships are flexible. However, there is a core set of interests reflected in the portfolio of projects across all of the partnerships. The areas receiving most attention are return and readmission, and migration and development. While the mandates of different ministries translate into different interests, there is general alignment in the collective interests of Switzerland with each of the partner countries.

- Migration Partnerships Balance Interests
The migration partnerships do reflect a fairly even balance of power between Switzerland and the partner countries. There are some inevitable imbalances that arise from the fact that Switzerland is the funder of the partnerships. However, these were largely mitigated by the partnerships' broad and flexible design which allowed the partner countries to develop their interests in accordance with local needs and interests. A focus on partner country needs has ensured the relevance of the partnerships to other ongoing processes, including visa liberalisation and EU accession.

- Migration Partnerships Improve Coherence

Improved inter-ministerial cooperation, fostered through regular dialogue, is one of the main achievements of the migration partnerships to date, which is contributing to achieving policy coherence. Thus, the regular migration dialogues involving all of the relevant actors working on migration are considered by the evaluators to be one of

when compared to past approaches to bilateral cooperation, cover five main areas: 1) they capture a broad range of issues within one framework; 2) they institutionalise and legitimise long-term cooperation; 3) they are reciprocal; 4) they are flexible and create bridging social capital that can be activated as problems arise; and 5) they are focused on lasting, holistic solutions to problems.

"... there is a clear need to correct some of the misconceptions surrounding the migration partnerships ..."

the most significant contributions of the partnerships in terms of achieving their goals. Furthermore, working together to tackle a sensitive topic such as migration establishes trust and can create opportunities for cooperation on other issues requiring bilateral cooperation.

-Migration Partnerships are Misunderstood

The migration partnerships have received negative media coverage in Switzerland, primarily because asylum flows from some partnership countries have not decreased. This should not be considered a failure, however, since many asylum applications are Dublin cases. However, the partnerships do contribute to smoother cooperation and information sharing on return issues. This points to a need for better communication on the purpose of the partnerships, including a reflection of the long-term benefits that increased trust and stronger bilateral relations can have.

To summarise, the main added-value of the migration partnerships,

Recommendations

Based on the key findings of the research the evaluators offer the following recommendations:

1. *Switzerland should continue with the existing migration partnerships*: As the partnerships mature, partners will be able to bring new challenges and existing omissions to the table; the trust established by the partnership will allow the identification of joint solutions to migration challenges.

2. *Migration dialogues should be a key component of future strategies within the existing migration partnerships*: While the process of organising regular dialogues is labour intensive, a clear finding of the evaluation is that the regular meetings hold significant value to actors on both sides of the partnership. Regular meetings bring actors together, facilitate the negotiation of interests and allow the partnership to be flexible.

3. *Creation of new partnerships*: Migration partnerships are a good instrument for bilateral cooperation on migration that compares positively to past and

current tools used by Switzerland and other countries to approach the topic. Thus, the logical conclusion would be that, as the migration partnerships are largely on track to achieve their objectives, it makes sense to create new partnerships.

4. *Selection of countries*: While return is clearly a concern that has been at the centre of the current migration partnerships, future migration partnerships need not only be negotiated with countries with which return is an issue. A focus on linking migration and development and pursuing coherent policies has merit in its own right. Thus, countries such as Turkey could be potential candidates for future partnerships.

Switzerland given the current pressures on their asylum system; this in turn could assist Switzerland with Dublin cases. Having Germany brought into the partnership with Kosovo may help in further achievements in implementing the visa liberalisation roadmap.

7. *Develop a communication strategy*: It is clear that the easiest way to highlight the benefits of the migration partnerships is through the implemented projects. However, given that the majority of these take place in the partner countries, this makes it challenging to capture the attention of the Swiss media. Nevertheless there is a clear need to correct some of the misconceptions surrounding the migration partnerships and their ability to

"A focus on linking migration and development and pursuing coherent policies has merit in its own right."

5. *Address the gaps and omissions identified by the evaluation*: The evaluation provided the opportunity for partners to reflect on the current state of the migration partnerships. Through this process specific gaps were identified, which should be reviewed and discussed at future migration dialogues.

6. *Pilot multilateral migration partnerships* through building on existing migration partnerships with Nigeria and/or Kosovo by inviting at least one other country of relevance to the table. It is suggested that the top source countries of Dublin cases in Switzerland be considered as logical candidates. This can be in the interest of all partners and reflects the complexities of migration management, particularly given that more than two countries can be involved in a specific migration issue. Italy, for example, may benefit from being in a partnership with

stop asylum flows. It may be advisable to make more information publicly available. This may contribute towards creating a more factual and informative narrative on migration statistics in the mainstream media.

8. *Disseminate experiences and findings to other countries*: One way to truly test whether the migration partnership can be considered as a transferrable model for bilateral cooperation on migration would be to implement the instrument in other country contexts. Given the positive experiences of the migration partnerships, it is recommended that the experience is shared.

9. *Conduct further evaluations*: It is too early to conduct a proper impact evaluation of the migration partnerships, particularly in Tunisia. One solution would be to conduct a follow-up evaluation in three to five years using the findings of this evaluation as a baseline. Another interest-

ing approach for assessing the extent to which the migration partnerships truly differ from the broader Swiss approach to bilateral cooperation would be to conduct a similar evaluation in countries where Switzerland has cooperation on migration issues but no formal migration partnership.

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INSIDE:

Policy Brief

Swiss Migration Partnerships: A New tool for Bilateral Cooperation on Migration?

A discussion of the potential of Swiss Migration Partnerships as a tool of bilateral cooperation on migration based on the findings of an independent evaluation of the process five years after the signing of the first partnership.

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