Project Description “Study on smuggling of migrants: characteristics, responses and cooperation with third countries”

Duration
December 2014 – August 2015

Countries covered by the Study
Case study countries: Bulgaria, Egypt, Ethiopia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Libya, Malta, Nigeria, Pakistan, Syria, Turkey

Additional countries covered in this study: Afghanistan, Algeria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Eritrea, France, Germany, Ghana, Iraq, Mali, Montenegro, Morocco, Netherlands, Poland, Somalia, Spain, Sudan, Sweden, and United Kingdom

Implementing Agencies
Optimity Matrix, European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) and International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), with the Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP) as subcontractor.

Donor
European Commission DG Home Affairs

Background and Justification
Although the tackling of migrant smuggling has become a pressing political issue at EU level, it remains a rather under-reported area of research, with scattered and incomplete information available. To date there is no systematic review or evaluation of existing policies counteracting the smuggling of migrants. It is acknowledged that migrant smuggling can take many forms (e.g. ad hoc smuggling services, migrant smuggling through misuse or abuse of documents, pre-organised stage-by-stage smuggling) and the actors involved can vary considerably (e.g. coordinators, recruiters, transporters, drivers, enforcers, suppliers). Furthermore, often in response to official policy and operational measures, routes and tactics used by smugglers can change quickly.

In order to address this lacuna of information, it is necessary to study the current institutional arrangements in place and how they work together in combatting smuggling, the characteristics of the phenomenon at present and the existing policies and programmes in place both at the EU level and in non-EU countries.

Objectives
The overall objective of the study is to:

- Identify and outline international developments and structures in the area of migrant smuggling, as well as existing ways to facilitate intergovernmental exchange, and to support the development and implementation of co-operation initiatives.

More specifically, the study seeks to:
• List and analyse policies, programmes and operational responses implemented by selected EU Member States and selected third countries aimed to fight against, reduce and prevent migrant smuggling
• Map the characteristics of the phenomenon to establish a comparative picture of its scale, characteristics, trends and patterns. Based on this we can draw comparative assessments of practices in selected parts of the world where smuggling of migrants occurs.
• Draw conclusions based on data collection and case study outcomes.

Activities
The study employs a number of data collection methods, namely: desk-based research, qualitative interviews, analysis of a survey and case studies. Desk research will include an analysis of information found in published research, policy documents, websites and statistical databases. Interviews are foreseen at the national, European and international level with experts and practitioners in this field, keeping in mind the wide variety of stakeholders involved (e.g. government agencies, international organisations, civil society organisations, smugglers and migrants themselves) and elements in the process. A survey has been conducted by the European Migration Network on existing institutional arrangements and policies and measures in each EU country addressing migrant smuggling.

The study will be particularly informed by the development of case studies (5). Each case study includes three countries (country of departure, country of transit, and country of first arrival in the EU) along a particular route, and aims at elaborating the national situation, the policy relationship among the three countries and the main characteristics of the phenomenon across the three countries. The case studies will feature a mix of desk-based research, legal and policy analysis, and fieldwork (including face-to-face interviews with governmental and civil society stakeholders, migrants and smugglers), where the political situation allows for this.

Expected Results
The five case studies, together with data collected from desk research, the EMN survey and in-depth interviews with a variety of stakeholders in additional countries covered by the Study and at the EU/international level, will be combined and analysed in a final comparative report.

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