

Independent Evaluation of the Mobility Partnerships between the European Union and Cape Verde, Georgia and Moldova

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Sarah Langley
Clara Alberola



Maastricht Graduate School of Governance (MGSoG)



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Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
List of Tables	3
List of Figures	4
Acknowledgements	5
List of Acronyms	6
Executive Summary	7
Background	7
Evaluation objectives and methodology	7
Major findings and conclusions	7
Recommendations	11
1. Introduction and background	12
2. Objectives and methodology	13
2.1 Objectives of the evaluation	13
2.2 Research questions	13
2.3 Methodological approach	14
2.3.1 Desk research	14
2.3.2 Fieldwork	15
2.3.3 Methodological reflections	16
3. Partner countries	18
3.1 Cape Verde	18
3.2 Georgia	19
3.3 Moldova	22
4. Findings	24
4.1 Mobility Partnership as a political framework	24
4.1.1 Origin of the MPs	24
4.1.2 Objectives and expectations of the MPs	25
4.1.3 Impacts of the MPs	26
4.1.4 Implementation of the MPs	28
4.1.5 Evolution of the MPs and influence of events and stakeholders	32
4.1.6 Challenges and suggestions for the future of the MPs	33
4.2 Cape Verde	35
4.2.1 Objectives and expectations of the EU-Cape Verde MP	35
4.2.2 Impact of the EU-Cape Verde MP	36
4.2.3 Implementation and evolution of the EU-Cape Verde MP	43
4.2.4 Evolution of EU-Cape Verde MP and the influence of events and stakeholders	46
4.2.5 The Future of the EU-Cape Verde MP	47
4.3 Georgia	49
4.3.1 Objectives and expectations of the EU-Georgia MP	50
4.3.2 Impact of the EU-Georgia MP	50
4.3.3 Implementation of the EU-Georgia MP	57
4.3.4 Evolution of the EU-Georgia MP and the influence of events and stakeholders	61
4.3.5 The Future of the EU-Georgia MP	61

4.4 Moldova	64
4.4.1 Objectives and expectations of Moldova in signing the MP.....	64
4.4.2 Impact of the EU-Moldova MP.....	65
4.4.3 Implementation of the EU-Moldova MP.....	72
4.4.4 Evolution of the EU-Moldova MP and the influence of events and stakeholders	78
4.4.5 The Future of the EU-Moldova MP	79
4.5. Value of the MPF.....	82
5. Conclusions and recommendations	84
6. Bibliography	94
Appendix 1: Elaboration of research questions.....	103
Appendix 2: Data collection tools.....	105
Appendix 3: Listing of organisations/ institutions interviewed	106
Appendix 4: Impact of visa facilitation and liberalisation on mobility.....	108
Cape Verde	108
Georgia	109
Moldova	110

List of Tables

Table 1 Overview of partner country interviews	16
Table 2 Background information on Cape Verde	18
Table 3 Number of Cape Verde citizens in MS signatories.....	19
Table 4 Background information on Georgia	20
Table 5 Georgians as % of immigrants in MS signatories (2015)	21
Table 6 Background information on Moldova.....	22
Table 7 Moldovans as % of immigrants in MS signatories (2015).....	23
Table 8 Migration legislation and policies passed in Cape Verde after the signing of the MP	37
Table 9 Creation of an institutional framework for migration governance in Cape Verde	38
Table 10 2018 MP-related objectives for the Cape Verdean government.....	48
Table 11: Migration and asylum-related legislation passed in Georgia since 2009	52
Table 12 Priority directions for future cooperation under the EU-Georgia MP	63
Table 13 Migration and asylum related legislation passed in Moldova after the signing of the MP	66
Table 14: National strategies and action plans mentioned in MP newsletters or interviews	67
Table 15 2018 MP-related priorities of the Moldovan government.....	80
Table 16 MPF budgetary sources.....	82
Table 17 MPF projects by budget	83
Table 18 Schengen visas issued and denied to Cape Verdean citizens	108
Table 19 Schengen visas issued and denied to Georgian citizens.....	109
Table 20 Moldovan citizens that exited Moldova towards the EU, 28.04.2014-23.04.2018	110
Table 21 Comparison of number of Schengen visas to number of exits of Moldovan citizens towards the EU	110

List of Figures

Figure 1 Institutional framework for migration governance in Cape Verde	43
Figure 2 “Not issued rate” of Schengen visas to Cape Verdean citizens	108
Figure 3 Number of Schengen visas issued to Cape Verdean citizens	108
Figure 4 Number of Schengen visas issued to Georgian Citizens	109
Figure 5 “Not issued rate” of Schengen visas to Georgian citizens	109
Figure 6 Total Schengen visas issued to Moldovans	110

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List of Acronyms

AA	Association Agreement
ACP	African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States
BMA	Bureau of Migration and Asylum (Moldova)
CCV	Common Centre for Visas
DCFTA	Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area
DG EMPL	Directorate General of Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion of the European Commission
DG Devco	Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development of the European Commission
DG Home	Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs of the European Commission
DG Near	Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations of the European Commission
DSA	Daily Subsistence Allowance
EaP	Eastern Partnership
EASO	European Asylum Support Office
EC	European Commission
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EEAS	European External Action Service
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
EUBAM	EU Border Assistance Mission
FRONTEX	European Border and Coast Guard Agency
GAMM	Global Approach to Migration and Mobility
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GFMD	Global Forum for Migration and Development
HLM	High Level Meeting
IAPE	Institute for the Support of Emigrants (Cape Verde)
IBM	Integrated Border Management
IC	Institute of Communities (Cape Verde)
ICMPD	International Centre for Migration Policy Development
IOM	International Organization for Migration
LCP	Local Cooperation Platform
MIEUX	Migration EU Expertise
MISMES	Migrant support measures from an employment and skills perspective
MP	Mobility Partnership
MPF	Mobility Partnership Facility
MRA	Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia
MS	Member State
NEA	National Employment Agency (Moldova)
RA	Readmission Agreement
SCMI	State Commission on Migration Issues (Georgia)
SEF	Service of Foreigners and Borders (Portugal)
SNIAC	National System of Identification and Civil Authentication (Cape Verde)
TIG	Targeted Initiative for Georgia
VFA	Visa Facilitation Agreement
VLAP	Visa Liberalisation Action Plan

Executive Summary

Background

The European Union (EU) Mobility Partnerships (MP) represent a multilateral cooperation framework to enhance migration governance. Theoretically, the MPs work to operationalise the EU's Global Approach to Migration and Mobility and its four pillars, namely better organising legal migration, preventing and combatting irregular migration, maximising the development impact of migration and mobility, and promoting international protection.¹ A Joint Declaration of a MP between the EU and a specific partner country then entails broad targets and commitments agreed upon by the EU, Member State (MS) and the partner country, as well as a set of specific support measures to be offered² to address a variety of migration and asylum related issues. The first MPs were signed in 2008 and since then, nine MPs have been signed.³ Ten years on, this evaluation represents a well-timed opportunity to review the achievements of the oldest of the MPs (Cape Verde, Georgia and Moldova) as well as identify challenges and areas for improvement in the future.

Evaluation objectives and methodology

The purpose of the evaluation is to carry out a multi-dimensional and independent evaluation of selected MPs and to provide a report on the MPs' impact on various levels, to formulate lessons learnt and to provide recommendations on the future implementation modalities and ways forward. To achieve these objectives, six primary research questions have been identified and will be answered by the research.

1. *Are the objectives of the various stakeholders met by the MPs in practice?*
2. *What is the impact of the MPs?*
3. *How has the implementation of the MP been conducted / functioned?*
4. *How have the roles and interests of various stakeholders influenced the evolution of the MPs?*
5. *How have institutional settings and emerging landscapes influenced the evolution of the MPs?*
6. *How can the MPs be reanimated / redesigned to better fit the current context?*

Semi-structured qualitative interviews with relevant stakeholders represented the key source of data for the evaluation. In total, 78 interviews were conducted with 102 participants between November 2017 and February 2018 in Brussels, Praia, Tbilisi and Chisinau, as well as by telephone and Skype when necessary. An initial listing of interview participants was provided to the research team by Mobility Partnership Facility (MPF) staff, which was then expanded through snowball sampling.

Major findings and conclusions

The main research questions addressed by the evaluation concern the impact of the MPs, the meeting of stakeholder objectives, the implementation and evolution of the MPs and their future outlook. The three MPs evaluated in this study represent vastly different contextual realities and accordingly, conclusions on their impact, implementation, evolution and future vary. The following paragraphs address each of the six primary research questions in turn, including caveats for each of the three MPs evaluated.

¹ European Commission, Migration and Home Affairs, 2018a

² The Joint Declaration is not legally binding and represents more a declaration of intent from stakeholders involved.

³ MPs have been signed with Cape Verde, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, Morocco, Azerbaijan, Tunisia, Jordan and Belarus.

What is the impact of the MPs?

The strengthening of partner countries' human, institutional and legislative capacities was noted by the majority of participants to have been positively affected by the MPs. While it is difficult to disentangle the effects of the MP versus legal instruments such as Readmission Agreements (RAs), Visa Facilitation Agreements (VFAs) or Visa Liberalisation Action Plans (VLAPs), all three partner countries noted a very significant improvement in their human, institutional and legislative capacities since the signing of the MP. Examples of success in this area include the alignment of partner country migration-related legislation to EU standards, the creation of specific ministries, departments and committees that deal directly with migration issues, the mainstreaming of migration and development objectives into legislation and a myriad of human capacity building initiatives. The sustainability of advances within this area is generally strong. Legal instruments such as RAs, VFAs and VLAPs entail regular meetings on implementation and maintenance of benchmarks, which require advanced institutional, legislative and human capacities.

The extent to which the MP aided in the successful implementation of legal commitments such as RAs, VFAs and VLAPs varies by partner country. Moldova seems to be the most successful in this regard as its government was able to identify and act on synergies between the MP and such legal commitments to the benefit of the country. In Georgia, the MP was noted to be extremely useful in supporting the implementation of the now highly functioning RA and to a lesser extent in the achievement of VLAP benchmarks. Besides some successes such as the Common Centre for Visas (CCV), Cape Verde reported less progress in this area, as there are widespread criticisms of the effectiveness of the VFA and the functioning of the RA.

The impact of the MP on enhanced legal mobility of identified target groups was deemed insufficient in all three partner countries. The Georgian and Moldovan governments were pleased with the accomplishment of visa-free travel to the EU for their citizens and noted the significant leverage that VLAP benchmarks provided to accomplish wide-ranging reforms. However, this visa-free travel lacks a critical component; access to EU labour markets. Georgian and Moldovan respondents were disappointed in the failure of the MP to open up more legal migration channels for their citizens to live and work in the EU and return home in a circular fashion. The Cape Verdean government also felt that advances in this area were unsatisfactory; the positive effects of the VFA are ambiguous, visa liberalisation has not been offered to Cape Verdean citizens and legal labour migration channels to the EU are very limited in number.

The MP appears to have had a positive and significant impact on enhanced border management and irregular migration in each of the three partner countries studied. Achievements in this area were often linked with specific MS with which the partner country had long-standing historical and geographic ties and included greater availability of technical equipment and capacity building. In Georgia and Moldova, positive advancements in addressing irregular migration and improving border management were heavily linked to VLAP-related reforms.

Perceptions of the impact of the MP in the field of migration and development were more negative in Georgia and Cape Verde than in Moldova. In Georgia, impacts were perceived to be very limited with unsustainable results. A similar story emerged in Cape Verde, as there were only a few projects within the field under the MP framework, all of which had a limited impact. The impact of the MP on the field of migration and development in Moldova was seen as significant and, in tandem with other factors, the MP aided in the establishment of a migration and development policy domain in Moldova where none had existed before. Currently however, the Moldovan government has noted a limited interest or support for migration and development related projects by stakeholders.

The impact of the MP in the field of international protection was limited in all three partner countries. In the case of Cape Verde, the country still does not have a functioning asylum system or the necessary legislation or institutional structure to establish one. In Georgia and Moldova, there have been significant advances in the field within the past decade, but these are more easily linked to VLAP-related reforms than specific MP projects. The MP and MPF in particular were seen, however, as a way to fill remaining gaps from VLAP-related reforms of international protection policy and legislation.

Cooperation and collaboration are essential conduits for achievements under the MP. Respondents overall felt that the MP has positively impacted cooperation and collaboration among counterparts and fellow stakeholders within the EU, MS, international organisations and partner countries. However, the MPs appeared to lack a mechanism to encourage the formation of new partnerships (instead of cooperation along existing lines). The sustainability of networks created under MP projects was sometimes deemed to be questionable.

Are the objectives of various stakeholders met by the MPs in practice?

A key finding of this evaluation is the vastly different expectations and objectives each type of stakeholder held for the MP. Within EU services, primary objectives of the MP included peer-to-peer contact and the exchange of best practices, fighting irregular migration and improving return procedures. Based on the overview of the impacts of the MPs in various fields, it can be concluded that the EU's objectives for the MP have been at least cursorily met by the three specific MPs studied.

For MS, key objectives included enhancing historical ties, improving bilateral relations, stemming irregular migration and improving return procedures. Whether or not these objectives were met depends greatly on the partner country in question. MS were pleased overall with the results of the MPs with Eastern partner countries, noting that the frameworks provided a channel to initiate new collaborative projects and improve relations. However, results were less positive for Southern partner countries, with MS noting that the MPs had achieved little in this region.

Key objectives of the Cape Verdean government when entering into the MP included initiating a dialogue on visa facilitation, collaborating with the EU on border management and security, mobilising the diaspora for development and stimulating regular migration channels. Based on the overview of the impacts of the MP provided above, it is clear that while the government's first two goals have been met to some degree, the objectives of diaspora engagement and increased mobility through legal migration channels remain unmet.

Specific objectives of the Georgian government in signing the MP focused on physical mobility and migration, including visa-free travel and more legal migration channels for its citizens to the EU. The government was especially interested in circular migration schemes and creating the ideal "triple win" situation, with the EU, Georgia and migrants themselves all benefiting from legal migration and promoting economic growth in Georgia. Based on the review of the impacts of the MPs provided above, it can be concluded that the Georgian government's objectives are only partially met through the provision of visa-free travel.

In signing the MP there were two main goals of the Moldovan government: EU visa liberalisation and stopping the significant irregular outflow of Moldovans from the country. While the first goal of visa liberalisation has clearly been met, Moldovans continue to leave the country in high numbers and often work irregularly abroad in exploitative conditions. Given continued difficulties in the country, the goals of

the Moldovan government have now shifted to focus on diaspora engagement and protection of the rights of migrants abroad. This new focus on the migration and development nexus has not been acknowledged by the MP; in Moldova's case, it remains concentrated on border security and stemming irregular migration.

How has the implementation of the MP been conducted / functioned?

The results of the evaluation show that implementation and monitoring structures within all three MPs studied are weak and ineffective to varying degrees. In all three countries, participation by MS was extremely limited in High Level Meetings (HLMs) and, where applicable, Local Cooperation Platform (LCPs). A mismatch of representation was reported in that partner countries would send much higher-level personnel to meetings than would MS, thereby limiting capacity for decision-making at such meetings. HLMs and LCPs were also found to be largely descriptive in nature and are not currently utilised for strategic guidance of the MPs. The frequency of meetings varied by partner country, with annual HLMs and regular LCPs occurring in Moldova, meetings occurring much less frequently in Georgia (only three meetings were conducted within the past nine years) and no LCP having ever been set up in Cape Verde.

The scoreboards utilised to monitor the results of each MP are outdated, poorly structured and missing significant amounts of critical information. Considerable confusion also exists regarding the definition of the MP as a political framework and what should or should not be included in the scoreboard. Such poor data tools compound the weak monitoring and implementation meetings prescribed in the Joint Declaration to produce a political instrument that lacks an overarching vision or goal.

How have stakeholders, changing institutional settings and emerging landscapes influenced the evolution of the MPs over time?

One of the most influential elements in the evolution of the MPs has been the shift in EU and MS attention away from Eastern neighbourhood countries to countries in Africa and the Far East. This shift in attention can be explained by the Syrian civil war and resulting flows of asylum seekers into Europe in 2015, as well as increased mixed migration flows from sub-Saharan Africa within the same time frame. Perceived results of this attention shift include less interest from both the EU and MS in funding and implementing projects with Eastern MP countries.

In Cape Verde, the MP began with a strong focus on border security and irregular migration and with the involvement of key MS, several fundamental reforms were implemented. In recent years, however, EU-Cape Verde cooperation on mobility has lost momentum. The creation of the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa and Cape Verde's ineligibility for the Fund highlight the EU's shift in focus.

In Moldova, visa liberalisation is as seen as a hugely impactful event within the lifecycle of the MP, with the achievement of visa liberalisation and the meeting of the required benchmarks leaving the Moldovan government asking if the MP could be used in the implementation of other legal agreements, such as the Association Agreement. Relatively recent political changes in the country and large-scale corruption scandals also worked to impact the environment in which the MP was implemented.

In Georgia, visa liberalisation was likewise seen as a major event within the MP and after the achievement of VLAP benchmarks, the government re-dedicated human resources to the implementation of the MP. Economic growth over the last decade appeared not only to have increased the mobility of Georgians, but also enhanced aspirations of mobility. This was linked to increased international exposure of the country and the growing affordability of air travel. Government restructurings, such as the current (2017-2018)

restructuring as well as another in 2012-2013 after the victory of an opposition party were also noted as influential in that the key government stakeholders changed.

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been made after analysis of the results of the evaluation:

1. For new MPs, certify that there are sufficient shared interests which all stakeholders can collaboratively pursue before the signing of a Joint Declaration and engage in expectation management on legal migration opportunities.
2. Identify and communicate a clear and well-defined definition of the MP framework that is accepted and verified by all stakeholders. Where possible, establish key baseline indicators in order to enhance periodic monitoring and evaluation processes.
3. Increase the financial and human resources available to the Mobility Partnership Facility to enable it to move beyond a project management role and become a key driving force behind the MPs (by housing institutional memory, coordinating information flows, identifying and pursuing synergies with other EU instruments, generating knowledge, identifying new stakeholders, and cooperatively developing a strategic vision and direction for each MP).
4. Encourage international organisations and EU agencies, as well as NGOs and universities in Member States to play a larger role in implementing the MPs and addressing the self-identified needs of partner countries.
5. Clarify the role of EU Delegations in implementing the MP and properly equip them to do so.
6. Adapt MP monitoring and implementation tools such as High Level Meetings, Local Cooperation Platforms and Scoreboards to better accommodate analytical thinking, critical discussion and forward-looking programming under the MP framework. Monitoring and implementation tools should be modified to fit the local context.

1. Introduction and background

Migration governance attempts to regulate and synchronise a complex and multifaceted phenomenon. Governance at the multilateral level gains even more complexity due to the varying interests and motivations of each stakeholder involved. The EU's Mobility Partnerships (MPs) are a relatively recent form of multilateral migration governance involving the EU, signatory member states (MS) and a third country. Cardwell (2013) classifies MPs as "new modes of governance", or measures or instruments that lack a formal legal definition and function as an alternative approach to hard law. New modes of governance theoretically allow governments to broach potentially sensitive policy areas in which cooperation would be logical, but consensus on legally binding agreements would be difficult to secure. Conversely, new modes of governance such as MPs cannot be legally enforced or challenged, which may lead to difficulties in implementation or alignment with international legal mechanisms.⁴

Lavenex & Kunz (2008) note that the EU began to externalise its migration policy at the 1999 Tampere European Council meeting, in which it was declared that the EU would benefit from a migration strategy that is comprehensive in nature and contends with developmental and human rights issues in origin, transit and destination countries. A partnership approach with third countries was seen as a critical element for success.⁵ In 2007, a Communication on circular migration and MPs between the EU and third countries (COM/2007/0248 final) established that MPs would be concluded with third countries committed to cooperation with the EU in the areas of migration management and fighting irregular migration. Specifically, the Commission noted that commitments by third countries could include readmission, information campaigns to discourage irregular migration, improving border controls and more effectively combatting fraudulent documents in exchange for greater possibilities for mobility to the EU, noting the competences of MS in the area.⁶

The MPs subsequently established were founded on the four pillars of the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (GAMM) and thereby were far-reaching in nature, covering legal migration and mobility, irregular migration and border security, migration and development and international protection (added later). Given the three types of actors involved and the different legal competences granted to each under EU law, Reslow (2010) highlights the complex legal foundation of the MPs, a key example being that only MS have the legal competence to establish the right to legal migration and access to the national labour market.⁷

Analysis of why certain actors agree to participate in MPs while others do not can also be found within the academic literature. MPs are, of course, voluntary for MS and the EU enters into negotiations with various partner countries to establish MPs, some of which have been successful while others have failed. Reslow and Vink (2015) adopt a "three-level game" perspective to explain the participation of each of the three actors (MS, EU institutions, and third countries), noting that MPs require coordination first between the European Commission and MS, and then between the EC and third countries. They argue that when deciding whether or not to participate in an MP, the EC, MS and third countries each take into account the associated costs of no agreement and the autonomy of central decision-makers to make a choice;⁸ if the

⁴ Cardwell, 2013

⁵ Lavenex & Kunz, 2008

⁶ European Commission, 2007a; European Commission, 2007b

⁷ Reslow, 2010

⁸ Reslow & Vink, 2015

associated costs of no agreement are high and if decision-makers have relative autonomy, then an agreement is likely. Stakeholders such as the EC, MS and third countries might find value in an MP agreement for different reasons (e.g. for the EC it is important to cooperate with third countries, for MS the MP might align closely to national policy and for third countries, closer cooperation with the EU might be expected to be beneficial⁹). Kunz and Maisenbacher (2013) also note that MPs are based on the assumption of shared problems and interests between stakeholders that would benefit from a cooperative approach.¹⁰

Accordingly, the participants of each MP have conducted a cost-benefit calculation and concluded that an MP may be useful in achieving their objectives and priorities. However, some researchers argue that in reality, the partnerships are dominated by EU and MS interests while the interests of partner countries are marginalised.¹¹ This claim is usually linked to the strong desire of MP partner countries for more legal migration opportunities to the EU for their citizens and the very limited number of new channels that have been created for this purpose.¹² Instead, these scholars argue that the MPs are highly focused on topics such as border management and reducing irregular migration with an overall “security-driven” rationale largely absent of development-minded goals.¹³

Contextualised by the findings of relevant academic research, this evaluation seeks to analyse the impact, functioning and future outlook of the EU MPs with Cape Verde, Georgia and Moldova¹⁴ (hereby called “partner countries”). Section 2 of the report presents the methodology utilised, Section 3 gives background information on each of the three partner countries, Section 4 details the findings of the evaluation and Section 5 offers conclusions and recommendations on the way forward.

2. Objectives and methodology

2.1 Objectives of the evaluation

In accordance with the Terms of Reference, the specific objectives of the evaluation are:

- To carry out a multi-dimensional and independent evaluation of selected MPs;
- To produce a report on the MPs impact on various levels, to formulate lessons learnt and to provide recommendations on the future implementation modalities and ways forward.

2.2 Research questions

In order to achieve these objectives, six primary research questions have been identified and will be answered by the research. The primary research questions were expanded into sub-questions where necessary and are listed below. The location of the discussion related to each research question in this report can be seen in table format in Appendix 1.

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Kunz & Maisenbacher, 2013

¹¹ Carrera & Hernández i Sagrera, 2009; Chou & Gibert, 2012; Hampshire, 2016; Lavenex & Kunz, 2008; Parkes, 2009; Reslow, 2015; Reslow, 2012b; Reslow and Vink, 2015; Weinar, A. 2012

¹² Carrera & Hernández i Sagrera, 2009

¹³ Chou & Gibert, 2012; Hernández i Sagrera, 2014;

¹⁴ The MPF, not the research team, selected the four original MPs to be evaluated on the basis of their maturity and the strength of cooperation between the partner country and the EU.

- 1. Are the objectives of the various stakeholders met by the MPs in practice?**
 - *How did the concept of the MP emerge?*
 - *What were the objectives or expectations of the EU, MS and partner countries upon signing MPs?*
- 2. What is the impact of the MPs?**
 - *On the human, institutional and legislative capacities of partner countries to manage migration?*
 - *On the implementation of legal commitments (including readmission agreements (RAs), Visa Facilitation Agreements (VFAs) and Visa Liberalisation Action Plans (VLAPs)?*
 - *In the field of irregular migration and border management in the partner countries?*
 - *In the field of migration and development in the partner countries?*
 - *In the field of international protection in the partner countries?*
 - *On the mobility of various target groups?*
 - *On cooperation and coordination (within the partner country, within the EU, between the EU and partner country, and between the partner country and MS)?*
- 3. How has the implementation of the MP been conducted/ functioned?**
 - *What were the impacts of the high-level meetings (HLMs)?*
 - *What were the impacts of the local cooperation platforms (LCPs)?*
 - *What were the impacts of the scoreboard?*
 - *How did the funding structure of the MP work in practice?*
 - *What structure was used to implement the MP by each partner country?*
 - *How does the MP fit among existing EU instruments and tools?*
 - *What other successes were encountered during the implementation of the MP?*
 - *What other challenges were encountered during the implementation of the MP?*
 - *What are the positive and negative aspects of the MPF and how could it be improved in future rounds?*
- 4. How have the roles and interests of various stakeholders influenced the evolution of the MPs?**
 - *How have the MPs evolved over time?*
 - *Which stakeholders have most influenced the MPs and how?*
- 5. How have institutional settings and emerging landscapes influenced the evolution of the MPs?**
 - *What has been the influence of political, economic or social events on the evolution of the MPs?*
- 6. How can the MPs be reanimated / redesigned to better fit the current context?**
 - *Which, if any, new objectives should be included in the MPs?*
 - *Should the implementation process of the MPs be revised? How so?*
 - *What other changes could be made to the MPs to make them more effective?*

2.3 Methodological approach

The evaluation was conducted using different research methods, including desk-based research and statistical analysis as well as primary data collection through qualitative stakeholder interviews.

2.3.1 Desk research

Desk-based research was ongoing throughout the evaluation, being conducted during both the inception phase of the project and simultaneously during the data collection phase. Desk research began with a systematic review of documents pertaining to the MPs, such as the minutes from HLMs and LCPs,

newsletters and reports from relevant international organisations and EU Agencies and past MP evaluations. The information gained from this review then fed into the development of the data-collection tools.

During the inception phase, background research was also conducted on each of the three partner countries in preparation for the field missions. This background research included the history of civil conflict, strife or notable changes in the governing structure of a partner country, relations with neighbouring countries, a history of EU relations and a review of other key collaborations between the partner country and the EU, such as the European Neighbourhood Policy, the Eastern Partnership, the Common Security and Defence Policy, Association Agreements, and the EU-Cape Verde Special Partnership.

Cumulatively, the review of policy documents and the background research conducted on each partner country was used to develop and tailor the data collection instruments used for the evaluation, namely the in-depth interview guides (all interview guides used during the fieldwork can be found in Appendix 2).

2.3.2 Fieldwork

In-depth, semi-structured interviews with relevant stakeholders represented the key source of data for the evaluation. In total 78 interviews with 102 participants were conducted. An initial listing of interview participants was provided to the research team by MPF staff. This listing was then expanded through snowball sampling. A detailed breakdown of the fieldwork is provided below, outlining the various phases of fieldwork, as well as the ministries and organisations that participated (additionally, a detailed overview of organisations and institutions that were interviewed can be found in Appendix 3).

The first round of interviews was conducted during the weeks of 27 November 2017 and 11 December 2017. For any participants who were not available for an interview during those two weeks, a Skype or telephone interview was scheduled. In total, 21 interviews with 23 respondents were conducted with representatives from DG Devco, DG Home, DG Near, EASO, EEAS, ETF, FRONTEX, ICMPD Brussels, ICMPD Vienna and IOM Brussels. Care was taken to ensure that participants focusing on all partner countries were included. During this stage, a total of 26 individuals were contacted and 20 agreed to participate in an interview, translating to a response rate of 77 percent.¹⁵

A second round of interviews was conducted with representatives of MS during December 2017 and January 2018. Due to limited project resources, these interviews were conducted largely by telephone or Skype. Some respondents also wished to conduct the interview in writing and accordingly completed a questionnaire closely resembling the interview guide. In total, 12 interviews were conducted with 20 respondents representing MS ministries of foreign affairs, internal affairs, various line ministries and permanent representations in Brussels. MS that participated in the interviews at this stage include Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Slovakia and Sweden. MS that were contacted for an interview but either declined or did not respond at this stage include Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Greece, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia and Spain. During this stage, 35 individuals from various MS were contacted and 13 agreed to participate in an interview, translating to a response rate of only 37 percent.

¹⁵ The number of participants and the number of individuals who responded to an interview request differs as often times, additional participants were identified and brought to the interview by the individual who had been initially contacted for the interview.

Where possible, interviews were also conducted with MS embassy staff during the fieldwork to each of the partner countries. Through this channel, one additional interview with an MS took place in Tbilisi (with one respondent), two additional interviews with MS took place in Chisinau (with three respondents) and three additional interviews took place in Praia (with three respondents). MS embassy staff who participated in interviews include Italy, Hungary, Romania, France, Portugal and Spain.

A third and final round of interviews was conducted in Praia, Tbilisi and Chisinau during the months of January and February 2018. Fieldwork was conducted in each of the partner countries on the following dates:

- Cape Verde (Praia): 30 January– 2 February
- Georgia (Tbilisi): 5 February– 9 February
- Moldova (Chisinau): 19 February– 23 February

As shown in Table 1, 39 interviews were conducted across the partner countries with a total of 52 respondents (not including the aforementioned interviews with MS embassy staff in Praia, Tbilisi and Chisinau). The interviews were organised and attended solely by the Maastricht University research officer conducting the mission. Interviews were intended to be representative of the key government ministries and departments involved in the partnerships as well as project implementation partners and representatives of the EU Delegation in each country. For the interviews in Praia, nine individuals were contacted and six agreed to participate in an interview, translating to a response rate of 66 percent. In Tbilisi, 23 individuals were contacted and 19 agreed to participate in an interview, resulting in a response rate of 83 percent. In Chisinau, 23 people were contacted and 14 agreed to an interview, resulting in a response rate of 61 percent.

Table 1 Overview of partner country interviews¹⁶

	CV	GE	MD	Total
Partner Country Government Actors	6(6)	9(12)	10(16)	25(34)
Other Country Actors¹⁷	2(2)	9(11)	3(5)	14(18)
Total	8(8)	18(23)	13(21)	39(52)

The interviews were fully transcribed and then systematically coded to address each of the research questions. Once answers were identified for each of the research questions, the data were analysed for emerging themes and a coding frame was developed accordingly. Where relevant, illustrative quotes highlighting the most common responses are provided in the text of the report. This approach ensures that the findings are based on what emerges from the interviewees (inductive research) as opposed to being developed based on the presupposed notions of the research team (deductive research).

2.3.3 Methodological reflections

There are several risks associated with the chosen research design that should be taken into consideration. First, while using qualitative interviews is beneficial, in that it allows for in-depth discussion of how the key stakeholders in the EU and partner countries perceive the partnerships, this approach also, by default, presents a perception-based assessment of the MPs in which socially desirable responses may be given.

¹⁶ The first number indicates the number of interviews completed and the number of respondents is provided in parenthesis.

¹⁷ Includes implementing partners such as international organisations, EU Delegations and other bodies such as trade unions, employers' associations or universities.

This is particularly the case where the findings may have implications for future project financing. To minimise the potential impact of this, the research team has made every effort to cross-check information provided with documents produced throughout the process (including project documents and meeting minutes).

Second, it is important to note that migrants were excluded from the evaluation for a variety of reasons (e.g. complexity, focus of the evaluation and resource allocation). This limits the ability of the research team to make objective observations or conclusions about the direct impact of the MPs on migrants (or potential migrants).

Third, it is impossible to identify direct causality between the MPs and possible impacts due to how the MPs are designed. Representing a political framework with no specialised funding envelope or inclusion criteria to determine what is or is not included under the MP umbrella, the impact of the MP in each partner country is largely dependent upon the perceived definition and parameters of the MP. Countries that adopted a more inclusive and comprehensive view of the MP overall felt that it had stronger impacts than countries that utilised a more limited definition. As highlighted by Reslow (2017), differences in definition of the MP also led to different approaches in filling out the scoreboards in each partner country, thereby limiting comparability between countries. The scoreboards are also frequently outdated and lack critical information such as project budget amount, duration, status, or funder, thereby making analysis of the data within the scoreboards unfeasible.¹⁸ Based on in-depth interviews, the research model was designed to gain information from key stakeholders as a workaround for poorly constructed and maintained data tools.

Fourth, similar reasoning applies when attempting to use statistical data (from sources such as Eurostat or national data) to determine the impact of the MPs on the mobility of partner country citizens to the EU. Because mobility is influenced by a multitude of factors (including economic trends, political changes and immigration, education or employment policy, among others), it is practically impossible to statistically determine the impact of the MP on the mobility of partner country citizens. This is also due to the political nature of the MPs as well as the lack of trackable indicators that could be used to measure impact. Accordingly, this report seeks to analyse perceptions of the MPs impact on mobility instead.

Fifth, a significant limitation of the evaluation design is that it is limited to three partner countries (Cape Verde, Georgia and Moldova), and thereby excludes all other partner countries that have signed an MP with the EU¹⁹. While Tunisia was originally included in the evaluation, it was decided that Tunisian participation would not continue after the inception phase of the project. It should also be noted that the MPF, not the research team, selected the four original MPs to be evaluated on the basis of their maturity and the strength of cooperation between the partner country and the EU. This introduced a degree of selection bias into the sample, in that the three MPs chosen for evaluation are not representative of the MP framework in general.

Keeping these limitations in mind, the following sections present the main findings of the evaluation and address the key research questions of the study.

¹⁸ Reslow, 2017

¹⁹ Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Jordan, Morocco, and Tunisia

3. Partner countries

3.1 Cape Verde

In 2008, Cape Verde became the second country to sign an MP with the EU and the first African country to do so. The EU-Cape Verde MP is comprised of the EU and five MS; Portugal, France, Spain, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. Since its independence in 1975, Cape Verde has cooperated closely with the EU on a variety of issues. In 1990, the first EU-Cape Verde Fisheries Partnership was signed. As a member of the ECOWAS area, Cape Verde also joined the ACP-EU Partnership (or Cotonou Agreement) in 2000 which aimed at enhancing political and economic cooperation between the EU and 79 ACP countries. Concretely, it facilitated trade by providing reciprocal trade preferences and granting duty-free access to EU and EFTA markets. Subsequently, multilateral cooperation was further advanced with the EU-Cape Verde Special Partnership, signed in 2007. The Special Partnership aims at “further developing the particularly close and successful evolution of the relationship between the EU and Cape Verde” and extending it beyond cooperation on trade.²⁰ It comprises the following six pillars of cooperation; good governance; security and stability; regional integration; technical and regulatory convergence; a knowledge-based society; the fight against poverty, and development.

In this context, the MP was signed in September 2008 as a stand-alone agreement that remained coherent with this general cooperation framework. Before the MP was in place, EU services had already worked on several related projects in Cape Verde; three projects on the prevention of illegal migration and promotion of the link between migration and development were implemented in the period 2007-2008. These were financed by the Thematic Programme on Cooperation with Third Countries in the Areas of Migration and Asylum.²¹ The MP was then envisioned as the political agreement covering cooperation on specific areas of mobility and migration and, like in other MPs, rests on four main pillars of cooperation; legal migration, preventing irregular migration, migration and development; and international protection. As stated in the MP, the parties subsequently negotiated and signed a VFA and an RA that entered into force in 2014.

Cape Verde has a rich history of migration. The ten islands were colonised by the Portuguese in the 15th century and became a major hub for the slave trade, as well as an important stop for whaling and transatlantic commerce. Portuguese, French and Spanish merchants progressively settled the islands, together with groups of slaves and merchants from various parts of West and sub-Saharan Africa²². Most Cape Verdeans have both Portuguese and West African ancestors. Due to its peculiar geography and colonial history, a strong culture of migration has developed in Cape Verdean society, and particularly a strong tradition of emigration, to the point that “few countries in the world are more dependent on migration than Cape Verde”.²³ As an example of this dependence, Table 2 highlights that remittances accounted for a full 13 percent of Cape Verde’s GDP in 2016.

Table 2 Background information on Cape Verde

²⁰ EEAS, 2016e

²¹ Reslow, 2013, p.192

²² CIA, 2018

²³ Carling, 2004, p113

Maastricht Graduate School of Governance

Total area, sq. km ² (2016) ¹	4,033 km ²	Poverty headcount ratio at national poverty line, % of population ³	26.6 % (2007)
Population (2016) ²	539,560	Immigrant population (as percentage of total population) (2013) ³	2.90%
Country classification by income group (2016) ³	Lower Middle Income	Emigrant population (as percentage of total population) (2013) ³	34.10%
Human Development Index (2014) ⁴	0.648	Tertiary-educated as a percentage of total emigrants in OECD countries (2011) ³	7.50%
GDP per capita, PPP, current international \$ (2016) ²	2,997.80	Inward remittance flows (USD) (2015) ³	195,000,000
Unemployment rate (date) (national or ILO* estimate), % of total labour force (2014) ³	9.20%	Remittances as a percentage of GDP (2016) ²	13.10%

Sources: 1) World by Map, 2017; 2) The World Bank, DataBank, 2018; 3) The World Bank, Migration and Remittances Factbook, 2016; 4) UNDP, Human Development Report, 2016

Estimates of the number of Cape Verdeans living abroad vary widely across sources. The belief that the Cape Verdean diaspora is more numerous than the in-land population is widespread, although this fact is not confirmed by the available data. While the former Institute for the Support of Emigrants (IAPE) reported more than 500,000 Cape Verdeans abroad in 1998, current UN DESA data suggest a total emigrant population of 165,732. The diaspora thus accounts for almost one third of Cape Verde's total population (30.7 percent). Today, Cape Verdean diaspora communities are mainly found in the EU and North America; a third of the diaspora resides in Portugal while a quarter is present in the United States. Some 57,636 Cape Verde citizens were residing in Portugal as of 2015, which accounted for only 7 percent of Portugal's total immigrant population. Cape Verdean immigrant communities represent less than 1 percent of the total immigrant population for each of the other MS signatory countries (see Table 3).

Table 3 Number of Cape Verde citizens in MS signatories

MS Signatories	Cape Verdean immigrants in MS signatories	Cape Verdeans as % of immigrants in MS signatories
Portugal	57,636	6.88
France	22,292	0.29
Netherlands	11,997	0.61
Spain	4,445	0.08
Luxembourg	1,619	0.65

Source: UN DESA, 2015

3.2 Georgia

The Joint Declaration on an MP between the EU and Georgia was signed in November 2009 and included as signatories: Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Sweden and the UK. Following the signature of this agreement, a VFA and RA between the EU and Georgia were signed in 2010 and a VLAP entered into force,

with implementation starting in 2013. Having achieved the V LAP benchmarks, Georgian citizens have been exempted from short-stay visa requirements for entering the EU Schengen area since early 2017.

Georgia has a relatively small population of approximately 3.7 million people and features a high percentage of the population as emigrants (16.6 percent), with tertiary educated emigrants accounting for 31.9 percent of the country's total emigrants in OECD countries in 2011. The unemployment rate in 2014 stood at around 13 percent and the poverty headcount ratio at the national poverty line was 14.8 percent of the population in 2012. Remittances accounted for 10.6 percent of national GDP (See Table 4).

Table 4 Background information on Georgia²⁴

Total area, sq. km ² (2016) ¹	69,700 km ²	Poverty headcount ratio at national poverty line, % of population ³	14.8% (2012)
Population (2017) ⁵	3,718,200	Immigrant population (as percentage of total population) (2013) ³	4.20%
Country classification by income group (2016) ³	Lower Middle Income	Emigrant population (as percentage of total population) (2013) ³	16.60%
Human Development Index (2014) ⁴	0.769	Tertiary-educated as a percentage of total emigrants in OECD countries (2011) ³	31.90%
GDP per capita, PPP, current international \$ (2016) ²	3,865.80	Inward remittance flows (USD) (2015) ³	1,625,000,000
Unemployment rate (date) (national or ILO* estimate), % of total labour force (2014) ³	13.40%	Remittances as a percentage of GDP (2016) ²	10.60%

Sources: 1) World by Map, 2017; 2) The World Bank, DataBank, 2018; 3) The World Bank, Migration and Remittances Factbook, 2016; 4) UNDP, Human Development Report, 2016; 5) SCMI, 2017

The governing structure in Georgia has undergone numerous changes in recent decades. After gaining independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, powers were delegated to Eduard Shevardnadze, a former secretary of the Georgian communist party and ex-foreign minister.²⁵ After his dismissal in 2003 amid concerns of corruption and electoral fraud, Mikheil Saakashvili was elected president, marking the end of Soviet era leadership in Georgia.²⁶ In 2013, Giorgi Margvelashvili, a representative of the opposition "Georgian Dream" party was elected, indicating that "Georgia is now a country where the opposition has a real chance of winning power and all sides abide by the constitution".²⁷

The Caucasus region has experienced relatively recent secessionist movements, some of which are occurring in Georgia. When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, Georgia regained its independence but faced separatist movements in the Tskhinvali region/ South Ossetia in 1991 and in the Abkhazia region in

²⁴ Although more recent data is available for some indicators from the 2017 Georgian Migration Profile, data from the World Bank have been used to allow for comparability between the three countries analysed in this evaluation.

²⁵ Howel et al., 2017

²⁶ Howel et al, 2017; US Department of State, 2007

²⁷ The Economist, 2017

1992. Situations in both regions escalated to armed hostilities, resulting in the deaths of thousands and the internal displacement of hundreds of thousands of people. In 2008, the conflict escalated again in the two regions and led to Russian recognition of the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, with the parties signing bilateral agreements on military support. Currently, Russia maintains a strong military presence in the regions. They are currently considered “frozen” conflicts^{28,29}.

Since Georgia’s independence, a collaborative relationship has been developed with the EU. In addition to the Joint Declaration on the MP between the EU and Georgia, a number of strategies, policies and agreements have been signed by both sides. For example, the 2003 EU Security Strategy recognises that conflicts such as those in Georgia are a threat to security and regional stability, while the 2004 European Neighbourhood Policy aims to “bring Georgia closer to the EU” through public administration reform, agriculture and rural development and justice sector reform, in addition to conflict resolution and peacekeeping.³⁰ Furthermore, the Eastern Partnership of 2009 seeks to “build a common area of shared democracy, prosperity, stability and increased cooperation”, while the 2014 Association Agreement (AA) and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) signify that Georgia and the EU are now key trading partners. Lastly, the 2014 Framework Agreement on Georgia’s participation in the EU Common Security and Defence Policy means that Georgia contributes to various EU operations in third countries.³¹

According to UNDESA 2015 data, the top destination countries for Georgian emigrants include Russia, Greece, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Armenia. Accordingly, only one MP signatory is present within this listing (Greece). It is interesting to note that Georgians in general do not make up a sizeable percentage of immigrants in any of the MS signatories, as detailed in Table 5. While Georgians represent approximately 7 percent of immigrants in Greece, they represent less than 1 percent in each of the other MS signatory countries.

Table 5 Georgians as % of immigrants in MS signatories (2015)

MS Signatories	Georgian immigrants in MS signatories	Georgians as % of immigrants in MS signatories
Greece	83,388	6.71
Germany	22,884	0.19
Italy	12,226	0.21
France	7,584	0.10
Belgium	3,772	0.27
UK	3,388	0.04
Estonia	1,485	0.73
Latvia	1,353	0.51
Sweden	1,275	0.08
Czech Rep.	1,045	0.26
Lithuania	612	0.45
Bulgaria	336	0.33
Poland	326	0.05
NL	296	0.01

²⁸ A frozen conflict is a situation in which active armed conflict has ended but no peace treaty resolves the conflict to the satisfaction of the combatants

²⁹ UNDP, 2017

³⁰ European Commission, 2017; European Union, 2017a; Whitman and Wolff, 2010

³¹ European Union, 2017a

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Denmark	221	0.04
Romania	57	0.03

Source: UNDESA, 2015³²

3.3 Moldova

The Joint Declaration on a MP between Moldova and the EU was signed in June 2008 and included Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Sweden as signatories. Preceding the signature of this agreement, a VFA and an RA between the EU and Moldova were signed in October 2007 and a VLAP entered into force. Having achieved the VLAP benchmarks, Moldovan citizens have been exempted from EU visa requirements since 28 April 2014.

Moldova has a population of 3.5 million people, with 24.2 percent abroad as emigrants and tertiary educated emigrants accounting for 19.5 percent of the country's total emigrants in OECD countries in 2011. GDP per capita (PPP, current international \$) was 1,900 in 2016 and the poverty headcount ratio at the national poverty line was 12.7 percent of the population in 2013. Remittances in 2016 accounted for a remarkable 21.7 percent of national GDP (See Table 6).

Table 6 Background information on Moldova

Total area, sq. km ² (2016) ¹	32,891 km ²	Poverty headcount ratio at national poverty line, % of population ³	12.70% (2013)
Population (2016) ²	3,522,000	Immigrant population (as percentage of total population) (2013) ³	11.00%
Country classification by income group (2016) ³	Lower Middle Income	Emigrant population (as percentage of total population) (2013) ³	24.20%
Human Development Index (2014) ⁴	0.699	Tertiary-educated as a percentage of total emigrants in OECD countries (2011) ³	19.50%
GDP per capita, PPP, current international \$ (2016) ²	1,900.20	Inward remittance flows (USD) (2015) ³	1,842,000,000
Unemployment rate (date) (national or ILO* estimate), % of total labour force (2014) ³	3.40%	Remittances as a percentage of GDP (2016) ²	21.70%

Sources: 1) World by Map, 2017; 2) The World Bank, DataBank, 2018; 3) The World Bank, Migration and Remittances Factbook, 2016; 4) UNDP, Human Development Report, 2016

Like Georgia, Moldova has also undergone changes to its governing structure since declaring independence in 1991. After holding its first competitive elections in 1994, the Democratic Agrarian Party of Moldova held power for four years and a democratic coalition of parties (the Alliance for Democracy and Reforms) was heavily influential for an additional three years. From 2001 to 2009, the Party of Communists of the

³² Generally, the UNDESA data in this table represents the number of Georgian-born individuals in each MS. Data on Georgians in Belgium and the Czech Republic is exceptional in that it represents Georgian citizens in the country.

Republic of Moldova won two consecutive rounds of elections, representing a return to communist rule after independence. From 2009 to 2014 a loose alliance of democratic and pro-European parties obtained the majority of seats, shifting in 2014 with the victory of the pro-Russian Socialist Party.³³

The Transnistrian region is home to an ongoing civil conflict within Moldova. The region declared independence from Moldova in 1991; an armed conflict followed, resulting in hundreds of deaths. After Russia intervened, a ceasefire agreement was signed and trilateral peacekeeping operations have been in place ever since. The conflict remains frozen, as Transnistria maintains its claim of independence but is not recognised as such by the international community.³⁴

Both Russia and the EU are interested in closer relations with Moldova and this is mutually reflected through the distribution of seats to various communist, socialist and pro-EU parties in the country's parliament. In 2015, 40 percent of Moldovans supported European integration, while 44 percent were in favour of Eurasian integration. In 2016, after renewed support of the EU to Moldova, the country endured major anti-government demonstrations.³⁵ On the EU side, the Joint Declaration on the MP between the EU and Moldova has been complemented by the 2005 EU Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM) on effectively managing the common border with Ukraine, the 2007 European Neighbourhood Policy and Instrument (the EU financial instrument dedicated to Neighbourhood countries), the 2009 Eastern Partnership on building "a common area of shared democracy, prosperity, stability and increased cooperation", the 2014 EU Common Security and Defence Policy, and the 2016 Association Agreement and DCTFA on good governance reforms and economic development.³⁶ It should be noted, however, that after entering into the EU Association Agreement, Moldova encountered Russian sanctions and the political will to implement EU agreements is questionable and may be affected by parliamentary elections scheduled for November 2018.³⁷

According to UNDESA 2015 data, the top destination countries for Moldovan emigrants include the Russian Federation, Italy, Ukraine, Romania and the US. Accordingly, two MP signatories are present within this listing (Italy and Romania). As noted in Table 7, Moldovans represent approximately 36 percent of immigrants in Romania, but significantly smaller proportions in other MS signatories (Moldovans make up approximately 3 percent of immigrants in Italy and 2 percent or less in each of the other MS signatory countries).

Table 7 Moldovans as % of immigrants in MS signatories (2015)

MS Signatories	Moldovan immigrants in MS signatories	Moldovans as % of immigrants in MS signatories
Bulgaria	2100	2.06
Cyprus	1048	0.53
Czech Rep.	6421	1.59
France	6560	0.08
Greece	10049	0.81

³³ Buckmaster et al, 2017

³⁴ Dura, 2010; Popescu, 2006; UNDP, 2017

³⁵ Hrant, 2016

³⁶ European Commission, 2016; European Union, 2016; European Union, 2017c; Hrant, 2016; Niemann, and De Wekker, 2010

³⁷ EU Observer, 2017

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Germany	23196	0.19
Hungary	228	0.05
Italy	166819	2.88
Lithuania	601	0.44
Poland	555	0.09
Portugal	19098	2.28
Romania	81856	36.07
Slovenia	342	0.14
Slovakia	112	0.06
Sweden	753	0.80

Source: UNDESA, 2015

4. Findings

This section of the report presents in detail the findings of the evaluation. It is organised in a modular fashion, with subsections describing findings on the origin, expectations, outcomes, implementation, evolution and suggestions for the MP as a whole, as well as specifically on the MPs with Cape Verde, Georgia and Moldova. A final subsection examines the role of the MPF within the MPs.

4.1 Mobility Partnership as a political framework

Although the evaluation specifically examined the EU MPs with three partner countries (Cape Verde, Georgia and Moldova), the questionnaire used during interviews also elicited perceptions of the MP as a whole applied in any partner country. This section accordingly highlights any data collected that address the MPs overall as a general political framework, while data collected on the MPs with Cape Verde, Georgia and Moldova follow in subsequent sections. It should also be noted that the data in this subsection were generally collected from respondents representing EU services or agencies, MS or international organisations based in Brussels, as they tended to speak about the MPs more generally and to know less about how an MP was functioning in a specific partner country.

4.1.1 Origin of the MPs

Knowledge of the origin of the MPs in general, or more specifically what environmental and political factors led to their creation, was scarce among respondents. Most were not working in the field or within their current organisation in the early 2000s; institutional memory on the subject is therefore limited. Nonetheless, many cited the 2007 Communication on circular migration and MPs between the EU and third countries (COM/2007/0248 final) as a starting point of the MPs (also referred to in Section 1).

One subject that several respondents were able to comment on was the terminology used in the title “Mobility Partnership”. It was noted to have been carefully selected by the EU, with “mobility” chosen over “migration” as it was seen to be more neutral and broad in nature, thereby accommodating subjects such as border management and development. Several respondents also felt that the term “mobility” was a signal to both third countries and MS that the EU was taking a leadership role in visibly putting legal migration and mobility on the agenda and therefore pushing MS towards more legal migration (as the EU itself lacks competence in the area).

How third countries were chosen to participate in the MPs was another area in which there was little knowledge among respondents. Most interviewees noted that they assumed MPs were designed to be used with neighbourhood countries, but repeated that they were not employed in the field at the time of their creation. They therefore assumed this to be the case, given that the majority of the nine MP partner countries are geographically close to Europe. The few respondents who did have knowledge of the creation of the MPs noted that they were in fact intended to be used with any third country, not only those neighbouring Europe. This was demonstrated by the fact that negotiations for MPs also took place with countries (or autonomous territories) such as India, Hong Kong, Macau and Ghana - but were ultimately unsuccessful.

The question therefore arises as to why MP negotiations with neighbourhood countries were more successful than negotiations with third countries further afield. Respondents stated that this may be because the EU had less to offer non-neighbourhood countries during negotiations. It was also felt that negotiations should have been undertaken with third countries that the EU and MS had working relationships with (to act as a basis for negotiations), instead of third countries with whom relations were very limited and bilateral cooperation was deemed unsuccessful. Of course, the political realities of the time were considerably different than today, in which newer tools, such as the Migration Partnership Framework, are used to engage non-neighbourhood countries.³⁸

4.1.2 Objectives and expectations of the MPs

This section examines what respondents perceived to be the expectations and objectives of the EU and MS in establishing MPs. The expectations of Cape Verde, Georgia and Moldova in participating in an MP will be discussed in Sections 4.1.2, 4.2.1, 4.3.1 and 4.4.1 of the report.

When asked about the expectations and objectives of the EU in establishing MPs with third countries, many respondents noted that peer-to-peer contact and the exchange of best practices was a primary goal, especially when such contact and exchange was targeted at aiding partner countries in signing and implementing RAs, VFAs and VLAPs. For certain partner countries, the MPs were seen as a channel for the EU to support partner countries in more effectively fighting irregular migration, providing better international protection and improving return procedures. While respondents frequently noted that the MPs were based on the four pillars of the GAMM (better organised legal migration, combatting irregular migration, maximising migration and development linkages and promoting international protection)³⁹, it was rare for respondents to mention legal migration as a main objective of the EU in establishing MPs with the various partner countries.

MS had somewhat different expectations of the MPs. By far the most frequently mentioned reason for participating in an MP was geographical proximity and historical ties between the MS and the partner country. For example, many Central and Eastern European MS noted that they signed MPs with Eastern partner countries out of a sense of regional solidarity. These MS often cited a long history of relations with Eastern partner countries, or the desire to stimulate relations due to geographic proximity and shared norms and values. Accordingly, political interest is high in these countries. Several MS also noted that they joined a particular MP because, in addition to having a political interest in the partner country, they were interested in cooperating and collaborating with MS in their region. For example, certain MS shared a desire to promote and strengthen the Visegrád Group (a cultural and political alliance between the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia) and felt that joint projects were a way to promote a unified voice.

³⁸ European Commission, 2016b

³⁹ European Commission, Migration and Home Affairs, 2018

Apart from geographic proximity, numerous other objectives were cited by MS as reasons for participating in MPs, although with a much lower frequency. Altruism, or more specifically the desire to join an MP to contribute to the greater good (through the sharing of international networks, experts, and overall expertise) was mentioned by only one MS.

Some MS cited joining an MP in the hopes of improving or strengthening existing bilateral relations with a partner country (specifically with Southern partner countries). Due to difficult relationships or diverging interests with some partner countries, MPs were seen as a way to possibly soothe relations and improve cooperation on sensitive issues such as return. One participant noted that through their participation in a particular MP:

“We hope to open some doors. It’s a difficult partner, so everything helps.” (Interview 05)

Visibility was another reason for MS to participate in certain MPs. For smaller MS, limited resources sometimes restricted the desired level of bilateral relations on migration through embassies. Accordingly, MPs were seen as a way to be part of a larger cooperation on migration and for MS to be seen as visibly active in the field. Others saw the signing of an MP (particularly with Jordan) as a political signal of support and solidarity without the obligation to follow up with concrete initiatives or funding.

In addition to these more abstract reasons, MS also noted more tangible factors that led to their involvement in certain MPs. These included stemming irregular migration, the creation of an “extra border” of the EU, improving cooperation on return, an interest in recruiting labour migrants from neighbouring countries, or having a large resident immigrant/ diaspora population from the partner country.

The differing objectives and expectations among the EU and MS for participating in MPs suggest something of a communication disconnect between the two actors and 1) a need for the EU to better communicate the scope and objective of the MP framework, and 2) a need for the EU to take into account the types of interests MS have in certain partner countries in order to set reasonable expectations of what can result from an MP.

4.1.3 Impacts of the MPs

This section will review what interview respondents representing the EU, international organisations and MS see as the primary outcomes of the MPs so far. It should be noted that knowledge of specific outcomes of the MPs (such as the impacts on capacity building, irregular migration and international protection) within individual partner countries was quite limited among EU and MS respondents and accordingly, these specific outcomes are better captured by representatives of partner countries and are detailed in Sections 4.2.2, 4.3.2 and 4.4.2.

Another point to note is the issue of causality and the impact of MPs, as previously discussed in Section 2.3.3 of this report. Due to the nature of the MP as a political framework with a very broad focus (the four GAMM pillars) and the lack of a specific funding envelope tied directly to the MP upon creation, it is impossible to concretely determine which actions, initiatives or developments occurred exclusively due to the existence of an MP, or alternatively exist due to bilateral relations, other EU migration instruments, or projects implemented by NGOs and international organisations. This was an issue raised numerous times by partner countries and is a point of contention in some contexts. Accordingly, this evaluation can only report what respondents perceive to be impacts or consequences of the MPs.

General outcomes of the MPs

General perceived impacts of the MPs include the approximation of partner countries with the EU, an altered perception of the concept of migration and increased or strengthened cooperation and coordination among the various stakeholders involved in the MPs. On EU approximation, both EU and MS representatives felt that the MPs provided a channel for critical reform within partner countries in areas of fundamental human rights, asylum procedures, integrated border management, document security and immigration strategies. It is, of course, unclear the extent to which these reforms were ushered in due to RAs, VFAs and VLAPs versus MPs, or the role of MPs in supporting partner country governments in achieving the reforms necessary for such agreements. This topic will be addressed in more detail within the discussion related to each specific partner country in Sections 4.2.2, 4.3.2 and 4.4.2. It was also noted that within partner countries, the MPs have led to a more comprehensive understanding of the concept of migration, meaning that the multiple (both positive and negative) facets of migration are now better understood by partner country governments and that reformed legislation and institutional settings better reflect the complexities of migration realities.

MP outcomes on cooperation and collaboration

Perceptions of the impact of the MPs on cooperation and coordination among stakeholders tended to differ according to which stakeholders were involved. These relationships can take numerous forms, including the impact on cooperation between partner countries and the EU, between partner countries and MS, among MS, within the EU and within partner countries. Regarding the impact of the MPs on cooperation between the EU and partner countries, responses were largely positive. Respondents felt that the MPs worked to increase the confidence of partner countries in working more effectively with the EU and being more involved in EU dialogue. The MPs were seen to bring together various actors from both sides to share information, which leads to increased understanding and a greater respect for each other's priorities. Respondents also noted that through a focus on technical expertise and best practices, the MPs were a valuable tool in expanding EU cooperation to less traditional partners and countries governed by differing political systems. Representatives from EU agencies also noted that through cooperation at the technical versus political level, more substantial dialogue and cooperation could occur outside of higher level political meetings.

Perceptions of the impact of the MPs on cooperation and collaboration between partner countries and MS were more varied, as many respondents noted that MS cooperate with partner countries along existing bilateral lines and use the MPs to solidify this cooperation instead of creating new relationships. It is noted that this outcome of the MPs is quite logical given MS's interest in signing MPs with partner countries with which they share geographical proximity and political interest. It was also criticised that no mechanism to increase cooperation and collaboration between new partners was built into the MPs.

On the other hand, several MS representatives did report that new cooperation and collaboration was spurred by the MPs, mainly with partner countries that they wanted a closer relationship with but were unable to achieve through bilateral relations alone. These comments tended to focus specifically on the network of MS and partner country subject-matter experts that resulted from projects under the MP umbrella. These networks were especially important due to their sustainability; connections between political-level personnel were seen as temporary given the high turnover in these roles, but technical experts were thought to remain in a similar position and field for a longer period of time, thereby increasing the likelihood that the network could be used in the future.

Respondents also reported positive impacts of the MPs on the level of cooperation and collaboration among MS, independent of the EU and partner countries. The main mechanism for this increased

cooperation was seen to be projects that fell under the MP umbrella that were jointly implemented by a consortium of MS, which required MS to develop a high level of communication and understanding. It was reported that MS consortia were easily formed based on interest in certain topics or geographical areas. Competitive advantages were also successfully utilised in some cases, as one respondent noted:

"We are not rivals, we try to complement and help each other. Those who believe they can contribute somehow to the partnership, they take the lead. If they have money, capacity, or human resources, they contribute that"
(Interview 23)

However, several respondents noted that relationships between MS were sometimes complicated by sentiments of entitlement or superiority. Regarding MS implementing EU-funded projects, some MS felt that they had a "preferred status" due to historical linkages with a specific partner country, leading other MS involved to feel that their views were not considered. Furthermore, MS which had significant historical ties or relations with a partner country sometimes did not seem to want to "share" their contacts or contextual knowledge with their counterparts within the overall framework of project implementation.

The impact of the MPs on cooperation among the various services and agencies of the EU was reported as limited by respondents; coordination and information sharing at the EU level was noted to be very poor. The creation of the MPF was seen as an opportunity to increase such cooperation, especially through the MPF evaluation committee which includes representatives from a variety of services. Respondents also highlighted the importance of the EU Delegations in the success of the MPs as the first point of reference for partner countries. Suggestions were made to ensure that Delegations had the correct "tools" needed to implement the MPs and that Delegations receive clear guidance from Brussels as to their roles and responsibilities related to the MPs.

It is critical to note that one area where an impact was not perceived was the mobility of target groups. While the achievement of visa-free travel for some Eastern partner countries was noted, this was not purely contingent upon the MPs and also represents only a very specific type of mobility (short stays of fewer than three months without access to the labour market). Reasons for limited progress on the creation of new legal mobility channels to the EU was often related to the lack of EU legal competence in legal migration, as well as the negative politicisation of migration after the 2008 financial crisis and the 2015 increases in Syrian and sub-Saharan African migration to Europe. Several respondents noted that this reluctance to grant more legal mobility sent the wrong signal to partner countries and limited the overall impact of the MPs, stating:

"If MS would have been more open in the legal migration part, including workers, the impact of the MP could have been much stronger." (Interview 31)

4.1.4 Implementation of the MPs

Coordination and monitoring

Coordination and monitoring of the MPs is officially conducted through a tripartite system involving HLMs, which are ideally political in nature and concerned with the overall strategic direction of the MP, LCPs, which are intended to be more technical and examine the various projects under the MP umbrella, and the scoreboard, which is at its core a listing of projects conducted under the MP framework. These should also be complemented by discussions on the MPs at GAMM expert meetings which take place on a regular basis in Brussels. Ideally, each of these three core elements should be adapted to the specific context of each partner country and the relevant stakeholders involved; a discussion of the success of this adaption process in each of the three partner countries studied is found in Sections 4.2.3, 4.3.3 and 4.4.3.

Among representatives of the EU and international organisations, almost all respondents agreed that some sort of architectural framework is necessary in order to direct the MPs and maintain momentum and visibility. Many noted that the architectural framework itself is very simple and that its success relies on ownership by the partner countries and the buy-in of key stakeholders such as MS. One respondent noted:

“Where both sides have taken this seriously is where there has been an overall successful outcome” (Interview 19)

However, some felt that this simplicity can be deceiving, as the architectural framework still needs to consider the various geographic, political and economic realities represented by the partner countries, as well as the differing time periods in which each MP began. Another participant noted the danger of over-politicising the architecture and the meetings it entails, pointing out that it is difficult to have open and productive discussions in such an instance.

High-Level Meetings

Focusing specifically on the high-level meetings, benefits highlighted by respondents included a clear overview of the partner country’s objectives, especially as these may have changed after electoral cycles, as well as an overview of what has been accomplished in the previous time frame under the MP. While these meetings should take into account the local political structure in the partner country, respondents representing the EU felt that they represent a critical discussion platform for all migration-related issues (due to the breadth of the GAMM pillars) and that care should be taken in combining them with existing meeting platforms.

Respondents noted that the attendance of civil servants, ministry experts, and project managers was helpful in increasing the comprehensiveness of the meeting. However, there was often criticism over the poor level of attendance by MS. Certain MS who signed the Joint Declaration are never present at HLMS and some MS who are present send only permanent representatives instead of the heads of ministries from the capitals. One respondent noted:

“On the EU side, there is always the director. But then aside from the director, it’s all more technical level people on the EU. Also, from the EU member states can often be people from the EU permanent representations that are mostly note takers rather than contributors to discussion.” (Interview 53)

This was seen as a visible and insulting mismatch compared to the level of representatives sent by partner countries to HLMS, usually comprised of high-level representatives such as deputy ministers from various line ministries, foreign and internal affairs and others. The mismatch was also seen as limiting the decision-making potential of the meetings. Respondents who had been involved in the MPs for a longer period of time also noted a shift in the type of MS representation at HLMS:

“Over time, the heads of delegation of foreign affairs disappeared and heads of delegation nowadays are mainly people from interior. And they look upon these things from a totally different angle of course.” (Interview 31)

While the lack of or level of MS involvement was highly criticised, MS were also dissatisfied with the HLMS. MS respondents who had attended HLMS in the past noted that they felt excluded from discussions, saying:

“The Commission was too present, they did not give the floor to the MS and I really felt uncomfortable with that situation. We did not get the opportunity at all. So, then you wonder, what am I doing here? (Interview 05)

The agenda of the HLMs, in which EU services and partner country representatives dominate discussions is incompatible with the design of the MPs, which calls for MS to take the lead in cooperation and project implementation with partner countries. To increase the ownership of MS, MS representatives should be given a more substantial role in HLMs, which then might encourage the sending of higher-level representatives representing more ministries.

Local Cooperation Platforms

Knowledge and awareness of LCPs among respondents representing the EU and MS was very low. While some respondents noted that LCPs could be of tremendous value due to their technical focus and potential to involve a variety of representatives from line ministries within partner countries and MS, it was agreed that they happen very rarely, if at all. Respondents also felt that partner countries are required to take the lead in setting up LCPs and while there are a few exceptions, this largely has not transpired. Respondents representing EU services also noted that limited time and human resources had barred them from being more proactive themselves in this area.

Scoreboard

Representing the last element of the envisioned MP architecture, it was widely agreed by respondents that the scoreboard created for each MP had the potential to be a very useful and informative tool. A user-friendly and regularly-updated scoreboard could act as a knowledge product of the MPs and be utilised for programme planning by a variety of stakeholders, including partner country governments, EU delegations, MS and EU services and agencies. The scoreboards could also be used to highlight common ground and objectives shared by experts and politicians in partner countries and MS, even though they may work within different country contexts.

Although the potential of the scoreboards was often highlighted, it seems that this potential has not yet been reached due to a variety of factors. It was frequently noted that the scoreboard in its current Microsoft Excel format is not easy to update and that updates take place irregularly, which decreases the value of the scoreboard. These irregular updates also highlighted the lack of institutional memory in some stakeholder bodies, in that once an update was undertaken, the persons responsible for projects were no longer working there and this information was lost. Also due to this lack of regular updating and non-user-friendly format, scoreboards were not used regularly by most respondent organisations for planning purposes.

A notable point of confusion for respondents was what should be included in the scoreboard. Some respondents noted that they did not include projects based on bilateral relationships within the scoreboard, as they did not occur as a result of the MPs. Others took a different approach and included topically relevant projects within the scoreboard even though they felt that the funding or political will for these projects was not linked to the MPs. This was done in an effort to increase awareness of work being done in the field of migration and to avoid programme duplications and overlapping. This lack of clarity in terms of what the overarching goal of the scoreboard is (documenting the impact of the MPs or providing an overview of all work in the field of migration) decreases the value and reliability of the scoreboard.

With these limitations in mind, it was highlighted that DG Home has plans to improve the scoreboards, namely putting them online and going beyond Microsoft Excel to increase the usability and ease of updating the scoreboards, as well as increasing the involvement of partner countries in the process. At the time of interviews, decisions still needed to be made in terms of which stakeholders would be in charge of updating and validating scoreboard data. It was further suggested by respondents that this new online version of the

scoreboards should be made publicly available to increase the visibility of the MPs, as well as overall transparency.

While these improvements will likely be welcomed by the stakeholders involved, they do not seem to address several fundamental issues within the scoreboard tool, namely the question of the purpose of the scoreboard and how to increase its strategic value for stakeholders in charge of programming. One respondent noted:

“I don't get the impression that it's [updating of the scoreboard] happening in a very strategic and coordinated way. Ahead of the high-level meetings in Brussels, there is normally a frantic series of emails asking everybody to update the scoreboard. But you don't have the impression that updating the scoreboard is linked to any sort of programming of funds that is clearly tied to an analysis of where there still remain gaps in terms of the priorities and mobility partnership versus what's funded in the scoreboard.” (Interview 53)

It is therefore suggested that the MP architecture be adapted to encourage and emphasise the need for analysis of the scoreboard to act as the basis for evidence-based programme planning. This could take place within existing LCPs or be conducted in a way more fitting to the specific context and infrastructure of the partner country. Regardless of the modality, such a change would also allow partner countries to highlight to MS and other potential project funders areas that are currently lacking attention, based on a shared and agreed-upon document that was jointly created.

Synergies with related EU instruments and tools

The MPs as a political framework exists alongside numerous thematically similar EU tools and instruments. This reality has sometimes led to confusion among stakeholders as to the purpose and scope of each different framework, tool or instrument. Respondents perceived a sense of confusion from the partner countries in determining the main forum for discussing migration and mobility-related issues, as well as the relative importance of each new tool or framework. A lack of coordination and organisation inside the EU was also noted by respondents, which has resulted in numerous tools and frameworks that are very similar to each other. One interviewee said:

“We at the EU level attempt to create more instruments and more solutions rather than make what we have more efficient. I think the basis is there – it's about not reinventing the wheel and adapting to changes in circumstance.” (Interview 02)

Tools and frameworks noted to be similar in either objective or scope to the MPs included (non-exhaustively) the EU Border Assistance Mission⁴⁰, the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa⁴¹, the Eastern Neighbourhood Policy⁴², the Eastern Partnership⁴³, the Partnership Framework on Migration⁴⁴, the Regional Development and Protection Programme⁴⁵, and the Valletta Summit Action Plan⁴⁶. While it was clear to respondents that these tools and frameworks differ from the MPs, they noted that the differences are sometimes subtle and poorly understood by stakeholders. Accordingly, the benefits of the MPs, including their flexibility, simplicity, focus on specific partner countries, ties to the GAMM pillars and

⁴⁰ EUBAM, n.d.

⁴¹ European Commission, EU EUTF, n.d.

⁴² EEAS, 2016a

⁴³ EEAS, 2016b

⁴⁴ European Council, 2017

⁴⁵ EEAS, 2016

⁴⁶ European Council, 2015

combination of political dialogue and concrete actions should be promoted as a comparative advantage to differentiate them from similar tools and frameworks.

Funding of the MPs

The funding of the MPs, or lack thereof, was highlighted as an element that significantly influenced the overall success and outcomes of the MPs. Ideally within the MP framework, a large and multidimensional project known as a “targeted initiative” is funded by the EU. After this project finishes, MS should continue project implementation using their own funds, or more recently through the MPF, which allows MS to apply for relatively small amounts of EU funding for the implementation of short-term projects. Opinions on the effectiveness of this structure were mixed among respondents. Some noted that the MPs are at heart a political framework, the goals of which include peer-to-peer contact, the sharing of best practices and the granting of greater mobility to citizens, which do not inherently cost a great deal of money. However, others noted that while the MPs are a political framework, they come with a very specific annex of projects that sets very technical expectations of what will be accomplished through the MPs. The projects slated in the annex of each MP inevitably require funding and that the lack of a specific funding envelope to achieve the goals of the annex sent an unclear signal to stakeholders and damaged the credibility of the MP model.

Respondents also reported confusion among the EU services as to who would fund the targeted initiatives for the early MPs. While the MPs were created by DG Home, Home at the time did not have funding to spend externally and therefore had to rely on funding from other EU services, mainly DG Devco. As the MPs were not included in DEVCO programme planning, funding was difficult to earmark. With the creation of DG Near in 2015⁴⁷, it became clear that DG Devco should not continue funding the MPs as it does not have a mandate over neighbourhood countries (the majority of MP partner countries) and that funding would need to shift to DG Home or DG Near. Ensuing discussions prompted the creation of the MPF (tasked to ICMPD), which was supported by the AMIF, ISF Borders and ISF Police funds with the implicit purpose of continuing EU funding of MPs beyond targeted initiatives. The MPF is discussed in greater detail in Section 4.5.

4.1.5 Evolution of the MPs and influence of events and stakeholders

The first MPs were signed in 2008 (Cape Verde and Moldova), with a gradual addition of MPs in the years following. Respondents noted that the most influential element in the evolution of the MPs since that time has been the shift in EU and MS attention away from Eastern neighbourhood countries to countries in Africa and the Far East. This shift in attention was explained by a variety of factors. The Syrian civil war and resulting flows of asylum seekers into Europe in 2015, as well as increased mixed migration flows from sub-Saharan Africa within the same time frame was the most frequently noted explanation for the shift in attention. While numbers of arrivals in 2015 were dramatic, the pattern of shifting focus based on where the largest number of migrants are originating from is not new. Media coverage of the Syrian war and of perilous and life-threatening journeys along the Central and Eastern Mediterranean routes was also noted by respondents as grabbing attention of policymakers and the general public, thereby shifting attention away from less dramatic regions.

In addition to the Syrian crisis and increased mixed migration flows from sub-Saharan Africa, respondents also posited complementary explanations of the shift of EU and MS attention towards the South and Far East that are more political in nature. With the addition of 12 Central and Eastern MS in the accession rounds of 2004 and 2007, it was to be expected that a huge amount of focus would be placed on Eastern countries in order to strengthen border management capacities both within the EU and on countries that

⁴⁷ EU Monitor, n.d.; European Commission, DG NEAR, 2016

share common borders with the EU. Furthermore, older and more established MS such as Spain and Italy are most heavily impacted by Southern flows and may be better able to draw attention to addressing these flows. The rotating presidency of the Council of the EU was also noted as an influential factor in shaping the priorities of the EU.

4.1.6 Challenges and suggestions for the future of the MPs

Several challenges have been highlighted according to the observations made by interviewees representing the EU, MS and international organisations in previous sections of the report, including differing objectives and expectations of the MPs among the EU and MS, poor coordination within the EU, the absence of a mechanism to encourage cooperation along new lines within the MP, limited participation of MS, and issues related to the MP architecture. This section will detail additional challenges that were specifically noted by interview respondents, as well as suggestions to address these challenges and improve the effectiveness of the MPs. Major challenges highlighted by respondents include the current priorities of the EU in negotiating multilateral agreements, an over-reliance on MS to implement and propel the MPs, the need for more strategic and analytical thinking among stakeholders, limited sustainability of the MPs and their limited legal foundation.

EU Priorities in negotiation

Multiple respondents felt that the EU's current strategy with some partner countries is not balanced and is too focused on EU interests while not acknowledging the realities partner countries face. Respondents were disappointed in the perceived use of negative incentives and the implication made by the EU that development assistance is in some way conditional. Multiple respondents representing the EU and MS noted that readmission is an extremely sensitive topic with some third countries (relating to various EU instruments and tools, not solely MPs) and that pushing for the signature of RAs perhaps does more harm than good. One respondent stated:

"Return has sort of infected a lot of these partnerships within the discussion and the dialogue. I understand that our partners think that the EU only wants them to take back irregular migrants and not send anymore." (Interview 10)

Rejecting this tactic, respondents highlighted the need for approaching migration with a broader lens and highlighting its positive aspects in order to build a common agenda, which would then make negotiations on more sensitive subjects more palatable.

Over-reliance on MS for MP implementation

Another significant issue was the over-reliance on MS to implement and advance the MPs. Many respondents felt that there is a lack of balance in implementing projects under the four GAMM pillars, with the areas of legal migration and migration and development often being neglected. This was often linked to the dependence upon MS to fund and / or implement projects, in that their interests seldom extend beyond border control and stemming irregular migration.

Related to this, respondents also noted that the MPs had sometimes created false expectations among partner countries, in particular related to legal migration channels. Partner countries anticipated that the MP would open the door for legal (labour) migration to the EU, whereas this largely did not materialise. In addition to a general limitation of projects addressing legal mobility, respondents noted that some projects under the MP were labelled as legal mobility projects, but did not actually lead to mobility, instead entailing information campaigns or trainings on existing legal channels to the EU instead of the creation of new legal channels. These projects were implemented in a way that led training attendees to believe that they would

migrate to the EU after training completion, but that there was never an intention of this among project implementers.

The issue of capacity for project administration among MS was brought up by numerous respondents as a key issue related to the MPs' heavy structural dependence on MS. While it is generally not a problem for larger MS with established project management units to take on project administration, smaller MS often reported that even with the MPF, they simply do not have the capacity to implement projects and are only able to provide expertise and in-kind support. This is a critical issue in the design of the MPs and the MPF, as MS are relied upon to indeed take a project management role.

To address this, many respondents described possible new roles for MS, international organisations and EU agencies within the MPs. MS involvement is theoretically beneficial due to the linkages that would be ideally created between partner countries and MS at a technical / expert level; however, achieving this was seen to be unlikely due to the limited project administration and management capacity of most MS. Given this limitation, a larger role for international organisations and EU agencies was suggested. For international organisations, project implementation was seen as an ideal function, a viewpoint which was largely supported by partner countries. This role could also be expanded to include contributions to policy discussions, specifically in terms of identifying priorities and approaches and updating and revising certain aspects of the MPs. It was also suggested by multiple respondents that EU agencies play a larger role in the MPs in the future. EU agencies already utilise MS expertise in their activities and generally have strong project management units. The unified vision that EU agencies are seen to offer could be beneficial in that instead of sharing the best practices and knowledge of a specific MS, EU agencies offer a more cumulative and collective viewpoint.

Strategic and analytical approaches

Changes to the architecture of the MPs were also envisioned by respondents. Overall, a lack of strategic vision or direction within the MP was noted by participants and the present MP architecture was not seen to provide space for analytical thinking. Respondents felt that the scoreboard should be updated more regularly and used to highlight programming gaps and establish future priorities of the MP. There is also a need for the HLMS and LCPs to provide a platform for discussion on the strategic vision and future direction of the MPs instead of simply describing past projects and actions. It was also suggested that if LCPs took place on a more regular basis, each meeting could be focused on one GAMM pillar, so that more knowledgeable and interested people attend only the meeting relevant to them. This allows for better insights from more targeted, relevant participants and the structure would also work to emphasise GAMM pillars that have received limited attention so far.

Sustainability and visibility

Sustainability of the MPs in various formats was highlighted as a significant challenge. First, limited institutional memory on the MPs within DG Home was seen as especially damaging and was specifically evidenced by a high turnover of staff. This was seen to be compounded by a limited amount of resources and personnel, which results in a lack of more substantial or long-term funding to support the implementation of the MPs. These issues together were then linked to an overall low degree of visibility of the MPs, as MS representatives noted that many of their colleagues working in relevant ministries and departments would probably be unaware of what the MPs are.

The issue of sustainability of relationships created under the MP was raised also by respondents. While respondents were aware that shifting political interests mean that countries of focus change, they were

wary of establishing relationships with partner countries that they did not deem to be sustainable. One respondent said:

“You can’t only ask for cooperation if it’s burning. If you don’t maintain your partnership and it starts burning again, they will probably not be so eager to cooperate with you again.” (Interview 28)

This was a sentiment strongly echoed by partner countries, as detailed in Section 4.4.3. EU agencies were especially insistent that the sustainability of new initiatives be carefully evaluated before a commitment is made.

Legal foundation

Lastly, one of the most apparent challenges of the MPs is that the Joint Declarations and attached annexes are not legally binding. While the flexibility and accessibility this offers may attract partners, it also carries the consequence that commitments made within the MP framework cannot be legally enforced and are purely a declaration of intent. Given the fast-changing political landscape and politicisation of migration, the limited legal weight of MPs could be seen as a detriment given the shift of EU focus from Eastern to Southern neighbourhood countries. Due to a limited political interest in Eastern countries, MS that are not legally obliged to be active in Eastern neighbourhood countries may then choose to dedicate their resources to geographic areas of higher political interest.

Keeping all of these challenges and suggestions in mind, the majority of respondents felt that the MPs should continue into the future. It was often noted that the MPs represent a very simplistic form of partnership that is necessary for any sort of relationship and that to invent new forms of partnership is simply recreating the wheel. Respondents were much more in favour of modifying and improving the MPs from their current form instead of starting over with a new framework or tool.

4.2 Cape Verde

The MP with Cape Verde was signed in 2008, during the instrument’s pilot phase. Ten years after the signature of the MP, the tangible impact of the instrument remains difficult to ascertain. While most stakeholders highlight significant advances in terms of legislative and institutional capacity building, some more pessimistic views have qualified the MP as a “missed opportunity”. Notwithstanding, all parties are willing to revitalise cooperation and reactivate the MP. This requires a clear identification of priorities as well as the establishment of the necessary implementation and monitoring structures at the national level.

4.2.1 Objectives and expectations of the EU-Cape Verde MP

Given its historical ties with Portugal, the size of the country and its established diaspora in MS, Cape Verde was considered an ideal “testing ground” for the MP framework. Moreover, the country had been willing to cooperate on security issues, which is usually a more sensitive matter for other partner countries.⁴⁸

Cape Verde’s government played an active role in becoming a candidate for a pilot MP by requesting MS (specifically Portugal and Spain) to propose Cape Verde to the EU.⁴⁹ In particular, the country was interested in initiating a dialogue on visa facilitation, stimulating regular migration channels and collaborating with the EU on border management and security. In a context of increasing irregular

⁴⁸ Reslow, 2013

⁴⁹ Reslow, 2013

migration through West and North Africa (soon after the “Cayuco Crisis”⁵⁰ in the Canary Islands) Cape Verde’s authorities were concerned that the territory might be used as a platform for irregular migration and drug trafficking from West Africa to Europe. While this is a widespread belief among policymakers, there seems to be no evidence as yet that the islands are being used as a strategic hub for such activities. Lastly, in line with a global discourse on the links between migration and development, the government had started to put forward the idea of enhancing diaspora engagement for the country’s development. Ultimately, a long-term objective for Cape Verde is to obtain visa-free travel to the EU for its citizens. While all parties acknowledge that visa liberalisation is not likely in the short term, the utilisation of this as a promise in Cape Verde’s political arena has created some confusion over the scope and purpose of the VFA.

4.2.2 Impact of the EU-Cape Verde MP

Ten years after the MP with Cape Verde was signed, the tangible impact of the instrument remains difficult to ascertain. While the MS has undeniably led to positive initiatives, observing its actual effects on mobility trends remains a challenge. This is partly due to several methodological impediments embedded in the design of the MP. First, the MP is, by nature, a policy tool that guides the actions of the parties, rather than a programme with a set of landmarks and baseline indicators.⁵¹ For many, the MP is an “on-going cooperation process”, which makes it difficult to observe and measure results quantitatively. As one of the interviewees noted:

“I think the MP should not be based on numbers and statistics. I believe it should remain open and flexible enough to address all the problems.” (Interview 68)

Under the umbrella of the MP, numerous multilateral and long-term activities were implemented that brought together MS and partner organisations to work on projects ranging from the establishment of a Common Centre for Visas (CCV) to capacity building in the field of border and document security. Further progress that coincided with the MP included the signing of the EU-Cape Verde RA and VFA, frequently noted projects on information sharing and a common visa application centre and the strengthening of the legislative and institutional capacity of Cape Verde to effectively manage migration. However, many challenges were also noted to exist within the design and implementation of the MP, including a dwindling amount of activity under the MP umbrella, a lack of monitoring and implementing structures and low visibility and awareness of the MP framework.

Impact of the EU-Cape Verde MP on the human, institutional and legislative capacities of Cape Verde to manage migration

One of the most sustainable successes of the EU-Cape Verde MP is without doubt the strengthening of Cape Verde’s migration legislative framework and interviewees unanimously report that the legislative aspect has been most significantly impacted by the MP.

After the publication of Cape Verde’s first comprehensive migration profile, authorities began updating the national legislative framework on emigration and immigration. For that purpose, ICMPD’s initiative “MIEUX” (Migration EU Expertise)⁵² started working in Cape Verde as of 2010 and supported the development of a National Immigration Strategy and its ensuing Action Plan and the draft of the new migration legislation and its implementation. The new Law on the Entry, Permanence and Exit of Foreigners

⁵⁰ In 2006, more than 31,000 West Africans reached the Canary Islands by boat from the coasts of Mauritania. This influx overwhelmed the islands and created a humanitarian crisis, with more than 6,000 deaths at sea (EFE, 2017).

⁵¹ Carrera, Radescu & Reslow, 2015

⁵² The MIEUX initiative is a peer-to-peer expert’s facility which aims to deliver legislative capacity building in the field of migration and mobility.

(Lei nº 66/VIII/2014) updated the former 1990 law, the content of which was very similar to the regulations in place under Portuguese rule.⁵³ Although this legislation was originally intended to cover asylum, the asylum component of the law was not approved by the Parliament and asylum and international protection remains an aspect that is almost unregulated in the country.

Table 8 Migration legislation and policies passed in Cape Verde after the signing of the MP

2008 Cape-Verdean Labour Code	Cape Verde ratified the <i>International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families</i> in 2003. National legislation was then adapted to the convention with the new Labour Code 5/2007. The law entered into force in 2008 and regulates working conditions for foreign citizens residing in Cape Verde.
2012 National Strategy on Immigration (ENI)	The National Strategy on Immigration was adopted by the parliamentary resolution 3/2012. It is Cape Verde's first comprehensive immigration policy. The strategy was elaborated by the recently created Immigration Coordination Unit, with the support of MIEUX.
2013 Action Plan of the ENI (2013-2016)	Implements the National Strategy on Immigration. The action plan foresees the creation of a Migration Observatory and proposes reforms to the Law on Foreigners 93/1990 and its ensuing Decree Law 6/1997. Supported by MIEUX.
2014 National Strategy on Emigration and Development (ENED)	This is Cape Verde's first comprehensive emigration policy and diaspora engagement policy. The strategy was elaborated by the former Ministry of Communities and supported by the AMEDIP cooperation project (Strengthening African and Middle Eastern Diaspora Policy Trough South-South Exchange), financed by France, The Netherlands, Italy and Switzerland.
2014 Law on Foreigners 66/2014	The Law on Entry, Permanence and Exit of Foreigners entered was approved in July 2014 and came into force in November 2014. It updates the Law on Foreigners 93/1990 and its ensuing Decree Law 6/1997. Supported by MIEUX.
2014 Decree law 21/2014 on electronic passports	Linked to Law on Foreigners 66/2014, this decree law establishes the new identification system in Cape Verde. It regulates the issuance of passports and establishes four different categories of passports: common passport, diplomatic passport, service passport and temporal passport. The decree law is crucial in the implementation of the Visa Facilitation Agreement of 2014.
2015 Decree law 1/2015 on Extraordinary Regularisation	Linked to Law on Foreigners 66/2014, this decree law established the necessary bases for the extraordinary regularisation of foreign citizens in irregular situation on national territory.

Together with the legislative aspect, the EU-Cape Verde MP has also positively contributed to institutional capacity building for migration governance; since its signing, multiple institutions dedicated to migration have been created and several projects have contributed to different aspects of institutional capacity building.

First, concluding and implementing the MP pre-supposed that all parties needed to understand the reality of immigration and emigration in Cape Verde. The Inter-Ministerial Commission for the Study and Proposition for the Bases of Immigration Policy was set up in 2008, right after the signing of the MP. As stated in the Joint Declaration of the MP, this Commission ordered the elaboration of Cape Verde's migration profile, which was published in 2009 by IOM and in the following years, a migration governance institutional framework was developed. Among others, the mission of these bodies is to work on multiple aspects of migration as mentioned in the MP's objectives. In 2010, the Institute of Communities (IC) was

⁵³ Varela & Barbosa, 2014

established to take charge of emigration and diaspora engagement policies. The IC also leads the National Committee on Emigration and Development (CONED), created in 2013. Together with the IC, the CONED participated in the elaboration of the National Strategy on Emigration and Development. To support its implementation at the local level, authorities set up the National Network of Municipal Focal Points for Emigration in 2014. In parallel, the Immigration Coordination Unit was created in 2011 as an inter-institutional coordination body on immigration issues, which later evolved into the General Directorate for Immigration. The IC, together with the General Directorate for Immigration jointly coordinated the Migration Observatory, a statistical body whose aim is to collect and disseminate migration data for evidence-based policies. Coordination structures have been set up both at the national and local levels, with new bodies such as the National Network of Municipal Focal Points for Emigration.

Table 9 below summarises the process of institutional capacity building and provides insights on their recent evolution. Through these new institutions, the principles and objectives of the MP become embedded in the institutional structures of the country. However, it is important to note that some of these institutions have not endured to the present day and so cannot ensure the sustainability of the policies they implemented.

Table 9 Creation of an institutional framework for migration governance in Cape Verde

<i>Year</i>	<i>Institution</i>	<i>Status in 2018</i>
2008	Inter-ministerial Commission for the Study and Proposition for the Bases of Immigration Policy (CIMI)	Completed
2010	Institute/Ministry of Communities (IC)	Became a department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and lost ministerial rank
2011	Immigration Coordination Unit (UCI)	Transformed into <i>Directorate General for Immigration</i> , within the Ministry of Family and Social Affairs
2013	National Committee on Emigration and Development (CONED)	Unknown
2014	National Network of Municipal Focal Points for Emigration (RENEM)	Unknown
2014	Migration Observatory	Became a section of the National Institute of Statistics

Other activities within the MP have contributed to build institutional capacity, from technical staff training in the field of migration data to training programmes in the area of border security. One of the most successful activities in this area has been the project, “*Strengthening capacities of institutions dealing with migration*”. The project had three components (return and reintegration, irregular migration and border security and migration data) and ran from 2005 to 2014. While the project started before the MP, many of the activities after 2008 explicitly aimed at fulfilling the MP’s objectives. Several Cape-Verdean authorities mentioned the importance and usefulness of this project, citing its length and flexibility and a continuous adaptation of activities according to the needs of the partners.

Impact of the EU-Cape Verde MP on the implementation of legal commitments

One of the main outcomes of the MP is that it initiated a dialogue on regular mobility (more concretely on Short Stay Visas) that culminated with the entry into force of the VFA in December 2014, together with the RA. Cape Verde is the only West African state to have concluded a VFA and RA with the EU, which, several stakeholders noted, is indicative of the privileged cooperation of the parties in the MP.

Visa Facilitation Agreement (VFA)

The VFA between the EU and Cape Verde was signed in 2012 and stakeholders worked together to ensure that implementation was feasible before the Agreement came into force in December 2014, including the implementation of a new biometric identification system (SNIAC) and new legislation (Decree Law 21.2014) that ensured the issuance of passports which matched the requirements of the VFA. As mentioned by several Cape-Verdean actors, the country made substantial efforts to reach EU standards in document and border security in order to implement the VFA.

Perhaps the most important implementing body when it comes to the VFA is the Common Centre for Visas (CCV), which started to operate in 2010. While the creation of the CCV precedes the signature of the VFA, its role in ensuring its due implementation is essential since it processes a vast majority of Short Stay Visas to the Schengen area. The CCV, located in Praia (Island of Santiago), is one of the very first EU Common Visa Centres ever created. Although the centre has received criticism from national media for delays in peak periods and a significant visa refusal rate (most recently around 30 percent), the CCV is repeatedly reported as one of the outstanding successes of the EU-Cape Verde MP.⁵⁴

“The Common Centre for Visas is clearly a success and I think Portugal deserves a lot of credit for that. I think there are only three common visas in the world, so it is a very positive example of what can be done under the MP.”
(Interview 74)

Readmission Agreement (RA)

The RA between the EU and Cape Verde was signed in April 2013 and came into force in December 2014, however with seemingly little preparation for its implementation. While most MS are generally satisfied with the implementation of the RA (notably because of very small deportation numbers), France has been vocal in its dissatisfaction and has voiced concerns over the fact that its readmission requests for Cape Verdean nationals remain unanswered. Specifically, since 2014, 520 readmissions have been requested and 20 Cape Verdean citizens have been readmitted. Notwithstanding, authorities of Cape Verde acknowledge the fact that there is no concrete procedure for the efficient implementation of the RA. The issue is being addressed by the Cape Verdean government, which recently restructured the Embassy of Cape Verde in Paris.

“We signed the readmission agreement, in good faith and we have been implementing it. The important thing is for us to really secure the technical and administrative capacity to implement it. So it’s not a matter of bad faith but of these administrative weaknesses and sometimes the issue of the speed with which things are done.” (Interview 68)

In 2016, Cape Verde requested technical assistance to the ACP-EU Migration Action to “identify the actions to be executed and the specific capacity-building needs of the authorities necessary to the implementation of the Readmission Agreement with the EU” (Rodrigues, 2016, p.4). This needs assessment report concluded that there is a lack of functional structures for the implementation of the agreement, that the national legislation should be reviewed to include readmission and finally, that the national identification database registers need to be digitalised (ibid.).

Impact of the EU-Cape Verde MP on the mobility of various target groups

Despite the conclusion of the VFA and the implementation of a series of activities aimed at facilitating mobility (including the CCV and CAMPO) it remains difficult to say whether or not the MP has had a

⁵⁴ More information on the issuance and refusal of short-stay Schengen visas to Cape Verdean citizens before and after the implementation of the VFA can be found in Appendix 4.

substantial impact on mobility, particularly for Cape Verdeans. Respondents in this evaluation unanimously agreed that the MP has had a very limited impact on the mobility of target groups identified in the Joint Declaration and the VFA.

Representatives on all sides have voiced their concern over the implementation of the first pillar of the MP “Mobility, legal migration and integration” and inactivity in this area is said to be due to several specific factors. First, it was reported that there is lack of circular migration activities that could provide a framework for effective professional mobility. While Cape Verde has signed bilateral labour migration agreements with France (2008) and Luxembourg (2015), these agreements fall short in enhancing labour migration. The agreement with Luxembourg, for instance, is limited to the migration of ten young professionals per year.

Second, despite the existence of a CCV, the process of obtaining Schengen visas for Cape Verdeans has become slower and the procedures increasingly complex. Respondents transmit complaints on the long queues at the CCV, the complexity of the online form, the length of the procedure and the increasing number of documents required. Many state that the process of getting a visa to Schengen seems more difficult now than it was previous to the MP and the establishment of the CCV. As described by members of the government:

“The VFA eases mobility for very few categories of people but for the general population it is impossible to get a visa. Look, I fulfil all the requirements: I am a civil servant, I have a high income level, I am married, I have children...and yet if I want to travel without my service passport it's almost impossible. [...] When I was a student it was much easier for me to travel to Portugal and at the time there was no MP and no VFA. Really, I still don't understand why mobility is not eased with between the EU and Cape Verde, it has become so hard.” (Interview 75)

Representatives of the CCV, on the other hand, explain that they have been overwhelmed by a rise in the demand for visas. Authorities of the CCV have heard these complaints and have made improvements; a new time-allocation system has been set up and online procedures are in the process of being simplified. It is also important to note that, despite some criticism, the government of Cape Verde has always shown its official support to the CCV and viewed it as a positive project.

At the root of this disappointment lies a misunderstanding on the scope of the MP and the VFA. According to some respondents, false expectations were created around the VFA and the general population confused it for full visa liberalisation. This communication issue was highlighted by interviewees from all sides and authorities of Cape Verde noted the need to improve communication on what the VFA entails.

Despite the many shortcomings of the MP in terms of mobility for the citizens of Cape Verde, a few notable activities have been established in that regard. One of the flagship activities of the MP in the area of regular mobility was the creation of a Centre for the Support of Migrants from the Country of Origin (CAMPO project). CAMPO was an information and counselling centre aimed at promoting legal mobility between the EU and Cape Verde. It ran for approximately two years and was a tool to facilitate mobility while also strengthening Cape Verde’s institutional capacity to manage migration. Specifically, connections were established between Cape Verde’s Institute for Employment and employment agencies of MS. The results of the CAMPO project include providing pre-departure orientation, reintegration and start-up funds for migrant entrepreneurs. The EU-Cape Verde partnership for CAMPO ended in 2011 and the Commission hoped that the project would then be transferred to the Cape Verdean authorities.⁵⁵ However, the project

⁵⁵ Reslow, 2012a

was never continued or reactivated due to a lack of administrative capacity and available funding within the responsible ministry. This is a clear example of how certain positive activities within the MP lack sustainability over the long term.

While the impact of the MP on the mobility of Cape Verdeans remains uncertain, the mobility of EU citizens towards Cape Verde is being substantially enhanced. Cape Verdean authorities recently announced a visa waiver for EU citizens starting in May 2018. This is a unilateral decision of the government of Cape Verde that may not be attributed to the MP but rather to the government itself, with the goal of incentivising tourism and investment in the islands. Although this measure does not contemplate reciprocity, actors both on the Cape Verde and EU sides have interpreted it as a way to push for visa liberalisation. In any case, the visa waving initiative for citizens of the EU is encouraging and a result of the previous work on border control and document security. At the same time, the measure also reflects the imbalance of power between the signatories of the MP.

"We are planning in May this year to wave visa for EU citizens who seek to come to Cape Verde, without even bothering with the issue of reciprocity. It has become very cumbersome to process the tourist individual, to get the visas. The long lines are annoying and very discouraging for tourism. So we plan to wave altogether the visa."

(Interview 69)

Overall, expectations for increased mobility were very high for the EU-Cape Verde MP, but the actual impact on mobility for Cape Verdeans is very limited. Actual change in this area will require genuine political will from all parties, especially MS.

Impact of the EU-Cape Verde MP in the field of irregular migration and border management

As opposed to the area of legal migration, the section of the MP on *"Border management, identity and travel documents, fight against illegal migration and trafficking in human beings"* is the area in which the MP has had the most impact. The reliable commitment of Portugal in this area has been a key factor of success, as the country has implemented a large majority of the activities in this area.

The Portuguese SEF (Service of Foreigners and Borders) has proposed many capacity building activities on security and border management. Various security units from Portugal, such as the judicial police, border guard units and military units, have provided trainings and workshops to their counterparts in Cape Verde. One of the key activities in this area was the "Capacity building programme of public security and law enforcement institutions" that ran from 2007 to 2012. Through this activity, more than 100 courses were provided by over 191 Portuguese trainers, who instructed over 1,500 members of Cape Verde's "Polícia Nacional". The Portuguese cooperation also had an important component of equipment provision. Another activity in the area of border management that was noted as being effective was the "PASSE" programme, which triggered the installation of a more secure border control system, specifically allowing for the automatic reading of biometric documents, document validation, registration of data for statistical purposes and back-office information management. The system was installed in airports and harbours around Cape Verde. Lastly, institutional and human capacity on border management was also strengthened through joint maritime surveillance operations. These joint operations have been organised primarily by FRONTEX through the European Patrols network.

Document security is another objective of the MP that has seen significant progress. Concerning human capacity building, several training courses on document fraud targeted the Judicial Police, National Police (including Borders and Foreigners Department), Cape Verdean Airlines, Air Security Airports and Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Visa Department). An outstanding project in this area is the implementation of a new

National System of Identification and Civil Authentication (SNIAC). The project was carried out by Portuguese development cooperation entities in 2010 and provided the material and institutional structures for Cape Verde to transition to a fully biometric identification system.

Respondents unanimously agreed that through these activities, clear progress has been made on border and document security. Two statements from Cape Verdean and EU respondents illustrate this fact:

“So now our passports are biometric, all the new passports are biometric. So we are talking about very modern standards of documents that facilitate the whole issue of mobility, we’ve really made efforts to reach EU standards and that’s thanks to cooperation with EU institutions. We have a very comprehensive, good dialogue on that matter.” (Interview 68)

“Without doubt, the security of documents, the project for passports and ID cards...real intensive work has been done on that aspect from the national administration. On the questions of border security, a lot of work has also been done. Essentially, these are almost the only areas where you can see real progress from the MP.” (Interview 71)

Impact of the EU-Cape Verde MP in the field of migration and development

Given the considerable size of the Cape-Verdean diaspora, all parties in the MP saw the potential to harness development through diaspora engagement activities. However, the second pillar of the EU-Cape Verde MP, “Migration and development”, has not sufficiently progressed since the conclusion of the MP. Although there have been several flagship projects, their impact remains limited. One of the few notable projects in this area is DIAS, which was implemented by IOM from 2008 to 2010 and funded by the EU and the Portuguese Development Cooperation. The project aimed to mobilise the skills of the Cape Verdean diaspora in the EU. Within the framework of the project, 27 Cape Verdeans living abroad returned to Cape Verde to provide a short-term training course to an institution (either private or public). Additionally, France signed an agreement with Cape Verde on “Solidarity Development” in 2008, in the frame of its large international project on migration and development. The project developed a website to compare the costs of remittance transfers. However, specific outcomes of the project for Cape Verde and its diaspora are still unknown.

Overall, respondents have emphasised the need to move forward on diaspora engagement matters and note the need to find ways to mobilise diaspora investment in the country.

“We can work more on the engagement of the diaspora and especially on remittances. We need to create the conditions here in Cape Verde so that the diaspora can make its contribution and invest here.” (Interview 71)

Impact of the EU-Cape Verde MP in the field of international protection

The MP did not have a substantial impact on international protection in Cape Verde and interviewees generally explained that the subject is not a priority within the national context. In 2009, two projects related to international protection took place under the MP; the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs first conducted a needs assessment on asylum and migration in Cape Verde and in cooperation with national authorities, and the Portuguese SEF later implemented a technical assistance project for the establishment of an asylum system. Concretely, this technical assistance was aimed at supporting Cape Verdean lawmakers in drafting an asylum law, but this could not be completed. In 2014, with the support of the third MIEUX mission to Cape Verde, a first draft of an asylum law came to light. However, despite the commitment of the government, the law was never endorsed by the Parliament as asylum remains a contentious issue in Cape Verde. To date, the country does not have an asylum system in place and does not dispose of any international protection structures.

4.2.3 Implementation and evolution of the EU-Cape Verde MP

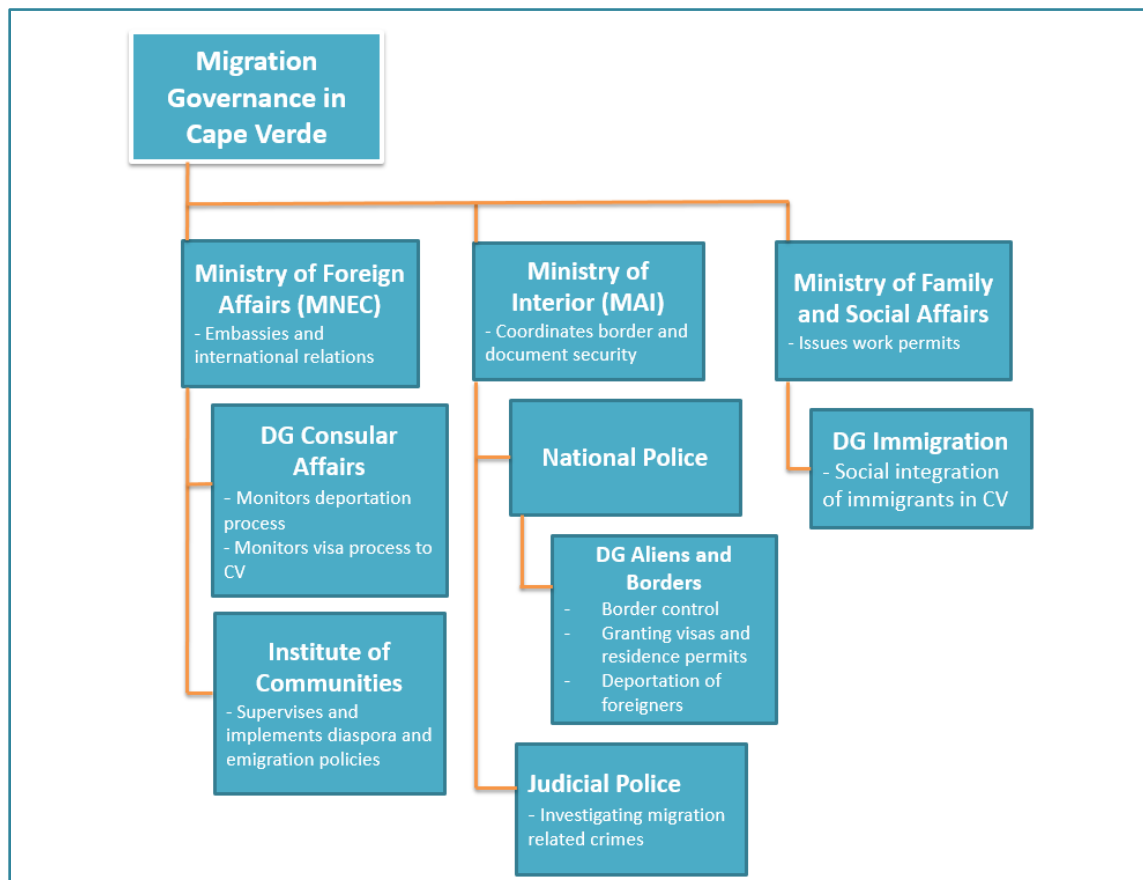
Monitoring and coordination

Respondents unanimously noted that one of the main impediments to the implementation of the EU-Cape Verde MP is the lack of coherent monitoring and implementation structures. Among other things, this is due to Cape Verde's limited administrative capacity; inter-ministerial as well as inter-island coordination is often reported as one of the main challenges for the implementation of projects in the country and EU and MS stakeholders noted that it can be hard to ensure follow-up of projects since there is an absence of certain counterparts in the partner country. Cape-Verdean interviewees acknowledged the lack of coordination between institutions and noted that high staff-turnover within public administration has repeatedly hampered implementation and monitoring of activities under the MP.

"We need better coordination at a superior level, to englobe all the sectors of the MP, work together and see what we can improve. [...] What we really lack is this central structure that would make things more dynamic, and draw people's attention on what falls within the MP and what doesn't. It's important to work on coordination so that all workers here know which projects are within the MP and not see them as autonomous projects, separate from each other." (Interview 71)

Although there have been several sectorial inter-ministerial commissions (on immigration, for instance), there has been no general coordination mechanism between the different institutions in charge of migration and mobility issues (see Figure 1 below).

Figure 1 Institutional framework for migration governance in Cape Verde



Source: Adapted from Reslow (2012, p.4)

However, cooperation and coordination can be improved through the implementation of the MP itself and several activities under the MP have required the creation of commissions and institutions that strengthen the country's institutional framework. For instance, the Inter-Ministerial Commission for the Study and Proposition for the Bases of Immigration Policy (CIMI) was established in 2008 and set the basis for the creation of the Directorate General for Immigration in 2014. In parallel, institutions dedicated to emigration were also created under the MP. The Institute of Communities was established in 2010, which now also leads the National Committee on Emigration and Development created in 2013. With these institutions, the MP is being gradually embedded in the institutional structures of the country.

Until recently, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MNEC) and the Institute of Communities (Instituto das Comunidades) managed different sections of the migration portfolio. However, a reform of Public Administration in 2017 resulted in the absorption of the Institute of Communities by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It is too early to say whether this change in the structure of the administration will benefit coordination on migration issues. National and EU stakeholders voiced their concerns over this change, which may hinder the visibility of migration and diaspora issues at the highest political level.

As recommended in the Joint Declaration for the MP, HLMs have been held yearly to oversee its implementation. It is important to note, however, that no HLM was held in 2015 and 2016, which reflects a clear slowdown of activities during those years. When they did occur, the meetings were attended by various representatives of EU institutions (namely DG Home and DG Devco), Cape Verde's ministries (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Employment, Family and Social Affairs), MS and often ICMPD. However, it has been noted that MS were rarely represented and this has consequently translated into less proactivity from MS in proposing and implementing activities within the MP over the past few years.

"I think that after so many years, we can say that many member states have not unfortunately understood the whole meaning of the MP, because they signed it, but somehow they withdrew from the process of implementation. Therefore, they left sort of a void when it comes to why they committed to it and what they can do; these are the questions that partner countries raise on a regular basis." (Interview 06)

The latest HLM was held in May 2017 and was attended by six representatives of the EU, four representatives of Cape Verde, one representative of an MS (Portugal) and one member of the ICMPD team. Besides discussing Cape Verde's priorities (principally border management), several financial cooperation instruments were presented, among which the MPF. The meeting minutes concluded with a generic statement: "The EU and Cape Verde will continue and seek to pragmatically enhance the dialogue".

The outcomes of this meeting are indicative of the disconnection between monitoring structures at the international and partner country level. First, the priorities identified during fieldwork in Praia differ from those presented during the meeting. While border management was emphasised during the meeting, interviewees designated circular migration and diaspora engagement as the most pressing priorities (see Section 4.2.1). Second, it was also noted during fieldwork that Cape Verdean and MS interviewees were not acquainted with the financial instruments presented during the HLM, (notably the MPF). Respondents generally noted that they had heard about the MPF but were not informed of the possibilities the instrument offers. To date, no activity has been implemented through the MPF in Cape Verde. On a positive note, the MPF was recently presented by ICMPD to 15 high-ranking officials during a field visit to Praia. The same meeting served to emphasise the need for Cape-Verdean authorities to set up regular monitoring and implementation mechanisms at the national level.

In the case of the EU-Cape Verde MP, no LCP has been installed to oversee the implementation of the MP in the country and consequently, the MP did not have a dedicated monitoring committee in the country. Instead, the state of implementation of the MP was reviewed during the meetings of the Special Partnership Local Monitoring Group, taking place twice a year in Praia. As noted by one of the interviewees:

“We have the Local Monitoring Group (GLS) of the Special Partnership and then the Technical Monitoring Group in Brussels. These meetings are held twice a year and in each of them, mobility is featured prominently. So there’s no need for another monitoring mechanism.” (Interview 73)

However, on several occasions, activities of the MP were not included on the agenda of these follow-up meetings, which hampered efficient monitoring in the long term. This also resulted in the fact that the scoreboard was rarely looked at or updated during the meetings of the Special Partnership Monitoring Group. Respondents were all acquainted with the existence of the scoreboard, but it is rarely used for strategic purposes.

Lastly, the implementation of legal agreements on Visa Facilitation and Readmission is overseen through the mixed committees. Each agreement is monitored by its corresponding mixed committee. Meetings are held once a year for each agreement and are attended by representatives of all three parties (EU, MS and Cape Verde).

Challenges encountered during the implementation of the EU-Cape Verde MP

In addition to poor inter-ministerial and inter-island coordination and inadequate monitoring and implementation structures, this section briefly highlights challenges faced in the implementation of the EU-Cape Verde MP.

Communication

A major obstacle to the efficient implementation of the MP is the lack of clear communication at the national and multilateral levels. This refers, first, to a general lack of information at the Cape Verdean and MS level on the purpose and scope of the MP. The low visibility and the general lack of knowledge on the possibilities within the MP accordingly hindered cooperation opportunities. Second, there has also been poor communication between the parties involved in the MP and many respondents admitted that the MP unintentionally created false expectations; while Cape Verdeans expected tangible progress on regular and labour migration, activities under the MP have focused on less visible areas such as border management and document security. This confusion created a palpable disappointment both at the societal and political levels in Cape Verde.

Sustainability of projects

Issues of institutional capacity and communication feed into another major challenge for the implementation of the MP in Cape Verde, namely the limited sustainability of its outcomes. A high turnover of staff and the lack of coherent monitoring mechanisms, notably the inadequate use of the scoreboard, on both the EU and the Cape Verdean side greatly limits the institutional memory of the MP. In turn, this is a major obstacle to the long-term impact of projects under the MP and most projects listed within the scoreboard appear as “completed” without stated results.

Local ownership

Lastly, a major challenge identified in the case of the EU Cape Verde MP is the lack of local ownership. For instance, contrary to other MPs (Moldova, Georgia), the task of monitoring and updating the scoreboard

remains the responsibility of the EU. There are several reasons explaining the lack of local ownership. First, coming back to the challenge of institutional capacity, Cape Verde might simply have lacked the political will, as well as the financial and human resources, to ensure the continuation of projects such as CAMPO. Second, there appears to be a general feeling of disempowerment on the side of Cape Verde and interviewees mentioned that Cape Verde seems to be regarded as a mere beneficiary or recipient rather than as a partner. Interviewees also mentioned the difficulty of working on EU projects because of the prominence of EU jargon and bureaucratic requirements.

Furthermore, it was noted that activities under the MP are often designed by and for the MS rather than by and for local partners. This is not the responsibility of a particular stakeholder but rather the result of a structural imbalance of power embedded within the MP. Numerous respondents mentioned that all parties need to work towards equilibrium in the partnership with Cape Verde. The following quotes illustrate this situation:

"The problem with mechanisms like the MPF is that we need to find a Member State that will lead the project... and all of the funds of the project are directly transferred to that MS. They are the leaders, we are the recipients. The idea that the project can be ours, that's good. But we do not have the right to manage directly the project." (Interview 75)

"I think many times we did not develop many projects because of the restrictions of access to financing. It is sincerely difficult for us to understand the procedures." (Interview 75)

4.2.4 Evolution of EU-Cape Verde MP and the influence of events and stakeholders

Before the MP was concluded, the EU and Cape Verde already had what many called a "privileged relationship". Since the early 2000s, the EU and Cape Verde have cooperated on mobility in the broader context of regional actions such as the ACP-EU Migration Action or the Rabat Process. Many perceive the MP as being "the expression of the very good relations between the EU and Cape Verde and the really exemplary performance of this country". This is enhanced by a general convergence of positions between the EU and Cape Verde in the domain of migration. As noted by a representative of Cape Verde:

"The MP is not an isolated item in our relationship with Europe. The mobility agreement is more a result of this relationship. [...] We share civilisational values, we share identical political systems. There is a whole lot of common interest, especially in this changing world of new challenges." (Interview 68)

The MP has stimulated cooperation between Cape Verde, the EU and MS in the area of mobility through the creation of a political and operational framework for dialogue and action in that field. Under the MP, various ministries in Cape Verde have developed collaborative relationships with counterpart institutions in MS signatories, and interviewees noted that cooperation with Cape Verde has been enhanced both from both a quantitative and qualitative perspective. Representatives of Portugal highlighted the consistent cooperation with Cape Verdean authorities on capacity building in the field of border security and irregular migration. In parallel, representatives of Spain have noted a steep increase in the intensity of their cooperation with Cape Verde, which can be attributed to the momentum generated by both the Special Partnership and the MP. On the other hand, EU representatives have also noted the shortcomings of EU capacities within Cape Verde, which would ideally need to be expanded to extend the existing level of cooperation. According to the EU Delegation in Praia, it is more a question of dedicated human resources rather than financial resources.

In recent years, however, EU-Cape Verde cooperation on mobility has lost momentum. According to various respondents, EU institutions and particularly MS have been focusing more on the European Neighbourhood Policy as well as the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (also referred to as the Valletta Trust Fund), both

of which channel large sums of money. As Cape Verde is not eligible to participate in these cooperation frameworks, there is a general feeling that political interest in Cape Verde has waned. However, Cape Verde is seeking solutions to this issue; it recently applied to a large border management project in cooperation with Portugal, which will be financed by the European Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF). The project is aimed at supporting the visa-waiving initiative for EU citizens; new equipment and border management systems (e-gates) will be installed at air and maritime borders.

Relationship of the MP to other instruments

As previously mentioned, the EU-Cape Verde MP could establish synergies with other cooperation frameworks and dialogues supported by the EU, such as the EUTF, the EU-ACP Migration Action, the Rabat Process and the Support to Free Movement of Persons and Migration in West Africa.

While most new projects under the MP can or should be supported by the MPF, other available financial and technical tools could work to complete certain aspects of the MP. So far, these possible synergies have not been studied or exploited and many respondents felt that the broad cooperation framework on migration between the EU and West Africa is overly complex and inaccessible.

Furthermore, respondents note that the MP is buried under another major cooperation instrument: the EU-Cape Verde Special Partnership. The Special Partnership was signed in 2007 and is a comprehensive tool covering a variety of development sectors. Although the MP emerges from a separate political document, it is often wrongly perceived as a section of Special Partnership. This is a major obstacle to the visibility of the MP as an autonomous cooperation framework. As mentioned earlier, the MP does not have its own monitoring body at the national level. Instead, “mobility” as an area of cooperation is featured during the meetings of the “Local Monitoring Group of the Special Partnership” (GLS). This structuring is not wrong *per se*, but lacks a mechanism to guarantee that all mobility issues are fully covered during the meetings of the GLS.

4.2.5 The Future of the EU-Cape Verde MP

New objectives

It was clear to most respondents that the MP between the EU and Cape Verde needs to be revitalised. This concerns not only the structures of the MP but highlights a need to formulate new priorities for action as the Cape Verdean government’s priorities concerning mobility issues have not yet been formally identified. This review and clarification of priorities could take place either at the national level or in dialogue with EU and/or ICMPD representatives.

Cape Verdean actors wish to shift the focus of the MP towards the first and third pillars of the GAMM, namely regular and labour migration as well as the development impact of migration. These areas have received less attention but are both crucial to harness the development potential of the MP in Cape Verde. First, Cape Verdean stakeholders have emphasised their interest in temporary and circular migration schemes. In this respect, the labour agreements signed with some of the MS such as Portugal (since 2007) and Luxembourg (since 2017) are not yet being rigorously monitored and implemented. Numerous interviewees have emphasised the need to facilitate regular mobility through lighter visa procedures, recognition of qualifications and strengthening the cooperation between Cape Verdean and the MS employment agencies.

Second, the evaluation revealed that diaspora engagement is one of the Cape Verdean government’s main interests. Specifically, interviewees mentioned the need to mobilise the younger generations of the

diaspora, attract investment from the diaspora and facilitate the transfer of skills and competences. The quote below summarises the government's vision on the links between education, regular mobility and diaspora engagement:

"We need to have more educational programmes such as vocational trainings because the EU keeps on importing manpower and that's where we can play a role. In a global world, we cannot think about the old cliché of the brain drain. The world is open, people circulate. A good professional is equally useful for Cape Verde here or in France, for instance. We need to facilitate migration in order to promote development in our country." (Interview 76)

Other new priorities mentioned throughout the interviews include; strengthening the border management system in order to implement the visa waiver for EU citizens; the digitisation of the citizen register database; greater engagement of municipalities in immigration policies; greater engagement of civil society organisations in activities of the MP as well as improving MP-related communication tools and procedures. A more comprehensive list of priorities for the MP's future is presented in Table 10 below.

Table 10 2018 MP-related objectives for the Cape Verdean government⁵⁶

Organising and facilitating legal migration and mobility	Preventing and reducing irregular migration and THB
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Increase participation in academic mobility schemes » Develop temporary, circular and seasonal migration schemes with MS » Implement existing bilateral agreements (France, Luxembourg) » Align professional skill standards to EU standards » Increase engagement of municipalities in the implementation of immigration policy » Prepare professionals to work in the area of immigration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Improve biometric control systems in four major airports » Set up a digital identification database » Ensure data exchange with FRONTEX » Improve capacity on readmission procedures » Offer training and capacitation on "tourism security"
Maximising the development impact of migration and mobility	Strengthening international protection systems and the external dimension of asylum
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Exchange of good practices on diaspora engagement with Moldova or other MP countries » Develop voluntary return and reintegration programmes » Reactivate long-term diaspora engagement projects such as DIAS » Increase MS recognition of diplomas and skills obtained informally » Mobilise Cape Verdean youth within the diaspora 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Conduct an updated needs assessment on asylum in Cape Verde

Revised implementation

Beyond new objectives, what is imperative for the success and continuity of the EU-Cape Verde MP is to enact an effective implementation structure. The absence of an LCP and the lack of MS involvement at HLMs, among other factors, has constrained the momentum for cooperation within the MP. While no specific propositions on how to change the implementation structure of the MP have been formulated by stakeholders, interviewees highlighted three general directions that could be taken, all of which require political will from the three parties involved in the MP.

⁵⁶This table was produced by the author of the evaluation and is not an official statement from the government of Cabo Verde. The priorities have been identified by the author through interviews with government officials.

First, as mentioned by many stakeholders within Cape Verde, coordination among national institutions needs to improve considerably. For that purpose, inter-ministerial commissions on immigration and emigration could be reactivated and efforts to engage municipalities in the implementation of activities need to continue. Besides improving coordination among Cape Verdean institutions, interviewees mentioned there should also be a local structure dedicated to the MP, where all three parties could meet. This is not to impose an LCP as such, but to find a suitable mechanism that would ensure regular monitoring of the MP at the national level, which must be flexible and adapted to the needs and resources of Cape Verde. This platform could also serve as a tool to improve local ownership as well as multilateral communication and accelerate the development of activities. Ultimately, it is crucial to create a dedicated space for discussion on the MP and avoid it being overshadowed by the Special Partnership, which covers different areas of cooperation.

“We need better coordination at a superior level, to engage all these sectors, work together and see what we can improve. At the moment, we need a better coordination at a political level. Better horizontal coordination but also vertical coordination. For the people who are monitoring and evaluating the MP, it would also really improve access to information.” (Interview 71)

Second, the implementation of the MP has also been hampered by the relatively low engagement of the MS. Indeed, the MS are not sufficiently represented in the meetings of the Local Monitoring Group, nor at the HLMs. However, involvement of the MS is crucial to stimulate activities under the MP; actors should try to stimulate MS engagement through the establishment of synergies between the MP and bilateral cooperation programmes, the promotion of the MPF and the possibility to delegate projects to the MS implementing agencies.

Third, the implementation of the MP could also be improved through a greater involvement of the EU at the national level. While the EU is proactive in steering the MP on a broader scale, the EU Delegation in Praia has limited human resources. As described by an EU representative:

“If you really want to fully implement a partnership and complete the scoreboard, if you really want to achieve a higher level, it would make sense to have a dedicated mobility counsellor here, or to have at least a Commission official (...) for instance someone who covers mobility and maybe transport and security.” (Interview 73)

Bearing in mind the existing challenges and implementation gaps, the MP has yielded notable positive outcomes and should continue to be used as a cooperation framework in the area of migration and mobility. The future of the EU-Cape Verde MP will depend on the political will and commitment of each stakeholder and, critically, on the establishment of a certain equilibrium in their relationships. Cape Verde will need to internally conduct a clear and concise identification of priorities and strengthen institutional coordination mechanisms. On the other hand, MS signatories and DG Home will need to be proactive in infusing dynamism into the MP.

4.3 Georgia

The MP with Georgia was signed in 2009, representing only the third country to sign an MP with the EU. Nine years after the signature of the Joint Declaration, stakeholders are divided as to its impacts. While some highlight the positive impacts of flagship and MPF projects, others perceive little concrete results from the MP. This division appears to stem from a disagreement over the definition and scope of the MP as a political framework. Respondents are therefore keen to reach a shared understanding of the MP in the future and utilise it to advance migration- and asylum-related issues in Georgia.

4.3.1 Objectives and expectations of the EU-Georgia MP

Specific objectives of the Georgian government in signing the MP focused on physical mobility and migration, including visa-free travel and creating more legal migration channels for its citizens to the EU. The government was especially interested in circular migration schemes and creating the ideal “triple win” situation in which the EU, Georgia and migrants themselves all benefit from legal migration and promote economic growth in Georgia. Less frequently mentioned objectives of the MP included facilitating the successful implementation of the EU Georgia Readmission Agreement, exposing Georgian workers to the EU labour market and business practices and improving the conditions of irregular Georgian migrants working in the EU.

Respondents representing both Georgia and the EU frequently made note of Georgians’ strong affinity towards the EU and noted that Georgians “feel that they are Europeans”. This affinity was expressed through a strong and sustained interest of closer cooperation with the EU and the MP was therefore seen by the Georgian government as an opportunity to enhance this connection by producing concrete collaborations between the two parties. Politically, it is also important to note that the signing of the MP in 2009 came one year after the Russo-Georgian War and sent a strong pro-EU signal to the Georgian population.

4.3.2 Impact of the EU-Georgia MP

Perhaps one of the most significant limitations of the EU-Georgia MP is the confusion and difference of opinions surrounding what the MP is and what it covers. Respondents from the Georgian government noted that they consistently received contradictory answers as to how the MP should be defined, with DG Home stating that any project that is thematically relevant to the Joint Declaration and is funded by the EU or MS belongs to the MP and the EU Delegation in Georgia advocating a more limited view of what the partnership entails. While there are benefits to either approach, it is important to give clear direction and have all actors on the same page to be able to move forward in an efficient way. Respondents noted that the confusion in defining the MP affected not only the ministries and commissions directly working with the MP but also line ministries, with different ministries receiving conflicting answers and therefore taking different operational approaches in utilising the MP.

This difference in opinion and approach towards the MP as a framework was pervasive throughout the interviews and resulted in widely varying opinions of the impacts of the EU-Georgia MP. Some respondents felt that the MP had had very limited or even no impact in the field of migration and asylum in Georgia, noting that while it had a lot of potential, this did not materialise in the end. One respondent stated:

“If you try to see what exactly the link is between MP and any results, I will be very surprised if you find it.” (Interview 44)

This perceived lack of impact was often linked to the failure of MS to implement and lead projects independent of the EU or international organisations (theoretically the primary avenue for collaboration within the MP). Projects that were led by the EU or implemented by international organisations in which MS joined were not classed as MP projects by these respondents.

Other respondents acknowledged that the MP did have an impact on capacity building and strengthening overall coordination and strategic vision of migration management in Georgia. While these impacts will be discussed in more depth in the following sections, respondents also noted that the MP (and complementary tools such as the RA, VFA and VLAP) allowed the Georgian government to view migration in a more comprehensive way and as a phenomenon with both positive and negative attributes. Previously, the

government viewed Georgians abroad as problematic and because of these tools, it adopted a different approach, highlighting the potential benefits of migration abroad. The MP was, while perhaps not directly responsible for the many reforms and changes made within Georgian migration management over the last decade, a sort of catalyst for change and reform. One respondent noted:

"It [the MP] could not be attributed as the fire but could be attributed as the spark to the action." (Interview 38)

Most respondents agreed that the Targeted Initiative for Georgia (TIG) was one project that could be clearly linked to the MP and had a tangible impact in the field of migration management in Georgia. The TIG focused specifically on supporting the reintegration of Georgian returnees and the implementation of the EU Georgia RA. It was funded by the EU and implemented by a consortium of nine MS under the supervision of the Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, in cooperation with IOM and local Georgian authorities. MS involved include Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania and Sweden. The project was sizable in nature and duration, with a budget of EUR 3,020,000 and an implementation period of three years. Respondents overall had mostly positive opinions of the project and its impacts, which are detailed throughout the following sections (in line with the multi-thematic nature of the TIG). There were, however, management problems within the TIG, particularly regarding disagreements between the project funder and the TIG management team, leading to the project ending with the denial of a no-cost extension and dissatisfaction among some MS. While the TIG was still said to have had visible and valuable results, this ending was noted to be an "old-sore" that may have impacted further cooperation under the MP framework.

Impact of the EU-Georgia MP on the human, institutional and legislative capacities of Georgia to manage migration

Interview respondents representing EU and Georgian bodies noted significant improvements in the human, institutional and legislative capacity of the Georgian government to effectively and efficiently manage migration over the past decade. However, it should be highlighted that due to the holistic nature of such reforms and the political nature of the MP, it is difficult to extract specific results of the MP versus other simultaneously functioning EU instruments and tools. The ETF's working paper on migrant support measures from an employment and skills perspective (MISMES) in Georgia⁵⁷ notes that the country has made continual progress in setting up its migration strategy, migration-related institutions and relevant legal frameworks, noting that the following changes have occurred since 2009 (the year the EU-Georgia MP was signed). While these developments are not exclusively a result of the MP, they cover similar thematic areas.

- Creation of the State Ministry on Diaspora
- Creation of the State Commission on Migration Issues (SCMI)
- Reorientation of the Ministry of IDPs from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia's (MRA) activities towards returnees
- Enhanced potential role of the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs
- Development of the national Migration Strategy and its revisions

Interview respondents corroborated the substantial and beneficial reforms that have taken place in Georgia, noting that over the past decade, Georgian practitioners in the field of migration and asylum have come to be seen by their EU and regional counterparts as experts and peers instead of beneficiaries and accordingly, projects have shifted from focusing on capacity building to dialogue and exchange. Many

⁵⁷ ETF, 2015a

respondents representing the EU and international organisations noted that European and MS experts could indeed learn from Georgian experts and the Georgian experience.

Migration strategy is a particular area of advancement within Georgia, with respondents attributing this largely to the TIG. While Georgia's first strategic document on migration was completed in 1997, respondents noted that the TIG allowed them to create a new migration strategy in 2013, which included a three-year action plan that was intended to be easily revisable to remain up-to-date in light of ongoing V LAP-related reforms. While this second migration strategy had notable deficiencies, respondents felt that it was critical as a transitional document and gave the SCMI vital experience in implementing an action plan. In 2015, work began on a third version of the migration strategy, which was completed by the SCMI and widely circulated as the Migration Strategy of Georgia 2016-2020.⁵⁸ This document is said to reflect lessons learned during the creation of the two previous documents and to accurately capture the Georgian government's priorities in the field of migration and asylum, as well as other policy areas, within the short to medium term.

Legislatively, many changes have also taken place in the past decade in the field of migration and asylum within Georgia. The objectives of recently passed legislation encompass improving migration data, encouraging diaspora engagement, simplifying citizenship determination, addressing irregular migration, regulating the labour emigration of Georgians abroad and creating a legal framework on international protection. Specific legislation approved in the field of migration and asylum is listed in detail in Table 11.

Table 11: Migration and asylum-related legislation passed in Georgia since 2009

2011 Law on Personal Data Protection	The active application of this law is intended to increase the quality and reliability of migration statistics (SCMI, 2015)
2011 Georgian Law on Diaspora Organisations and Compatriots Living Abroad	Defines the legal status of diaspora organisations and compatriots living abroad, the documents necessary to acquire this status and provides definition of diaspora organisation. Intended to encourage compatriots and expatriates living abroad to maintain contact with Georgia, retain national identity and to return to Georgia (CARIM-east, 2018b)
2014 Law on Georgian Citizenship	This law simplifies the determination of Georgian citizenship and altered the process for naturalisation. This law is in full compliance with the 1961 UN Convention of the reduction in statelessness (State Commission on Migration Issues, 2015).
2014 Law on the legal status of Aliens and Stateless Persons	This law repealed the previous law of 2006 on the legal status of aliens and was passed in response to Georgia's extremely open visa policy, which according to the government required regulation with international standards (Ministry of Justice of Georgia, Ministry for Internal Affairs of Georgia, & Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Georgia, 2014). The law aims to decrease unregulated migration flows and establish a clear and common approach to visa policy and immigration into the country that is line with the EU-Georgia Visa Liberalisation Action Plan (ICMPD, n.d.)a. Specifically, the law introduced new visa and residence permit categories and expulsion mechanisms for people deemed to have no right of stay (State Commission on Migration Issues, 2015)
2015 Law of Georgia on Labour Migration	Regulates labour emigration of citizens abroad, particularly emigration through intermediary organisations (State Commission on Migration Issues, 2015). Allows for equal access to the labour market for legal migrants residing in Georgia (State Commission on Migration Issues, 2015).

⁵⁸ http://migration.commission.ge/files/migration_strategy_2016-2020.pdf

2016 Law of Georgia on International Protection	Establishes a legal framework for asylum procedures and ensures human rights to those who are seeking asylum, refugees and beneficiaries of human protection (UNHCR, 2016). Refugee status is defined and must be granted to those who have a reasonable fear that they might be a victim of persecution on the basis of race, religion, faith, ethnicity, belonging to a certain social group or political views (State Commission on Migration Issues, 2017). This law repeals the Law of Georgia on Refugee and Humanitarian Status of December 2011.
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Impact of the EU-Georgia MP on the implementation of legal commitments

Georgia and the EU have established multiple legal commitments related to the field of migration and asylum, including an RA (entered into force in March 2011), a VFA (entered into force in March 2011), the VLAP and subsequent granting of visa-free travel for Georgians to the EU / Schengen (granted March 2017) and broader instruments such as the Association Agreement (signed in June 2014) and access to the DCFTA. Respondents' opinions on the impact of the EU-Georgia MP on the implementation of legal commitments were mixed; most felt that the MP supported Georgia in implementing the RA, but opinions varied more regarding support in meeting VLAP benchmarks.

It was noted by respondents that the Georgian government recognised the *quid-pro-quo* nature of the RA and felt that if this was functioning well, visa-free travel to the EU would be granted in return. By contextualising the RA in a more positive framework focused on migration and development, return was not seen as a command but as a channel for cooperation. Respondents unanimously felt that the EU-Georgia RA was functioning very well, largely due to Georgia's Readmission Case Management Electronic System, which is unique among third countries that have signed an RA with the EU. This system allows for virtual knowledge management of the readmission process and is seen as being highly effective by all stakeholders involved. The report of the second LCP in Tbilisi states that between March 2011 and June 2017, a total of 7,768 readmission requests were made by MS and only 393 were refused by the Georgian government, resulting in an approval rate of approximately 95 percent. The report also notes that the Georgian government would like to use this success to conclude protocols with specific MS as well as to facilitate the signing of readmission agreements with other third countries.

The synergies shared between the objectives of the MP (largely based on the 4 GAMM pillars) and Block 2 of the VLAP, which focuses on migration management and asylum, were widely recognised by respondents, but opinions were mixed as to the impact of the MP in supporting the Georgian government in meeting Block 2 benchmarks. The ENIGMMA project (Enhancing Georgia's Migration Management)⁵⁹, which is funded by the EU and implemented by ICMPPD, focused specifically on strengthening the migration governance framework in Georgia in line with the VLAP and likely had the greatest degree of impact in this area. However, while the ENIGMMA project is included in the MP scoreboard, many respondents noted that it is not considered an MP project.

More generally, most respondents noted that the MP helped the Georgian government in achieving VLAP benchmarks through the introduction of best practices, collaboration with EU experts, and general reform of the migration management framework within Georgia, which was a shared objective between the MP and VLAP. However, respondents felt that in addition to the MP, the strong commitment of the Georgian government as well as other targeted initiatives such as ENIGMMA probably played a stronger role in supporting the achievement of VLAP benchmarks.

⁵⁹ ICMPPD, n.d.(b)

Impact of the EU-Georgia MP on the mobility of various target groups

For the purpose of this evaluation, mobility can be viewed in two forms: the movement of individuals (particularly Georgians to the EU) that prohibits labour market access and movement that allows labour market access. The Georgian government's goal of visa-free travel was achieved in 2017. This accomplishment allows for Georgians to travel to the EU as tourists, to visit family or friends, or to attend professional events and exchanges such as conferences or expositions. Another possible benefit could impact small Georgian businesses which might have otherwise lacked the financial or temporal resources to obtain EU visas to meet potential business partners within the EU. However, the biggest impact of visa-free travel for Georgians to the EU was said to be political in nature in that it sent a strong signal from the EU to Georgians saying, according to one respondent:

*"Look, we care about cooperation with you and we want to make sure that you are part of the European family."
(Interview 47)*

However, respondents were also sceptical about the tangible impacts of visa-free travel felt by average Georgian citizens, emphasising that due to the resources required to travel to Europe, it only affected those who never had a problem going abroad in the first place. Most importantly, visa-free travel to Europe does not allow access to the EU labour market⁶⁰.

Due to this and a lack of legal migration focused projects, respondents unanimously stated that the goal of legal / circular migration to the EU was explicitly unmet by the MP, approximately nine years after signature. It is interesting to note here that only a few respondents noted the impact of the financial crisis in 2008 and the "migration crisis" in the EU in 2015 as influential factors in this.

Only two projects were noted by respondents as having focused on legal migration within the thematic framework of the MP. The first was an EU/GIZ-funded project which requested 40 Georgian workers within the medical and hospitality sectors to work in Germany. Project implementers noted that they faced several challenges in implementing the project, including a lack of qualified Georgian candidates with sufficient levels of German language skills and the fact that most of the healthcare workers remained in Germany to work legally after the project had ended due to a lack of a mechanism supporting return and the large difference in salary earned by healthcare workers in Germany and Georgia. The second project is entitled "Piloting temporary labour migration of Georgian workers to Poland and Estonia", which ran from 2015 to 2017, was funded by the IOM Development Fund and aimed to develop operational frameworks to facilitate labour mobility between the three countries, including job-matching, skill development and protection of labour rights components.

Keeping in mind the widely recognised failure of the MP to facilitate and encourage legal (labour) migration from Georgia to the EU, it is interesting to note that interview respondents not representing the Georgian government felt that the government did not adequately "push" for labour migration. Multiple respondents made note of the general "hands-off" approach of the Georgian government in managing the labour market in general, stemming from an embrace of free-market capitalism. Specifically, employment policy in the country was noted to be weak and there was said to be a lack of focus within the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs on labour migration. While some respondents pointed to the recent 2015 Law of Georgia on Labour Migration as a sign of progress in the area, others noted that this law is of poor quality and was a "tick-the-box" exercise.

⁶⁰ More information on the issuance and refusal of short-stay Schengen visas to Georgian citizens can be found in Appendix 4.

Impact of the EU-Georgia MP in the field of irregular migration and border management

The field of irregular migration and border management has seen numerous reforms within recent years and it was felt that the MP aided the Georgian government in improving document-related services, refining migration-related databases and advancing border protection. The MISMES Georgia report confirms that the EU-Georgia MP has been much more focused on border management activities than other areas to date.⁶¹ While numerous border management projects were implemented in efforts to meet requirements of the VLAP, respondents working in this area frequently noted the effectiveness of two recent MPF projects.

The first, entitled “Development of the capacity of dog handling services of border guarding institutions in Moldova and Georgia” was implemented by the State Border Guard College of Latvia in cooperation with the Patrol Police Department and the Border Police within the Georgian Ministry of Interior. The project had a budget of approximately EUR 100,000 and included workshops and training sessions for dog handling instructors as well as the procurement of dogs and their training.⁶² Respondents and participants of this project reported that it was successful and that they were able to extend their professional networks to include Latvian and Moldovan counterparts.

A second project within the field of irregular migration and border management that was frequently noted by respondents was entitled “Fostering capacities and cooperation on IBM among EaP training institutions” and aimed to develop relevant training modules and material, organise three regional thematic events and conduct a feasibility assessment for enhanced coordination. The project had a budget of approximately EUR 155,000 and included the target countries of Armenia, Belarus, Georgia and Moldova.⁶³ Similar to the dog handling project, participants appreciated that it created a platform from which they could have a fruitful dialogue with peers throughout the region. Respondents also noted that the project was well timed and complemented the implementation of Georgia’s strategy for Integrated Border Management for the years 2014-2018.

Impact of the EU-Georgia MP in the field of migration and development

Most respondents felt that the impact of the MP in the field of migration and development was quite limited, given a general focus of MP-related projects on border management and irregular migration. One clear impact of the TIG specifically was the establishment of two mobility centres within Georgia, which focused on the reintegration of returning migrants (based in Tbilisi and in Kutaisi). Services offered by these mobility centres included support in creating individual reintegration plans, job-seeking and starting a business. However, respondents noted that during the TIG project, the number of migrants who benefited from these centres was very low and that the centre in Kutaisi did not function properly. In 2015, IOM took charge of the operation of these centres under its “More for More” project, officially titled “Reinforcing the capacities of the Government of Georgia in border and migration management”. This project entailed several migration and development related components, including the operation of mobility centres in four locations around the country and the development of a web portal to facilitate communication and interaction with the diaspora.⁶⁴ Although the Georgian government does budget money for the reintegration of returning migrants (GEL 590,000 in 2017 according to the report on the second LCP in

⁶¹ ETF, 2015a

⁶² ICMPD, n.d.(c)

⁶³ ICMPD, n.d.(d)

⁶⁴ Informed Migration Georgia, 2015a; Informed Migration Georgia, 2015b

Tbilisi, June 2017), there is concern that this amount is not increasing over time and will therefore be insufficient in the future.

According to the scoreboard, there are several projects foreseen in the near future in the area of diaspora engagement. These include a diaspora mobilisation project funded by Germany and (still under negotiation) diaspora brain exchange, financial literacy and youth leadership programmes to be funded by the EU.

Impact of the EU-Georgia MP in the field of international protection

Overall, respondents felt positively about the impacts of the EU-Georgia MP in the field of international protection, but few had been directly involved in related projects and many referred to the larger impact of VLAP in leveraging reform in this area. After reviewing the Georgian VLAP progress reports⁶⁵, the following actions can be said to have been completed in order to meet VLAP benchmarks in the field of asylum and international protection:

- Adoption of the Law on Refugees and Humanitarian Status
- Distribution of temporary identity cards to all asylum seekers
- Creation of a Country of Origin Unit
- Amendment of the legislative framework to allow asylum seekers to qualify for humanitarian visas
- Adoption of quality indicators by the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees (MRA) to monitor the quality of decision-making on asylum applications
- Development of a strategy to reduce backlog of cases
- Creation of a Quality Control and Training Unit within the MRA and the offering of numerous external and internal training courses for staff
- Development of a new database of country of origin information
- Extension of the deadline for appealing negative decisions
- Extension of state-sponsored system of free legal aid to asylum seekers
- Development of an education programme to help refugees access the naturalisation procedure

Regarding the impact of the MP specifically, respondents frequently referred to an MPF project entitled “HIGH FIDELITY: Exercising for asylum procedures” that aimed to identify training needs, develop a virtual simulation exercise to better share knowledge and offer training sessions to Georgian officials. The project had a budget of approximately EUR 70,000 and was implemented by the Estonian Academy of Security Sciences, with the participation of the Latvian Ministry of Interior and the relevant Georgian authorities.⁶⁶ Respondents noted the substantial changes to the Georgian asylum system implemented to meet VLAP benchmarks as well as bringing legislation in line with EU and international standards -- and how it was crucial to share experiences from MS regarding the application of EU asylum legislation at the national level. They found the High Fidelity project to be extremely useful in addressing this need, as well as in supporting a continual reform of the asylum system even after VLAP benchmarks had been achieved. Respondents emphasised that the EU Delegation to Georgia, ICMPD Georgia and IOM Georgia were proactive in enhancing the national asylum system after VLAP benchmarks had been achieved and hoped that existing mechanisms of cooperation would continue to function in the future.

Impact of the EU-Georgia MP on cooperation and coordination

⁶⁵ European Commission, 2015a; European Commission, 2015b

⁶⁶ ICMPD, n.d.(e)

Like the other areas of impact discussed above, respondents overall felt that the MP had a positive impact on cooperation and coordination between relevant stakeholders, but that other EU tools and instruments probably had a larger impact in this area. For example, respondents did not contribute to the creation of the SCMI in 2010 to the MP, but rather to the collective impact of numerous initiatives in the field of migration and asylum taking place at that time. Regardless of what triggered its creation, respondents were overwhelmingly positive about the work of the SCMI and its inclusive approach towards migration management.

Regarding cooperation and coordination between the Georgian government and the EU, respondents noted that this has always been strong, and that the MP is more a result of the strength of this relationship than vice versa. Georgian authorities noted that cooperation is easy and fruitful with the EU and non-Georgian respondents applauded the proactiveness and dedication of the Georgian authorities, stating that there is a “huge amount of trust and goodwill” between the different parties.

On cooperation and coordination between the Georgian government and MS, it was frequently noted that projects within the MP umbrella have aided in strengthening relationships. The various Georgian ministries interviewed all spoke of candid relationships with MS which allowed them to share their priorities and objectives for the future with relevant MS counterparts in the hopes of establishing future collaborations. Several respondents even noted that the creation of such networks between Georgian and MS subject-matter experts is the most important impact of the MP to date.

4.3.3 Implementation of the EU-Georgia MP

Monitoring and coordination

At the time of the signing of the Joint Declaration, the Office of the State Minister of Georgia on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration was tasked with its coordination and implementation. This was seen as a compromise in that there was no agency at the time (in 2009) focused on migration specifically and so it was the best fit thematically. The main task of this Office was to coordinate the elaboration of the National Action Plan for the implementation of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement and the Association Agenda, as well as coordinating its implementation. The Office therefore had a very broad mandate and dealt with other policy areas outside of migration and asylum. After signing, the MP file was shifted around various departments without dedicated attention until 2015, when the European Integration Coordination Department took it up in earnest. This Department was heavily involved in the restarting of the monitoring meetings within the MP (an HLM took place in 2016 and an LCP in 2017) and undertook an effort to update and clean the MP scoreboard. However, several respondents noted that this Office was perhaps not the best choice for the coordination of the MP. Due to its broad mandate, it was seen as lacking thematic expertise in the area of migration and its leverage with other ministries within the government was noted to be limited.

The State Commission on Migration Issues (SCMI) also has a thematic mandate over the area of migration. It was created in 2010 and tasked with coordinating all of the institutions within the Georgian government involved in migration management (currently 10). The creation of the SCMI showcases the Georgian government’s comprehensive understanding of migration management in going beyond border controls and document security to examine more complex issues such as migration and development linkages. The SCMI intends to operationalise this more comprehensive view of migration through inter-ministerial and interdisciplinary cooperation, while additionally including NGOs, international organisations and migrant-led organisations within its processes. The SCMI holds migration project coordination meetings twice a year. Respondents unanimously perceived the SCMI to be a strong and competent body that performed

the vital task of coordination, but also provided strategic direction and momentum within the field of migration and asylum.

In an effort to reduce bureaucracy and minimise duplications, the Georgian government is currently undergoing a significant restructuring. Most notably, the Office of the State Minister will be merged with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with responsibility for overall coordination of the MP being tasked to the SCMI Secretariat, in close cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

MP Architecture

Respondents overall were dissatisfied with the monitoring and coordination of the EU-Georgia MP, noting the low frequency of meetings, the descriptive nature of meetings, a lack of MS involvement, duplication of tasks and confusion surrounding the scoreboard. Regarding the low frequency of meetings, Georgia has only had three MP monitoring meetings since the signing of the Joint Declaration in 2009; in Tbilisi in January of 2012, in Brussels in April of 2016 and again in Tbilisi in June 2017. There was also confusion about whether the first meeting in Tbilisi in 2012 was an HLM or an LCP, indicating that the two types of meetings are not well defined or distinguished by the stakeholders involved. Georgian stakeholders noted that the limited number of meetings was in part caused by the frequent changes in ownership of the MP within the Office of the State Minister, while EU stakeholders similarly noted a demanding workload on their side as having limited the attention that could be paid to organising such meetings. It was also highlighted that the gap in meetings from 2012 to 2016 was when the Georgian government was heavily focused on implementing reforms to meet VLAP benchmarks. These reforms entailed many meetings with EU counterparts and some respondents felt that it would have been repetitive to have had meetings at that time specifically on the MP.

In regard to the content of the HLMs and LCPs that did occur, respondents felt that they were primarily descriptive in nature and were mainly comprised of presentations about ongoing or completed projects in the field of migration and asylum. While this is critical for coordination and maintaining momentum and visibility of the MP, some respondents were disappointed in the lack of critical discussion or debate. MS who participated in the meetings were particularly disappointed in the lack of interaction or ability to contribute in a substantive way.

Similar to the other MPs, the majority of Georgian and EU respondents involved felt that MS involvement in the MP meetings had been very limited, while MS respondents felt that they were somewhat cut out of the loop and not given a chance to speak or contribute during MP meetings.

A mismatch of staff was experienced at MP meetings, with high level representatives on the Georgian and EU side and lower level staff representing MS. One respondent noted:

“The Georgians who came, it was really the crème de la crème of Georgian migration authorities there, all well prepared, all with presentations, and then ... the MS partners were, how to say, not the highest level.” (Interview 15)

Due to the numerous other migration-related actions and initiatives taking place in Georgia, Georgian and EU counterparts had recently decided that LCPs should be merged with the twice annual SCMI project coordination meetings, in which a specific part of the meeting would be dedicated to discussion exclusively on the EU-Georgia MP. The HLM will remain independent but will occur back-to-back with the Justice, Freedom and Security Subcommittee meetings and will take place annually, alternating between Brussels and Tbilisi. This seems to be a well-planned step towards creating synergies, reducing overlap and adapting the MP architecture to fit the Georgian context.

Respondents also reported larger issues of overlap of responsibilities and a duplication of efforts within the MP architecture between the SCMI and the Office of the State Minister. In an effort to keep up-to-date on activities taking place within the field of migration and asylum, both bodies were requesting similar information from line ministries, which led to frustration and confusion. However, respondents noted that after this was discovered, it was agreed that in principle, the SCMI Secretariat would be responsible for the collection of relevant information from line ministries and the Office of the State Minister would communicate such information with DG Home and the broader EU.

Confusion and contention surrounding the MP scoreboard was the most significant complaint encountered within the area of MP architecture. Respondents noted that while the scoreboard could be useful in avoiding project overlap and identifying neglected areas, a range of issues persists, including the scoreboard not being user-friendly and being difficult to update, confusion over what should be included in the scoreboard and overlap with the SCMI's migration matrix. Regarding the ease of use of the scoreboard, it was seen to be difficult to update in its current Excel format and interest in updating the scoreboard was low, with respondents reporting that calls for updates were frequently ignored. As such, the scoreboard became very out-of-date very quickly and had to be overhauled.

Many respondents noted that the SCMI has created its own "migration project matrix", which logs all projects, regardless of donor, in the field of migration and asylum in Georgia. This matrix was generally noted to be more user-friendly and informative for respondents and was widely known among the different ministries. Georgian counterparts had therefore suggested merging the MP scoreboard with the migration project matrix, in that the matrix would still include projects from all funding sources but would include an option to limit viewing to only MP projects. It was noted that a formal architecture for this merging remains to be created and it is still unclear based on what criteria MP projects will be demarcated.

Confusion over what is ideally included in the scoreboard was commonplace and stems from the disagreement over how the MP should be defined between DG Home and the EU Delegation in Georgia. Some stakeholders felt that the scoreboard should be a broader reflection of work supported by the EU in the field of migration and asylum, while other actors felt that this approach exaggerated the impact of the MP, thereby decreasing the explanatory power of the scoreboard. Respondents representing the Georgian government noted that they had requested an explicit definition and guidance on what should be included in the scoreboard from DG Home to be presented at the last LCP but found the definition to be somewhat vague. At the time of interviews, this issue remained unsolved. When asked what should be included in the scoreboard, one respondent from the Georgian government noted:

"This is my question as well. You are asking me, but I am also asking everyone." (Interview 38)

Agreement needs to be reached on this issue so that all stakeholders can move forward in an effective manner with a shared understanding of the MP and what it entails. Agreement could either entail clear and unified guidance from all EU representatives, or all EU representatives could default to what the Georgian government feels is the most effective definition.

Synergies with related EU instruments and tools

As detailed in Section 3.2, Georgia is the home of numerous EU tools and instruments that focus either primarily or secondarily on the field of migration and asylum. Respondents noted these different instruments and tools sometimes have quite a high degree of thematic overlap and suggested a general inventory of EU instruments in Georgia to clarify the need and objective of each different tool.

Two main tools that were noted to be complementary to the MP were the Association Agreement and the Eastern Partnership. Within the Association Agreement, commonalities were identified between the MP and the third chapter of the Association Agreement on justice, freedom and security. Similar to the VLAP, it was envisioned that the MP could aid the Georgian Government in achieving Agreement-related reforms. However, it was often noted that the visibility of the MP as compared to more output-oriented tools such as the Association Agreement or the VLAP was quite limited. Accordingly, more needs to be done to highlight synergies and linkages between the MP as a political framework for legal commitments and agreements.

Challenges within the EU Georgia MP

Numerous challenges were identified by respondents within the implementation of the EU-Georgia MP, including a limited number of projects funded and implemented by MS, lack of involvement by the EU Delegation, a perceived complacency of the Georgian government, limited institutional memory and visibility and a limited understanding on how to use the MP.

As is also the case in other MP partner countries, the ideal setup of the MP, in which MS take the lead in funding and implementing projects is not functioning in Georgia. One respondent noted:

“We were not able to do anything, Just Georgia and MS directly, that was not really possible. In every successful project, there was an ownership or implementation from the EU side or from international organisations.” (Interview 42)

However, it was also noted in the Georgian case during the VLAP process there was heavy involvement from MS and that they contributed significantly to the achievement of the benchmarks. Projects that were not labelled as MP projects but still focused on the field of migration and asylum, such as the ENIGMMA project are based heavily on MS involvement and are widely noted to be successful.⁶⁷ Several respondents therefore noted that cooperation and collaboration from MS needs to be “reorganised and reshaped to fit the platform of the MP”, not created from scratch.

Apart from MS, there was also seen to be a lack of interest in the MP on the part of the EU Delegation in Georgia. Respondents noted that they sensed reluctance or hesitation of the Delegation to actively involve themselves in the MP and desired clearer definitions and instructions on MP implementation from the Delegation.

Conversely, some respondents noted that they felt the Georgian government has been somewhat complacent towards the MP and was simply responding to whatever came from Brussels or MS as a way of setting the strategic direction of the MP. One respondent said:

“They still have to change their mindset. They are used to ‘okay, here is someone who wants to help us. They come here, they give us money and we do some things and because it’s their money we do what they want to do.’ This process must be changed and must be led by Georgians.” (Interview 48)

Respondents noted that this could be improved by the Georgian government giving clear direction and explicitly identifying its needs to set the direction of the MP in the future.

⁶⁷ <http://www.enigma.ge/overview-3/>

Lastly, the complementary issues of institutional memory and visibility of the MP were raised as being significant challenges within the implementation of the EU-Georgia MP. Limited institutional memory was seen to be a problem faced by all relevant stakeholders, including Georgian government ministries, MS and the EU. Within the Georgian government, institutional memory is mainly limited due to the rotation system in place within most ministries, as well as the long period of time in which the MP was stagnant after the conclusion of the TIG. This, in addition to the minimal involvement of MS within the MP was seen to encourage limited institutional memory among MS. Limited knowledge of the MP within key institutions was thought to have negatively impacted the visibility of the MP as a whole, with respondents noting that the MP was largely “forgotten”.

4.3.4 Evolution of the EU-Georgia MP and the influence of events and stakeholders

From the interviews, a general story of the evolution of the EU-Georgia MP emerged. It was broadly seen that beginning the MP with the TIG ensured a period of activity from 2010-2013. After the conclusion of the TIG, respondents noted a stagnation of the MP in that there were very few projects implemented and funded by MS under the MP umbrella without the involvement of the EU or international organisations. This stagnation was generally attributed to a low level of involvement of MS, as well as the governments’ focus on meeting VLAP benchmarks and the lack of an institutional champion or driver of the MP within the Georgian government. This changed in 2015 with the tasking of the MP to the European Integration Coordination Department⁶⁸ and was further encouraged by the creation of the MPF and its subsequent projects in Georgia in 2016 and beyond. Currently, respondents noted that the restructuring of the government (as described in Section 4.3.3) has placed the MP “on-hold” for a period of time due to uncertainty about which authority would be tasked with the MP in the future and the re-structuring of relevant ministries and departments.

When asked about influential political or economic events that may have affected the trajectory of the MP, very few respondents mentioned the 2008 financial crisis or the 2015 EU “migration crisis”, however these events were noted within the HLM that took place in April of 2016. Within Georgia, respondents highlighted the economic growth that has taken place within Georgia in the past ten years, which has led to not only increased mobility of Georgians, but also increased aspirations of mobility linked to greater international exposure of the country and more convenient and affordable air travel. Government restructurings, such as the current (2017-2018) reshuffle as well as another in 2012-2013 after the victory of an opposition party were also noted as influential in that the key government stakeholders changed.

4.3.5 The Future of the EU-Georgia MP

New objectives

The 2016-2020 Migration Strategy of Georgia and its action plan were seen to reflect the main priorities of the Georgian government in the field of migration. Specific to the MP, the government has also created a document entitled “Priority directions for future cooperation under the EU-Georgia MP” that highlights possible areas of focus within the MP umbrella. These include migration management, border management and irregular migration, labour / circular migration, diaspora and asylum as primary areas. Some areas, such as the one focused on diaspora, are quite detailed and specific in nature. Table 12 presents these priorities in detail.

⁶⁸ The department fell within the former Office of the State Minister of Georgia on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration.

Numerous respondents noted that due to the significant amount of progress made within the field of border management and irregular migration, as well as the capacity building of personnel, institutions and legislation in Georgia, all of the prerequisites are now in place to enable the government to focus on migration and development. Diaspora engagement was identified as a key area of focus for the future and some respondents noted that the Georgian government should be more vocal about their priorities within this area (outside of the migration strategy).

It was also suggested that work within the field of legal migration could, with the cooperation of the ETF and DG EMPL, focus on improving cooperation with Eastern Partnership countries on skills management and overall improvement of the national qualifications framework, which is useful when trying to establish beneficial circular migration channels.

Beyond specific areas of focus, it was recommended that the MP be used to support the government of Georgia in implementing the EU-Georgia Association Agreement. This was seen as a way to highlight Georgia's post VLAP-reality by identifying a new legal agreement as a focus for the MP. Synergies were also sought here with Moldova, in that the two countries could brainstorm together how to use the MP to implement their respective Association Agreements.

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Table 12 Priority directions for future cooperation under the EU-Georgia MP

Migration Management	Border Management and Combatting Irregular migration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Experience sharing with MSs in the field migration management; » Supporting the implementation and coordination process of the EU-Georgia MP; » Continue sustainable implementation of Visa Liberalisation Action Plan; » Supporting the development of the Unified Migration Analytical System; » Strengthening the cooperation with academia and international research institutions; » Strategic communication on migration-related issues within the framework of Georgia's European integration process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Developing border management through further improvement of border management capacities and cross border cooperation; » Upgrading border control capabilities through introduction of modern technologies and equipment for border control; » Improving cooperation with migration services of MS; » Strengthening cooperation with MS law enforcement training institutions; » Supporting voluntary return of irregular migrants through implementation of specific programmes; » Developing effective mechanisms for combating irregular migration through exchanging the best practices
Labour / Circular Migration	Diaspora
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Development of executive mechanisms for the legislative framework on labour migration; » Exploring cooperation opportunities through bilateral agreements with MS on circular migration and protection of labour rights; » Supporting the reintegration process of migrants in the framework of circular migration agreements; » Supporting the development of cooperation and information exchange mechanisms between MSs and Georgian public and private employment agencies; » Promoting pilot projects on circular migration and supporting their implementation within the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs; » Supporting institutional capacity development in the field of circular migration between MSs and Georgia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Supporting the Implementation of Common Interests of Compatriots and Diaspora Organisations; » Protection of Interests and Rights of Compatriots; » Preservation of Cultural Identity; » Promotion of the Activities of Diaspora Organisations; » Developing Mutually Beneficial Sustainable Unity between State and Diaspora; » Encouraging the Process of Returning to Homeland; » Collaborate on enhancing High Skilled Diaspora professionals' engagement programmes and experience exchange activities into the homeland; » Develop Diaspora Financial Literacy programmes for Remittances and Diaspora Investments
Asylum	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Establishing cooperation with European Asylum Support Office (EASO) and Georgia; » Supporting Georgian asylum authority in the enhancement of asylum system 	

Source: Document: "Priority directions for future cooperation under the EU Georgia MP"

Lastly, it was suggested that the MP could be linked with the idea for an “EaP+” model that could eventually lead to more comprehensive cooperation on mobility between the EU and Georgia, Moldova and the Ukraine.⁶⁹ The idea originated in a 2017 resolution, which was passed with the support of 519 MEPs. The resolution also calls for a trust fund for the three countries to be established to support investments in social and economic infrastructure and to maintain collective pressure on Russia to resolve conflicts. Accordingly, such goals also fit within the framework of the MP and connections made between the two instruments could prove very useful for stakeholders.

Revised implementation

The central comment respondents made in regard to revising the implementation of the MP was the need to create a space or platform in which substantive, critical and analytical discussions can be had on the progress of the MP. Due to the outdated nature of the Annex of the Joint Declaration, respondents perceived a need for a space in which stakeholders could meet to review what objectives have been met and which remain to be addressed to more strategically steer the MP. This would ideally be combined with existing MP monitoring and implementation structures to limit the creation of more meetings and the current HLMs and LCPs could allow for more debate and discussion in order to accomplish this goal.

4.4 Moldova

The MP with Moldova was signed in 2008 during the instrument’s pilot phase. Ten years later, it is clear that the Moldovan government has been highly proactive in implementing the MP and utilising it to progress in the areas of migration and asylum. After significant advances in the areas of border management, controlling irregular migration and the achievement of visa-free travel to the EU, Moldovan stakeholders are now shifting their sights to more complex migration and development related projects and are eager to link the MP to the migration and development nexus.

4.4.1 Objectives and expectations of Moldova in signing the MP

Moldova’s proactiveness in encouraging cooperation with the EU by means of acting as an MP pilot country was frequently noted. This proactiveness seems to have been encouraged by two main goals of the Moldovan government: EU visa liberalisation and stopping the significant irregular outflow of Moldovans from the country. Moldova had signed an RA and VFA with the EU in 2007 and after signing the MP in 2008, its sights were set on visa-free travel for its citizens to the EU. Moldova also viewed visa liberalisation as key leverage for wide-ranging reforms and anticipated building its institutional, legislative and human capacity through the VLAP. One respondent noted:

“We worked for many years prior to give the EU inspiration to make the step of visa facilitation and liberalisation. And the MP from that perspective was a concrete way to cooperate with the EU, to build national institutions where necessary.” (Interview 52)

The second key goal for the Moldovan government was to stem the large-scale emigration of its citizens and to encourage the return of those already abroad. In 2010, emigrants represented 21.5 percent of the population⁷⁰, but were also sending back remittances that accounted for 30.2 percent of national GDP.⁷¹ This situation gave the Moldovan government interest in fighting

⁶⁹ European Parliament, 2017

⁷⁰ The World Bank, 2011

⁷¹ The World Bank, n.d.

irregular migration (mostly the emigration of its own citizens), which fit well with long-standing EU objectives. Many respondents pointed to the flagship initiative of the EU-Moldova MP (Strengthening of Moldova's Capacity to Manage Labour Market and Return Migrants) in that it perfectly exemplified the government's goals in the initial phases of the MP.

A less frequently mentioned objective of Moldova in signing the MP is enhanced bilateral relations with MS. Several respondents noted that the government was interested in improving bilateral relations with key MS in order to ease the visa liberalisation dialogue and to eventually negotiate labour migration agreements to encourage its citizens to move via regularised channels.

It is interesting to reflect that Moldova and the EU had similar goals in the initial stages of the MP; the Moldovan government had readily signed an RA as it suited its own needs and the two parties shared key goals of encouraging the return of Moldovans and fighting irregular migration. Such a harmonious start to the MP paved the way for good future cooperation between the two parties and highlights the importance of shared goals and objectives when entering into an MP.

4.4.2 Impact of the EU Moldova MP

Similar to respondents representing the EU, Moldova-based respondents commonly noted the difficulty in measuring the impact of the MP due to its nature as a non-binding political framework. While the impacts of the flagship initiative with the Swedish Employment Service can be clearly tied to the MP, impacts of the MP became more blurred after this project ended. Respondents also emphasised the holistic interconnection of projects in the field, stating that it is impossible to separate the impacts of one initiative from another. Essentially, the effects become cumulative and build upon each other over time. When asked about the political impact of the MP, one respondent noted:

"Like the ingredients salt and pepper; if you add them in the food it brings out its value, but just like this, you cannot do it. This is the case of the MP for us." (Interview 54)

With regard to other general impacts, respondents noted the relatively large number of projects to be found within the scoreboard. While this cannot be used as a measure of impact of the MP specifically, it does show that Moldova and its partners have been very active in the field of migration and asylum and the MP may indeed have been part of establishing momentum and visibility for all of these individual projects.

By far the most frequently mentioned impact of the MP overall was a change in mindset or thinking. This change in mindset took different forms for different respondents. Some noted that the MP had ushered in a trend of structured planning in which priorities are routinely set and an end goal is worked towards in a strategic way. Others noted that the MP represented a "breath of fresh air" in that just before signing, Moldova was an isolated state in which emigration from the country was not even acknowledged by the political leadership as it was seen as shameful. The signing of the MP signalled cooperation and openness from the EU. One respondent noted that before the MP, the Moldovan government did meet regularly on migration issues, but the issues discussed were dictated by the Presidency and did not reflect real concerns faced by practitioners and civil servants on the ground. Instead, the MP encouraged creative problem solving of issues identified by practitioners and civil servants. Project implementers also noted that projects under the MP umbrella introduced greater transparency within institutions and access to information by all, instead of just the head of an organisation. While these changes are difficult to quantify, they are indeed impactful.

Impact of the EU-Moldova MP on the human, institutional and legislative capacities of Moldova to manage migration

Respondents indicated that one of the strongest areas of impact of the EU-Moldova MP was in building the human, institutional and legislative capacities of the Moldovan government to effectively manage migration. It should also be noted that it is difficult to delineate the impacts of the MP versus the VLAP in leveraging reform within the Moldovan government, but most respondents saw the two as complementary and mutually beneficial in that the MP provided needed support and resources in achieving Block 2 VLAP benchmarks and the reforms required to meet said benchmarks brought momentum and visibility to the MP.

From viewing the scoreboard, it becomes apparent that many of the projects under the EU-Moldova MP framework focused on increasing the capacity of government institutions through the training of personnel and the development of legislation, strategies and action plans. With regards to adopting policies and legislation, respondents said that the goal of the Moldovan government was to meet EU standards in all things related to migration and asylum.

One way to quantify the changes the Moldovan government made is to examine the pieces of legislation, strategies and action plans created in the field of migration and asylum. Detailed in Tables 13 and 14, it should be noted that while not all of these instruments were created specifically due to the MP, they were noted in either Moldova's migration newsletters or the interviews conducted. Table 13 highlights relevant pieces of legislation that have been signed since 2008, including new legislation on asylum, labour migration, consular services, statelessness and border police.

Table 13 Migration and asylum related legislation passed in Moldova after the signing of the MP

2008 Law on Asylum in the Republic of Moldova	This law establishes the legal and institutional function of the asylum framework in the Republic of Moldova. The general principles include: non-discrimination, non-refoulement, family unity, confidentiality, protection of minors, social integration. This law also clarifies the forms of protection in Moldova (refugee status, humanitarian protection, temporary protection, political asylum) as well as establishing the conditions by which one receives these statuses (UNHCR, 2018).
2008 Law on Labour Migration	Regulates labour activity of immigrant workers – “labour migration in the Republic of Moldova of foreign citizens and/or stateless people shall be possible when the vacancies cannot be filled from domestic human resources...” (article 4). It also as well as sets requirements for Moldovan emigrants working abroad (CARIM-east, 2018a)
2010 Law on Foreigners no. 200	Law establishes the rights of foreigners in Moldova (UNHCR, 2018). Regarding migrant integration, this law simplifies procedures for work and residence permits (MPG, 2015).
2010 Law on the Regime for Foreigners in the Republic	This law defines the notion of a ‘visa’ and the conditions for which it can be granted. Prior to this law, Moldova issued entry/exit visas to legally residing migrants. After this law, this practice was abandoned and legal migrants are able to leave and enter the country without a visa during their validity of their residence permit (CARIM-east, 2018a). This law transposes the European Legislation including the Return Directive, 2008/115CE and also spells out the return measures for irregular migrants (MPC, 2013).

2010 Law on Consular Taxes	This law mandates a reduction of taxes for a number of consular services (processing of travel documents for minors, authentication of birth certificates for the citizens of the Republic of Moldova born on the territory of another country), in addition to an exemption from consular taxes on registering Moldovan nationals at consular offices abroad. (Newsletter #3)
2011 Law on Border Police	The Law stipulates the demilitarisation and improved professionalisation of the Border Guard Service. Beginning in July 2012, the Border Police will be a public administration authority within the Ministry of Interior and will be in charge of promoting policies in the field of integrated state border management. (Newsletter #3)
2011 Law on accession to the Convention on the Status of Stateless Persons	The Bureau for Migration and Asylum will ensure the comprehensive spread of information on the new procedure in regions where stateless persons reside with the assistance of the UNHCR Office in Moldova. In this context, UNHCR has already launched pilot projects in Mihaileni, Ochiul Alb, Tirnova, Otaci, Nicoreni, Comrat, Basarabasca, Hincesti, Vulcanesti and Ciocilteni. (Newsletter #5)
2011 Law on the Integration of Foreigners	Law that regulates the assistance of integration of foreigners in Moldova and proposes basic support for integration, including individualised integration programmes (MPG, 2015)
2013 Law of the Republic of Moldova No. 257	“About natives from third states obliged to have the visa, and natives of the third states exempted from obligation to have the visa when crossing frontier of the republic of Moldova”. Law provides a list of non-EU countries which citizens of which will require visas and exemptions to this (CIS-Legislation, n.d.).

Table 14 provides a detailed overview of the national strategies and action plans that currently make up Moldovan migration governance. Topics cover all four pillars of the GAMM, as well as cross-cutting issues such as education and labour market participation.

Table 14: National strategies and action plans mentioned in MP newsletters or interviews

General
Moldova 2020 National Development Strategy
National Strategy for Agricultural and Rural Development for the years 2014-2020
Legal Migration
Action Plan on Liberalised Visa Regime for the Republic of Moldova (2011)
The Action Plan for the implementation of the Migration Profile in 2015
Irregular migration and border security
Integrated Border Management Strategy 2011-2013
Border Integrated Management Strategy for 2015 - 2017
MARRI Strategy 2017-2020 (Border Police)
National IBM strategy
Action Plan to guarantee the issue of electronic passports with biometric data, approved by the Government Decision No. 317 (2010)
Migration and Development
National Action Plan 2014-2016 on the support of the reintegration of citizens returned from abroad
Action Plan (2017-2020) on the (re) integration of the Republic of Moldova citizens returning from abroad
National Strategy “Diaspora – 2025” and Action Plan for 2018-2018
National Action Plan on the Protection of Children Left Without Parental Care for 2010-2011
Plan on Supporting the Returned Migrants, for the years 2014-2016
The National Plan for Migrants’ Reintegration
International Protection
National Action Plan in the field of migration and asylum (2010-2011)
National Strategy in the field of Migration and Asylum (2011-2020)

National Strategy on Migration and Asylum (2016-2020)
Education and Labour Force
National Strategy on Human resources in health sector
National Strategy regarding Policies on Labour Force Employment for 2007-2015
Development Strategy for the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) 2015
Life Long Learning (LLL) Strategy for 2020
The National Employment Agency's Information System Development Strategy
Strategy for the development of SMEs for 2012-2020
Action Plan for the development of SMEs for 2012-2014

Source: Migration newsletters and interviews

While there were numerous projects under the MP framework that could be said to have had an impact on the human, institutional and legislative capacity of the Moldovan government, several projects emerged during the interviews as having been especially effective or successful. One of the most frequently noted projects was the flagship initiative implemented by the Swedish Public Employment Service in cooperation with the Moldovan National Employment Agency (NEA) entitled “Strengthening of Moldova’s Capacity to Manage Labour and Return Migration”. This project included the organisation of job fairs, a variety of training and study visits for the staff of the National Employment Agency, study visits to MS for Moldovan specialists in a particular trade, informational campaigns about legal migration to the EU and the organisation of international roundtables on good practices in labour market monitoring. Additional to these outcomes, respondents also noted smaller scale impacts that created changes in communication and working methods within the NEA, such as training the entire staff in the use of email instead of telephone for daily work duties.

Another project that was highlighted numerous times as being effective in building the capacity of Moldova’s public institutions was the creation of an Extended Migration Profile for Moldova. Specifically, respondents noted that this project increased the Government’s knowledge of its migrants abroad and aided in obtaining data from key destination countries. Practitioners also became familiar with best practices in migration data management and use.

Impact of the EU-Moldova MP on the implementation of legal commitments

Moldova and the EU have entered into numerous legal commitments related to the field of migration and asylum, including an RA (in force since October 2007), a VFA (also in force since October 2007), the VLAP and subsequent granting of visa-free travel for Moldovans to the EU (granted April 2014) and broader instruments such as the Association Agreement (signed in August 2014) and access to the DCFTA.

As was previously noted, many respondents felt that the MP and the need to achieve VLAP Block 2 benchmarks were complementary and mutually beneficial. Respondents viewed the MP as helpful in gaining the confidence and trust of the EU in that Moldova could achieve VLAP benchmarks due to the already large amount of activity going on in the field of migration and asylum from the MP. The MP was seen as a reflection of Moldova’s commitment to progress and move forward in the field. Projects under the MP framework that were noted within the newsletters as aiding in the implementation of legal commitments such as the RA and VFA included “Support for the implementation of Agreements on Facilitation of visa regime and agreements on readmission to Moldova and Georgia” and “Support for the implementation of EC Readmission Agreements with the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation and Ukraine: Facilitation of assisted voluntary return and reintegration” (SIREADA). The MP was also seen as helpful in paving the way or, as one

respondent noted, “establishing a natural flow of activities” towards the signature of the Association Agreement and gaining access to the DCFTA. While it is possible that the Association Agreement would have been signed regardless of the MP, respondents noted that activities under the MP framework certainly helped Moldova prepare for the Agreement.

Impact of the EU-Moldova MP on the mobility of target groups

Respondents unanimously agreed that the MP has had a very limited impact on the mobility of target groups.⁷² While there have been advancements in mobility through the granting of visa-free travel for Moldovans to the EU, respondents were quick to note that this was not the sort of mobility they had envisioned, seeing as it does not include those moving for employment or education. Visa liberalisation was seen to be impactful at the political level and to improve the image of the EU among Moldovan citizens, but to have had a very limited impact on regular Moldovans⁷³. While it does allow Moldovans with the necessary resources to tour the EU or visit family and friends, respondents emphasised that many Moldovans have Romanian (or other EU Member State) citizenship and therefore are already EU citizens. This was also emphasised as a cause for concern in regard to the accuracy of statistical data, as dual Moldovan and Romanian citizens who enter the EU or Schengen zone using their Romanian passport may be excluded from counts of Moldovans living in the EU.

Projects in this area tend to address legal migration indirectly by offering information or trainings about EU legal migration channels but not actually opening up new avenues for regular migration to the EU. For example, the project “Consolidation of migration management capacities in the Republic of Moldova”, while deemed beneficial by respondents, focuses specifically on providing information about legal migration and the risks of irregular migration, pre-departure trainings and information for returnees.

There is one example of the MP helping to successfully create a new labour migration channel for Moldovans to the EU. Specifically, Poland admitted Moldovan workers to its labour market without the need for a work permit and subsequently opened its labour market to workers from the Eastern Partnership countries. Unfortunately, limited data exists on how many Moldovans made use of this channel and how long or in what sectors they were able to work in Poland.

It is of course important to remember that the EU does not have legal competence on regular migration and that it is up to individual MS to decide who will be allowed within their territory. That being said, a key avenue for encouraging more legal migration is the negotiation and signing of bilateral agreements between Moldova and MS. Multiple respondents noted that the most effective bilateral agreement Moldova has in the area of labour migration is not with an MS, but with Israel. Under this agreement, Moldovan construction workers are regularly employed in Israel and receive protections on the job negotiated as part of the agreement.⁷⁴ Respondents were pleased with the functioning of this agreement, noting that its signing had eliminated exorbitant commission fees and the health of migrants had improved. Unfortunately, no similar agreements exist with MS. Respondents often noted a framework agreement signed with the Italian

⁷² This shows that little progress in the area has been made since 2012, when an evaluation of the EU Moldova MP was carried out and documented similar findings (IOM, 2012)

⁷⁴ CIMI, PIBA & Hercowitz-Amir, 2016

government and while this did result in the training of potential Moldovan workers in the Italian language, no individuals have actually migrated as a consequence of this agreement.

Impact of the EU-Moldova MP in the field of irregular migration and border management

Impacts of the EU-Moldova MP in the field of irregular migration and border management were noted by respondents to be numerous, as this is an area in which the interests of Moldova and the EU converge.⁷⁵ It is also important to mention that there are numerous EU tools and instruments focused on strengthening border management in Moldova, including for example Blocks 1 and 2 of the VLAP, which focus on document security (including biometrics) and border management. Respondents noted that consequently, Moldova received direct budget support from the EU to implement VLAP-related reforms from 2013 to 2017. Standout projects in this area highlighted as especially successful by interview respondents included the “Fighting irregular migration in Moldova” (FIRMM) project, which involved consolidating operational and analytical capacities to address irregular migration, strengthening the capability to detect irregular migrants, capacitating law enforcement and the judiciary to properly address cases of irregular migration and facilitating the negotiation of readmission agreements.

There have been four MPF initiatives in the area of irregular migration and border security within Moldova. Several of these actions were noted to have been especially effective by interview respondents in establishing networks and good working relationships with MS, including the projects “Further implementation of the Moldovan Integrated Border Management (IBM) concept in line with the upgrading of the European ICMP concept” and “Development of the capacity of dog handling services of border guarding institutions in Moldova and Georgia”. However, other respondents were critical of the use of MPF funds for border management themed projects; they noted that Moldova already received financial and technical support in this area from other initiatives (i.e. the European Union Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine⁷⁶) and that the MPF should accordingly focus its funds on less addressed areas such as migration and development.

Impact of the EU-Moldova MP in the field of migration and development

Respondents noted that the EU-Moldova MP had significantly impacted the field of migration and development in Moldova, but that much more could be done in the area given dedicated resources and political will. Respondents who were involved specifically with migration and development projects noted that the MP (in tandem with other factors such as funding from the national and Swiss governments) helped in the very establishment of a migration and development policy domain in Moldova. One such respondent noted:

“The country has established the discourse on migration and development and established programming and related strategies. That has all started with the very first project supported under the MP.” (Interview 55)

Success was specifically highlighted in the field of diaspora engagement. Moldova’s Diaspora Relations Bureau was established in 2012 followed by the creation of the Diaspora 2025 Strategy.⁷⁷ Furthermore, in 2017, the Government of the Republic of Moldova Decision No. 725 was taken,

⁷⁵ This conclusion is supported by similar findings in the 2012 IOM evaluation of the EU Moldova MP. (IOM, 2012)

⁷⁶ EUBAM, n.d.

⁷⁷ BRD, 2016

calling for the establishment of a mechanism to coordinate state policy in the field of diaspora, migration and development. In regard to specific actions and initiatives, the MP was noted to have supported a diaspora mapping project which has been implemented by IOM and carried out in multiple phases, each focusing on Moldovans in different destination countries.⁷⁸ These documents are currently used in evidence-based policy and programming by the Diaspora Relations Bureau and the State Chancellery of the Republic of Moldova.

Other key projects mentioned during the interviews as having been especially successful included “Supporting the implementation of the migration and development component of the EU-Moldova MP” (SIMP) and its second iteration (SIMP II), “Supporting the implementation of the migration and development component of the EU-Moldova Mobility Partnership and harnessing its benefits for the residents of Transnistria”, both implemented by IOM. The original SIMP project aimed to improve communication channels and modernise the web pages of Moldovan diplomatic missions, provide training to 23 consular offices, create the extended migration profile, and provide financial assistance for the implementation of Pare 1+1. The Pare 1+1 project has since become an independent programme funded and implemented by the Moldovan national government. Matching financial investments made by migrants and their first-degree relatives, the programme also requires beneficiaries to attend business courses and has supported over 1,150 individuals. SIMP II worked to better link academic and research communities on both sides of the Dniester river, improve capacities in diaspora programming, enhance the rights of Moldovans abroad and support families left behind, including Transnistria Region residents.

Impact of the EU-Moldova MP in the field of international protection

Impacts of the EU-Moldova MP in the field of international protection were rarely mentioned in the interviews. However, evidence of such an impact is visible within the MP newsletters, especially in those published after the 2015 “migration crisis” within the EU. Newsletter #13, published in July of 2016, notes that, in addition to the Action Plan on the implementation of the National Strategy on Migration and Asylum, Moldova began issuing biometric travel documents for refugees in February of 2016 and developed a contingency plan in the event of an influx of foreigners.

The scoreboard also lists a limited number of projects that have taken place under the MP umbrella within this field. One notable project was the “Legal and Social Protection of Asylum Seeking and Refugee Children in Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova” which had a budget of approximately 1 million EUR and aimed to strengthen government and civil society capacity within Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova to protect vulnerable asylum seeker and refugee children. Apart from this project, other projects noted in the scoreboard were short term in nature (one year or less) and relied heavily on trainings and study visits.

Impact of the EU-Moldova MP on cooperation and coordination

Opinions among respondents on the impact of the EU-Moldova MP on cooperation and coordination among and within various involved institutions were mixed, with some stating that cooperation already existed and enabled the MP, while others felt that the MP had genuinely opened up new communication channels.

With regard to cooperation and coordination between Moldova and the EU, most respondents felt that even before the MP, both parties had a productive and easy working relationship that, while

⁷⁸IOM, 2013a; IOM, 2013b; Mosneaga, 2017

perhaps further strengthened by the MP, was not a result of the MP. Regarding cooperation and coordination between Moldova and MS, multiple respondents noted that the MP had positively impacted bilateral relationships. While Moldova clearly has historical ties and relationships with select MS outside of the MP, respondents felt that the projects that occurred under the MP framework were helpful in expanding networks of contacts. A similar story was heard in terms of cooperation and coordination among Moldovan state ministries and departments. Respondents noted that even before the MP, Moldova had a great deal of issue-specific committees and was well organised. One respondent stated:

“We organised ourselves because of the MP. It’s not that the MP created this coordination. We created this because of the MP.” (Interview 54)

Even so, other respondents noted that while the MP may not have been a catalyst for change in coordination and collaboration within the Moldovan government, it did work to strengthen the linkages and bonds connecting various ministries as for many MP-related projects, multiple ministries were beneficiaries of the same project and therefore found themselves working together in new ways.

4.4.3 Implementation of the EU-Moldova MP

Monitoring and coordination

Respondents representing a variety of institutions noted the clear organisational structure established by the Moldovan government to oversee the implementation of the MP. Contact points on various topics within the MP were clearly visible and the informal approach to collaboration taken by the Moldovan government was well-received by other parties. This informal approach (contact through email / telephone and generally open lines of communication throughout the hierarchy) was seen to enable a dynamic collaboration.

The internal committee established by the Moldovan government specifically for the purpose of implementing the MP was unique among the focus countries in this evaluation and was referenced by nearly all respondents, highlighting the visibility and inclusiveness of the platform. Officially titled the National Monitoring Committee for the Implementation of the MP, it is currently chaired by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection, but also heavily involves the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Upon its creation, each relevant ministry was asked to designate a focal point who would be responsible for scoreboard updates, attendance at framework meetings and a general point of contact. Meetings of this committee are intended to allow a space to prepare internally for HLMs and LCPs, as well as overseeing the output of bi-annual MP newsletters highlighting the achievements and relevance of the MP. The newsletters are publicly available online⁷⁹ and showcase a catalogue of migration- and asylum-related activities over the last decade in Moldova. However, it is somewhat unclear what inclusion criteria are used to feature a project under the MP umbrella. While most highlighted projects are EU-funded, there are also Swiss and other non-EU funded projects included in the newsletter.

As stated in the Joint Declaration, the MP between the EU and Moldova has entailed a series of HLMs and LCPs. It is worthwhile to note that Moldova has held HLMs annually since the signing of the MP in 2008, a feat that requires a consistently high level of motivation and dedication.

⁷⁹ <http://www.mfa.gov.md/information-bulletins-en/>

Moldovan respondents see HLMs as a platform to share future priorities with stakeholders involved and identify areas of potential cooperation with the EU and MS. It was noted by almost all Moldovan respondents, however, that they are disappointed with the attendance and input of MS, highlighting that not all signatory MS attend and the MS that are present are usually represented by Permanent Representation staff who observe instead of actively contribute to the meeting.

Moldova is one of the few MP countries that regularly holds an LCP, with HLMs normally taking place in the second half of the year and LCPs in the first half. LCPs are seen as an opportunity to inform middle-level decision-makers on achievements and project implementation details under the MP and were described as efficient, providing a platform to link individual projects with a broader strategic perspective. A similar complaint over the lack of MS involvement was made in regard to the LCPs, with respondents stating that MS are usually represented by Embassy staff who are sometimes unaware of the ins and outs of the MP and its functioning. This was seen by Moldovan respondents to represent a break in communication with MS, as Embassy staff usually represent the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. However, other Ministries such as labour or education are the most critical stakeholders for the implementation of the MP. The lack of MS participation at both HLMs and LCPs was seen as one of the weakest elements within MP implementation.

There was also noted to be some confusion on the goal and strategic values of HLMs versus LCPs, with several respondents reporting a blurring of lines between the ideally more strategic and political HLM versus the project-implementation-oriented LCP. As Moldova is one of the few partner countries that have successfully held HLMs and LCPs on a regular basis, it should be used as a case study to examine if the architectural structure set out in the Joint Declaration is useful and effective when applied to real-world situations. This confusion seems to hint that the framework established in the Joint Declaration should be modified to meet the specific needs of the partner country.

It is worthwhile noting here that many respondents highlighted both HLMs and LCPs as a way to inform others about current activities and priorities under the MP umbrella, but that they are largely descriptive in nature. One respondent stated:

"I think it's important to have this dialogue. It doesn't bring anything new for us, but it's a platform where we can share and inform on what we are doing." (Interview 52)

The MISMES Moldova (2015b) report by the ETF also notes the lack of an analytical approach at these events, stating "The reports presented at the Extended Meeting of the EU-Moldova Mobility Partnership Local Cooperation Platform are substantially informational in character and lack the analytical, problem revealing critical approach." (ETF, 2015b, pp. 14). Accordingly, it is suggested that HLMs and LCPs be used as more problem-solving events in which stakeholders can collectively brainstorm creative solutions to problems faced within the MP. This approach may also work to attract higher-level representatives from MS and other relevant stakeholders as it will be seen as a platform where their input will be heard and perhaps implemented, instead of traveling to Brussels or Chisinau simply to sit in on a purely informational meeting.

In addition to HLMs and LCPs, MP implementation and monitoring is also complemented by the scoreboard. The Moldovan government is unique among other partner countries in that it updates its scoreboard itself and has created an online version. Moldovan respondents report using the scoreboard to limit project overlap, identify synergies and take stock of what has been

accomplished under the MP. However, it was noted that the ease of use of the scoreboard could be improved (i.e. making data easier to find and export) and that this would increase usage of the scoreboard even more. It was also suggested that the scoreboard be translated into Romanian to encourage use by more government officials.

The scope of the scoreboard and what projects should be included within it has been decided upon differently by the partner countries included within this evaluation. The Moldovan government seems to have made a decision early on that all projects that match the thematic scope of the GAMM (including projects on legal migration, irregular migration, migration and development and international protection) are to be included in the scoreboard, regardless of their size or the source of funding (including EU, MS, national, or other sources of funds). Additionally, international organisations working in Moldova have agreed to this definition of scope and willingly add their projects and activities to the MP scoreboard. One respondent noted:

“Projects implemented during this period were attached [to the scoreboard] which were in the spirit of the MP document, even if not completely in line with it.” (Interview 55)

Moldovans recognised the flexibility and non-binding nature of the MP, highlighting that this allowed them to utilise it as they saw fit, in line with their national context. The scoreboard was accordingly visualised as a tool to allow the government to track *all* activity in the area of migration and asylum from a variety of external and domestic funds, thereby minimising overlap and duplication and providing evidence for the need for more projects in neglected areas. It could be argued that instead of spending time and effort trying to delineate which projects are a direct result of the MP and which are not (likely an impossible task), the approach taken by the Moldovan government provides a clear definition for all stakeholders to take up and also provides momentum and visibility to the MP.

Looking towards the future, Moldovan respondents anticipate and welcome the envisioned online scoreboard proposed by the EU and hope that it will add even more visibility to the MP. Multiple respondents noted that the government of Moldova would like to be involved in the process to ensure synergies between the time and energy invested in their current scoreboard and the new version. Concern was raised, however, over the ownership of the new scoreboard and which parties will be tasked with the continual updates necessary for such an online tool.

Synergies with related EU instruments and tools

As highlighted in the previous section, Moldovan respondents have understood the MP as a loosely-formulated, non-binding political framework. They noted that the MP has advantages over other tools and instruments that cover similar thematic areas, stating that the MP has (recently) led to the implementation of longer-term projects than the Eastern Partnership, which for them represents more the exchange of best practices and short-term workshop and capacity building exercises. The targeted nature of the MP was also appreciated, in contrast with initiatives such as the Prague Process, which includes 50 states.

Confusion also existed, however, with regard to the current number of EU initiatives required to cover the same priorities and thematic areas. In particular, there was confusion over the 2016 Migration Partnership Framework and how it would impact the MPs. Respondents did not understand the need for a differently-named tool which had very similar goals to the MP but focused on different countries. Respondents were also curious if Moldova could somehow be

involved in the new Migration Partnership Framework, perhaps taking on an advisory role for new partner countries.

Successes within the EU-Moldova MP

The EU-Moldova MP was generally seen by respondents from all parties as a success on multiple fronts. Success factors that have already been mentioned include the inclusive approach taken by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration in managing the MP, as well as the regular occurrence of HLMs and LCPs to maintain momentum and visibility, ownership of the scoreboard and its use as a strategic planning tool and the self-motivated creation of MP newsletters which act as a user-friendly knowledge repository. Other factors influential in the success of the MP are detailed in this section, including obtaining the necessary political interest from stakeholders and developing networks, creating ownership and sustainability of key projects, maintaining some form of institutional memory in the face of high staff turnover and utilising the MP to increase the international profile of Moldova.

Securing a high degree of interest and political will from stakeholders in the beginning of the MP, as well as utilising well-developed informal networks, was seen as critical to the success of the MP. One respondent noted:

“It [the MP] offers only a framework. If you have the contacts, the cooperation, the concrete ideas, you should come with them. If you think you have signed a declaration, nothing will happen if you will not work.”
(Interview 54)

With this attitude in mind, respondents noted that even though the MP is not politically binding, it can still be successful, as long as there is political will on all sides. While Moldovans enjoyed such political will in the initial stages of the MP, this has reportedly waned among the MS and the EU and the impact of such a trend is discussed in the Challenges section that follows.

The ownership and sustainability of key projects was highlighted as another success within the MP. Specific examples include the extended migration profile, which was initially supported by EU funds but is now budgeted for annually in Moldova’s national budget, the FIRMM project, in which a new unit risk analysis unit was created within the Bureau of Migration and Asylum, and an e-learning platform that was created as part of an MPF border management project⁸⁰. Additionally, respondents also highlighted the numerous MP projects that focused on the creation of new laws, strategies and policies covering various areas of migration and asylum. These new legislative tools were viewed as another form of project ownership in that the tools enable a new strategic vision to guide future migration- and asylum-related activities.

Respondents noted that the Moldovan government had managed to achieve some form of institutional memory, despite an extremely high rate of staff turnover due to low salaries and poor living conditions in the country. While this high rate of turnover creates a myriad of problems that will be discussed in the Challenges section, it was evident from the interviews that respondents were aware of what took place in the initial stages of the MP even if they were not personally working in their current capacity at that time. Respondents pointed to the use of ministerial and departmental focal points and information management tools such as the scoreboard as enabling them to maintain institutional memory.

⁸⁰ The project is entitled “Further implementation of the Moldovan Integrated Border Management (IBM) concept in line with the upgrading of the European IBM concept”

Another success of the MP, according to multiple respondents, is that it has allowed Moldova to increase its presence on both the regional and international stages. Specifically, respondents noted that due to the successes of the EU-Moldova MP, Moldova has taken on a leadership role in the Eastern Partnership in which similar methods and principles are applied. Moldova has also been represented during various GFMD meetings and respondents noted that the MP allowed Moldova to implement various GFMD recommendations, such as the creation of the extended migration profile.

Overall, respondents noted that while there are positive and negative aspects of the flexible and non-binding character of the MP, it inspired creativity and motivation in the Moldovan case. One respondent said:

“The MP was more of a solution generator; people were not afraid and there was no punishment for not accomplishing something. This motivates people and it is not a carrot and stick approach.” (Interview 65)

The MP was not seen as a strict legal instrument requiring enormous amounts of effort and therefore was seen by respondents as less intimidating and encouraging of creative solutions.

Challenges within the EU-Moldova MP

In addition to the success factors highlighted above, respondents also noted a multitude of challenges faced during the implementation of the EU-Moldova MP. Challenges ranged from contextual factors such as high staff turnover, limited human resources, corruption and a poor investment climate, to problems specific to the MP, including a difficulty in impact monitoring, project overlap, a lack of project sustainability and lack of institutional memory. However, the most commonly noted difficulty among respondents who have worked on the EU-Moldova MP was the uneven distribution of projects among the four GAMM pillars and the absence of a funding channel available to address critical needs, thereby resulting in a dearth of migration and development or legal migration focused projects.

Respondents felt that the government does not have sufficient resources (i.e. competitive salaries) to retain staff once they have been trained with the appropriate skills. It was also noted that even if the higher-ranking officials stay in place for significant periods of time, middle-ranking civil servants and professionals commonly leave the country, with these individuals being seen as the “backbone” of project implementation. One respondent summed up the situation as “You train, and you lose. You train, and you lose” (Interview 55). This constant turnover has negative implications for the institutional and human resource capacity of Moldovan stakeholders. Respondents reported sometimes not having the appropriate amount of trained staff to implement projects and others mentioned that although there are mechanisms in place to try to retain institutional memory, something is inevitably lost when staff leave the country. It was also mentioned that due to limited governmental resources, key ministries involved in the implementation of projects under the MP framework are having to cut personnel and assign remaining staff more responsibilities without a raise in pay.

Corruption in numerous forms is also a common difficulty in successfully implementing projects. For instance, it was seen to create a poor investment climate in Moldova, resulting in limited trust or confidence in Moldovan-based financial services. This limited trust was heightened by a recent scandal in which the equivalent of approximately 1 billion USD was stolen from the country’s

banking system, amounting to approximately one-eighth of GDP.⁸¹ Furthermore, respondents noted that migration and development initiatives are limited in their success due to this poor investment climate. For example, it was noted that while the EU's Deposit Guarantee Schemes guarantee deposits of up to 100,000 EUR, Moldovan banks ensure a much lower amount (6,000 MDL or approximately 295 EUR).⁸²

Respondents also noted challenges related to the structure of the MP itself. The impact of the MP was noted to be difficult to monitor because of several factors. High staff turnover made respondents question the impact of capacity building projects and it was noted that it was not always possible to accurately report financial amounts of bilateral assistance received from MS due to a hesitation in sharing information on the part of MS. Lastly, it was noted that while the MP had a substantial impact on the institutional, human and legislative capacity of the government of Moldova to effectively manage migration, projects with migrants as direct end users were relatively rare and the number of actual migrants that benefitted from the MP was seen as low. Respondents hope, of course, that institutional and legislative changes will trickle down to benefit migrants in more indirect ways.

Project overlap and a failure to develop ownership within some projects were seen as further challenges within MP implementation. Respondents noted that while the scoreboard was useful in preventing projects that addressed the same or similar issues, this was not always possible to prevent due to the large number of donors and projects that took place in a relatively short period of time. Furthermore, while some projects were seen to have been successfully onboarded by the Moldovan government, it was acknowledged that other projects simply ended without follow up after donor funds stopped. To avoid this in the future, respondents emphasised the need for projects that develop tools, strategies or knowledge management platforms instead of simply providing money.

Outside of Moldova, numerous respondents noted that while institutional memory is a problem within Moldovan state ministries and institutions, it is also a problem within MS and specifically within the EU. Respondents highlighted that there have been four different DG Home desk officers assigned to Moldova over the life of the MP and that while all assigned desk officers were very professional and competent, knowledge of the EU-Moldova MP and a long-term vision are inevitably lost with such a high turnover rate. Furthermore, respondents expressed that while Moldovan political and economic instability is often cited, it is important to note that the focus and interest of MS and the EU is constantly changing, which affects the momentum and implementation of projects and activities.

Keeping these challenges in mind, by far the most frequently mentioned challenge faced during the implementation of the MP was the uneven distribution of projects under the GAMM pillars and the absence of a funding channel available for Moldovan stakeholders to address needs that they see as critical. While irregular migration and border management topics were seen to be adequately covered by projects under the MP umbrella, migration and development related projects and, to a much more severe degree, legal migration related projects, were seen to have been largely neglected. While it was acknowledged that this is likely due to the "migration crisis" in Europe, Moldovan respondents also felt that they had made significant commitments and

⁸¹ Reuters, 2017

⁸² European Commission, n.d.; The World Bank, 2014

dedicated huge amounts of time and effort into securing their borders and controlling irregular migration and were now ready for projects that focused on different areas. One respondent noted:

“Both Georgia and Moldova secured their borders, secured their systems, created biometric passports. They put in place very advanced document security systems, procedures, so on and so forth. So, at the end of that after so many years of support in these areas, indeed both Moldova and Georgia are very demanding when it comes to more support to exploit the connection between migration development.” (Interview 06)

The growth in capacity and knowledge that occurred during the initial stages of the MP has led Moldovans to aspire to playing a larger role in facilitating development within their country. It was widely seen that the only way to get funding for a project under the MP umbrella was to find an MS which is also interested in the goals of the project. Respondents noted that this limits their ability to act, as MS were usually only interested in projects on controlling irregular migration or strengthening border security, thereby making migration and development or legal migration focused projects almost impossible to fund and implement. This led respondents to feel that they are not treated as equal partners in the eyes of the EU. One noted:

“We’ll never shift from our reality if we’re not moving to another, different dimension. If we’re just going to have training of dogs and security of borders, we will always be dealing with this.” (Interview 54)

Instead, respondents expressed interest in more complex migration and development related projects, such as the creation of diaspora savings bonds or beneficial remittance schemes. It was also noted that after encouraging various line ministries to put together such project proposals and then being rejected, motivation is fading among line institutions to act under the MP umbrella. As a solution to this, Moldovan respondents highlighted the desire to be able to apply as lead partners to MPF funding without the need to secure interest from an MS. This idea is further developed and discussed in greater detail in Section 5.

4.4.4 Evolution of the EU-Moldova MP and the influence of events and stakeholders

Respondents generally noted that the thematic focus of the MP had shifted in phases over the past decade. Most reflected that in the beginning, the MP focused on strengthening border management and addressing irregular migration flows. This was seen as a logical and necessary phase, as Moldova had recently signed an RA as well as a VFA with the EU. Securing borders and controlling irregular migration (mostly flows of Moldovans migrating irregularly to the EU), as well as legislative and policy reform, were seen as prerequisites for more complex or multifaceted migration and development projects or the creation of new legal migration channels. This phase also reflected the Moldovan government’s priorities at the time, which were stemming the emigration of Moldovans and simultaneously encouraging the return of Moldavans that were already abroad. Since then, the government is said to have adopted a position that recognises the unlikelihood of mass return of Moldovans given that conditions in the country have not drastically changed and instead promotes leveraging its large diaspora abroad for engagement in national development. One respondent noted:

“Then we understood that we cannot actually convince our people to go back. But what we can do as a government is manage more effectively their migration outside. In this way, we can protect them if we know where they are, who they are and where they are working, to avoid exploitation and THB. We can work on recognition of their skills and protect their families left behind. We understood that then, we can also benefit from their work outside.” (Interview 52)

This shift in thinking is said to represent the most recent phase of the MP which should focus on migration and development initiatives, albeit with limited success, as was highlighted in the Challenges section.

When asked about influential political or economic events that have shaped the MP over the course of its lifetime, respondents inevitably mentioned the “migration crisis” in Europe in 2015 as well as the financial crisis of 2008 as having a significant impact on the direction of the MP and the interests of European partners. Furthermore, visa liberalisation is as seen as a hugely impactful event within the lifecycle of the MP, with respondents sometimes describing “pre-visa liberalisation” and “post visa-liberalisation” phases. The achievement of visa liberalisation and the meeting of the required benchmarks was then seen to alter the strategic vision and goal of the MP.

As was previously discussed in the Challenges section, economic and political instability in Moldova have been a factor in the implementation of the MP. The theft of 1 billion EUR from the country’s major banks of course did not improve the economic situation of the country and recent changes in the strategic direction of the government were also noted to have been influential. Specifically, political instability around 2014/2015 (the 2014 elections gave power to the pro-Russian Socialist Party) was noted to have been disruptive in the implementation of legal commitments such as the Association Agreement and is seen to have created a less supportive atmosphere for the implementation of MP projects. Several respondents noted that they feared that such developments would decrease EU confidence and trust in Moldova.

4.4.5 The Future of the EU-Moldova MP

New objectives

The Moldovan government has clearly laid out its future objectives in a document titled “Future priorities and initiatives for the 2018 year in the framework of the Republic of Moldova-European Union Mobility Partnership”. The document categorises objectives and envisioned initiatives based on the four GAMM pillars and is re-created in Table 15. Some of these priorities and initiatives are already being realised⁸³, such as the sharing of Moldova’s experiences with other MP countries, while others have yet to be addressed.

Complementary to this, objectives that were mentioned in the interviews but do not appear within the official listing of priorities include increased protection for Moldovan domestic care workers abroad, increased integration of the Transnistria region, improvement of the social dialogue between employers, trade unions and the government and support in negotiating bilateral agreements with MS in the areas of trade, produce export, and ease of financial transfers.

⁸³ EEAS, 2016d

Table 15 2018 MP-related priorities of the Moldovan government

Organising and facilitating legal migration and mobility	Preventing and reducing irregular migration and THB
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » More participation in academic mobility schemes » Better assessment of labour market needs » Improving reintegration of Moldovan citizens » Vocational education reform » Bilateral agreements on social protection and labour migration » Implementation of existing bilateral agreements » Modify legal framework on immigration conditions » Further support vulnerable groups affected by migration » Development of the National Qualifications Register 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Applying EU best practices in managing crisis issues » Strengthen migration and asylum risk analysis units » Strengthen BMA employees in the field of irregular migration » Sign Cooperation Agreements or MOUs on migration and asylum with MS » Conduct trainings on attracting funds, project development and management » Ensure data exchange with FRONTEX
Maximising the development impact of migration and mobility	Strengthening international protection systems and the external dimension of asylum
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Develop temporary, circular and seasonal migration schemes with MS » Develop voluntary return and reintegration programmes » Implementing the Diaspora Excellency Groups » Continue organisation of Diaspora Days and DOR programme » Increase MS recognition of diplomas and skills obtained informally » Share Moldova's MP experience with other MP countries » Participate in trilateral cooperation format (MS, MD and 3rd country interested in MP Experience » Cooperate with Knowledge Centre on Migration and Demography of the EC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Trainings to enable BMA staff to provide better integration services » Conclude cooperation agreements on asylum with MS » Introduce EASO training modules » Enhance cooperation with EUROSTAT » Increase capacities within the Centres for Integration of Foreigners

Source: "Future priorities and initiatives for the 2018 year in the framework of the Republic of Moldova-European Union Mobility Partnership"

Beyond the specific objectives noted in Table 15, interview respondents also noted broader future objectives for the MP. One respondent said that the MP should be used to create a greater evidence base for future policy and programming in all areas related to migration and asylum. Another noted that future initiatives related to any migration and asylum topic should focus on local level civil servants as the beneficiaries, as these individuals are the ones dealing with migrants on a daily basis. Lastly, several respondents noted a desire to explore the linkages and possibilities of using the MP to implement the Association Agreement and the DCFTA, as well as to progress towards the achievement of the SDGs in Moldova.

Redesign and changes to implementation

Beyond specific objectives that the MP could address, respondents also suggested a variety of changes that could be made to the architecture of the MP, as well as changes to how the MP framework is utilised to make it more effective and efficient. Within the current MP architecture, it was suggested that the LCPs and HLMs be utilised as a time to informally update the original

annex for the MP by jointly agreeing on priorities and initiatives that can be tackled together by a consortium of stakeholders. This supports the suggestion made by the evaluation team to encourage a more analytical approach to the meetings. Apart from the LCPs and HLMS, it was noted that informal webinars could be used to increase direct communication among contact points within the EU, MS and Moldova to facilitate setting priorities for the short and medium term (i.e. next 1-3 years).

Regarding the EU, Moldovan ministries noted a desire to be kept better informed when changes are likely to be implemented in EU legislation relevant to MP thematical areas. As Moldova has aligned a great deal of its legislation with EU standards, there is frustration among the ministries when legislation modelled to meet EU standards is passed in Moldovan parliament, only for the EU legislation or directive it was modelled after to be changed several weeks later. One respondent stated:

“Being in partnership and being partners, it would be fair to be, not consulted, but at least informed about some of the next priorities that will touch everything related to migration and asylum.” (Interview 54)

It was noted that existing frameworks, such as the LCPs or HLMS, or newly envisioned meetings such as informal webinars could be used to keep each other up-to-date on envisioned changes in strategy and direction.

Respondents highlighted that it would be beneficial to increase the visibility of the MP as there is some danger now of it being overshadowed by the Association Agreement and DCFTA if it is not properly linked and synergised with these new tools. Increasing the visibility of the MP could be achieved through multiple methods, including publishing the MP newsletters in different formats and on social media to increase their readership and distributing them to various Moldovan diaspora organisations to be read by their membership. Other respondents noted that low-cost regional conferences could be supported so that technical level actors from different MP countries could come into contact with each other. It was additionally noted that representatives of the EU Delegation in Moldova should be made more aware of the MP and its potential, as they directly link Moldova and the EU and could actively spark more cooperation under the framework of the MP.

As was mentioned previously, Moldovans would very much like to be able to apply for MPF funding as lead partners, as they see that this will allow them to address their own needs instead of the needs of MS. One respondent noted:

“We are a little bit over the past of just trainings and someone coming to show us. We want to be more than this. We would like the MPF to offer this possibility.” (Interview 54)

Given the possibility to act as lead partner for MPF projects, Moldovans are open to using their country as a testing ground for more complex migration and development policies.

Changes related to new ways to use the MP framework were also envisaged by respondents. It was noted that Moldovans could work trilaterally with, for example, the EU and a third country (perhaps a country that has signed a Migration Partnership) that is currently experiencing a migration-related crisis in a peer-to-peer fashion. Respondents also noted a desire to test applying the MP framework to other sectors (for example agriculture or environmental concerns) to see if the basic elements of the MP framework might also be beneficial in these areas. Respondents emphasised

that they would like to use the MP to become more of a leader at the regional level by sharing their experiences and successful approaches to the MP and could offer trainings in areas such as border security and international protection to other countries in the region. Lastly, Moldovans expressed an interest in investigating the feasibility of developing MP-like instruments between Moldova and other third countries, due to a labour shortage currently experienced in Moldova.

With these suggestions in mind, many respondents wondered if, beyond the MP, Moldova could serve as the testing ground for a new framework or instrument that would entail more advanced cooperation and mobility. While it was acknowledged that accession is not realistic at this time, greater labour mobility, perhaps limited to certain employment sectors or categories of people could be seen as a next goal.

4.5. Value of the MPF

The MPF was created in 2016 through the signing of a delegation agreement with ICMPD to support the preparation and implementation of current and future MPs and CAMMs. The MPF was funded for 35 months by the EC, specifically from the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), the Internal Security Fund for Police Cooperation (ISF-Police) and the Internal Security Fund for Borders and Visa (ISF-Borders) with a total budget of 5.5 million EUR⁸⁴ (including funds for ICMPD staff, internal activities and procurement services). The objectives of these three funds are noted in Table 16. It is interesting to see that only the AMIF budget thematically covers topics such as legal migration and migration and development. Lastly, the AMIF budget makes up a considerable percentage of the MPF's overall budget (59 percent), meaning that there are funds available for migration and development or legal migration themed initiatives through the MPF.

Table 16 MPF budgetary sources

AMIF Budget (€ 2,184,948)
Asylum, legal migration and integration, return and solidarity within the EU
ISF-Police Budget (€894,621)
Fight against crime and managing risk and crisis
ISF-Borders Budget (€617,056)
Schengen visas and borders

Source: European Commission, Migration and Home Affairs, 2018b; European Commission, Migration and Home Affairs, 2018c; ICMPD, 2017

Table 17 provides a more detailed overview of projects that have been funded through the MPF within MP and CAMM countries. From the table, it can be seen that MPF projects focus on a wide range of objectives, including reintegration, IBM, regular migration, international protection, employment, diaspora engagement, and trafficking. Only three projects have been conducted in the areas of migration and development and legal migration through the AMIF fund, but the budgets for these projects are significantly larger than projects funded by the ISF-Borders and ISF-Police budgets. The geographic coverage of the MPF should also be analysed. Table 17 shows that countries such as Moldova and Georgia have hosted numerous actions, while other MP or CAMM countries, such as Cape Verde, have not seen any. While it could be argued that resources should be more equally distributed, Moldovan representatives counter that countries that are motivated

⁸⁴ ICMPD, n.d.(f)

to apply and are active within their MP should be further encouraged and equipped with resources to build upon what they have already accomplished.

Table 17 MPF projects by budget

Budget	Project Title	Budget	Partner Country
AMIF	Reintegration policy for returning Armenian migrants	€ 492,736	Armenia
ISF-Borders	Further implementation of the Moldovan Integrated Border Management (IBM) concept in line with the upgrading of the European IBM concept	€ 173,340	Moldova
AMIF	MENTOR – Mediterranean Network for Orientation to Regular migration	€ 543,231	Morocco, Tunisia
ISF-Borders	Development of the capacity of dog handling services of border guarding institutions in Moldova and Georgia	€ 100,653	Georgia Moldova
AMIF	HIGH FIDELITY - Exercising for asylum procedures	€ 69.211,27	Georgia
ISF-Borders	Fostering capacities and cooperation on IBM among EaP training institutions	€ 154,894.95	Armenia, Belarus Georgia, Moldova
AMIF	Strengthening current and future employment and self-employment programmes through sustainable value chain management systems under the Migration Resource Centres and Local Centres of the State Employment Agency	€ 554.000,00	Armenia
AMIF	Development of Moldovan Diaspora Entrepreneurship D.O.M.D.E	€ 421,464	Moldova
ISF Police	Strengthening Moroccan Operational Capacities for the Verification of False Travel Documents	€ 330.715	Morocco
ISF Borders	Improving the Quality of Border Surveillance Through Enhanced Cooperation	€ 194,893	Belarus
ISF Police	AKT on Smuggling by Air Action for knowledge transfer on migrant smuggling by air and document fraud in select MP and CAMM countries	€ 219,252	Morocco, India & Nigeria
ISF Police	Enhancing Moldovan Capacities in Fighting Against Trafficking in Human Beings	€ 189,302	Moldova

Source: ICMPD, n.d.(g)

Respondents' opinions of the value of MPF were mixed. Positively, it was noted that the MPF is a much-needed tool to add concrete actions to the political framework of the MP. Its targeted nature and easy application process were appreciated by respondents. Although financial caps for projects are relatively small (EUR 500,000), these amounts were seen to be useful in addressing small-scale needs with a limited amount of human resources available for project administration. The open application deadline, easy application process and quick turnaround time between proposal submission and project implementation was also appreciated relative to EU procedures, in which proposal evaluation and contract issuance can take many months. Noting the limitations of the relatively small overall budget and project caps, respondents said that MPF-targeted actions need to be paired with longer-term development minded reforms to focus on structural changes, meaning that the MPF was designed to be complementary to bilateral programming and regional funding instruments. Lastly, the MPF was seen to be useful in encouraging partnerships within the MPs by providing concrete avenues for cooperation between MS and partner countries and limiting the role of the EU in project formulation and oversight.

Respondents also identified multiple challenges within the design and implementation of the MPF, including the absence of a mechanism to encourage cooperation, limited funding, an over-dependence on MS to manage projects and thematically shape the MPF, and its limited political impact. Regarding the encouragement of cooperation, it was noted that the MPF lacks a mechanism to effectively encourage cooperation between MS and partner countries that do not have existing bilateral relations, with projects instead taking place through existing relationships. Concerns were also raised over the amount of funding allocated to the facility. Some respondents felt that the funding availability is very limited in comparison to the geographical coverage of the MF and the project cap of EUR 500,000 meant that larger MS were not interested in applying, preferring to pursue larger funding amounts through other EU tools or instruments.

The most frequently noted challenge within the MPF was an over-dependence upon MS to shape and implement it. While this is of course how the MPF was designed, problems that have emerged include a lack of project management capacity among MS, as well as a lack of interest in legal migration or migration and development themed actions. Numerous respondents felt that a lot of MS that would be interested in applying for the MPF (namely smaller MS with less national resources and accordingly less project administration capacity) do not have dedicated project administration units to implement an MPF project, preferring to provide exclusively expertise or knowledge for an existing project which is managed externally. Representatives of partner countries were also displeased with their limited role in guiding the thematic direction of MPF projects, noting that most MS are only interested in border management or addressing irregular migration and not migration and development or legal migration focused initiatives. Accordingly, the MPF does not adequately represent the needs of partner countries nor allow them influence in guiding which actions should be implemented. Lastly, respondents were concerned that projects were implemented not due to a need within the partner country, but due to the existence of expertise within an MS. For example, an MS may propose a project on border management under the MPF within a partner country. One respondent noted:

"Is it just because you have experts on border management, or is it because you really think that [partner country] needs border management reform?" (Interview 15)

Accordingly, respondents felt that MPF projects need to be carefully tailored to each partner country context and should be implemented primarily due to a demand or need voiced by the partner country itself.

Lastly, respondents felt that the MPF has untapped political potential and should therefore be redesigned – into something more than simply a project management facility. Instead, it was noted that the MPF should actively advocate for more substantial long-term bilateral or regional cooperation within DG Near or DG Devco in order to complement its short-term, targeted assistance and in areas that it sees as priority. Respondents said that the MP is ultimately a political framework and therefore should be utilised to advance political commitments and interest in relevant areas.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

The main research questions addressed by the evaluation concern the impact of the MPs, the meeting of stakeholder objectives, the implementation and evolution of the MPs and their future

outlook. The three MPs evaluated in this study represent vastly different contextual realities and accordingly, conclusions on their impact, implementation, evolution and future vary. The following paragraphs address each of the six primary research questions in turn, including caveats for each of the three MPs evaluated.

What is the impact of the MPs?

As highlighted throughout the report, the political nature of the MPs prevents the establishment of direct causality between an MP and a possible impact. This section accordingly collates the perceived impacts of the three MPs studied, dividing findings into the subcategories used in the report, namely; impacts on human, institutional and legislative capacity, the implementation of legal commitments, the mobility of target groups, irregular migration and border management, migration and development, international protection and cooperation and coordination between stakeholders.

The strengthening of partner country's human, institutional and legislative capacities was noted by the majority of participants to have been positively affected by the MPs. While it is difficult to disentangle the effects of the MP versus legal instruments such as RAs, VFAs or VLAPs, all three partner countries noted a very significant improvement in their human, institutional and legislative capacities since the signing of the MP. Examples of success in this area include the alignment of partner country migration-related legislation to EU standards, the creation of specific ministries, departments and committees that deal directly with migration issues, the mainstreaming of migration and development objectives into legislation and a myriad of human capacity building initiatives. The sustainability of advances within this area is generally strong, as legal instruments such as RAs, VFAs and VLAPs entail regular meetings on implementation and maintenance of benchmarks, which require advanced institutional, legislative and human capacities.

The extent to which the MP aided in the successful implementation of legal commitments such as RAs, VFAs and VLAPs varies by partner country. Moldova seems to be the most successful in this regard as its government was able to identify and act on synergies between the MP and such legal commitments to the benefit of the country. In Georgia, the MP was noted to be extremely useful in supporting the implementation of the now highly functioning RA and to a lesser extent in the achievement of VLAP benchmarks. Beyond the success of aspects like the CCV, Cape Verde reported less progress in this area, as there are widespread criticisms of the effectiveness of the VFA and the functioning of the RA.

The impact of the MP on enhanced legal mobility of identified target groups was deemed insufficient in all three partner countries. The Georgian and Moldovan governments were pleased with the accomplishment of visa-free travel to the EU for their citizens and noted the significant leverage that VLAP benchmarks provided to accomplish wide-ranging reforms. However, this visa-free travel lacks a critical component: access to EU labour markets. Georgian and Moldovan respondents were disappointed in the failure of the MP to open up more legal migration channels for their citizens to live and work in the EU and return home in a circular fashion. The Cape Verdean government also felt that advances in this area were unsatisfactory; the positive effects of the VFA are ambiguous, visa liberalisation has not been offered to Cape Verdean citizens and legal labour migration channels to the EU are very limited in number.

The MP appears to have had a positive and significant impact on enhanced border management and irregular migration in each of the three partner countries studied. Achievements in this area

were often linked with specific MS with which the partner country had long-standing historical and geographic ties and included greater availability of technical equipment and capacity building. In Georgia and Moldova, positive advancements in addressing irregular migration and improving border management were heavily linked to VLAP-related reforms

Perceptions of the impact of the MP in the field of migration and development were more negative in Georgia and Cape Verde than in Moldova. In Georgia, impacts were perceived to be very limited with unsustainable results. A similar story emerged in Cape Verde, as there were only a few projects within the field under the MP framework, all of which has a limited impact. The impact of the MP on the field of migration and development in Moldova was seen as significant and, in tandem with other factors, the MP aided in the establishment of a migration and development policy domain in Moldova where none had existed before. Currently however, the Moldovan government has noted a limited interest or support for migration and development related projects by stakeholders.

The impact of the MP in the field of international protection was limited in all three partner countries. In the case of Cape Verde, the country still does not have a functioning asylum system or the necessary legislation or institutional structure to establish one. In Georgia and Moldova, there have been significant advances in the field over the last decade, but these are more easily linked to VLAP-related reforms than specific MP projects. The MP and MPF in particular were seen, however, as a way to fill gaps left over from VLAP-related reforms of international protection policy and legislation.

Cooperation and collaboration are essential conduits for achievements under the MP. Respondents overall felt that the MP has positively impacted cooperation and collaboration with counterparts and fellow stakeholders within the EU, MS, international organisations and partner countries. However, the MPs were seen to lack a mechanism to encourage the formation of new partnerships (instead of cooperation along existing lines) and the sustainability of networks created under MP projects was sometimes deemed to be questionable.

Are the objectives of various stakeholders met by the MPs in practice?

A key finding of this evaluation is the vastly different expectations and objectives that each type of stakeholder held for the MP. Within EU services, the primary objectives of the MP included peer-to-peer contact and the exchange of best practices, fighting irregular migration and improving return procedures. Based on the overview of the impacts of the MPs in various fields, it can be concluded that the EU's objectives for the MP have been at least cursorily met by the three specific MPs studied.

For MS, key objectives included enhancing historical ties, improving bilateral relations, stemming irregular migration and improving return procedures. Whether or not these objectives were met depends greatly on the partner country in question. MS were overall pleased with the results of the MPs with Eastern partner countries, noting that such MPs provided a channel for them to initiate new collaborative projects and improve relations. However, results were less positive for Southern partner countries, with MS noting that the MPs had achieved little in this region.

The key objectives of the Cape Verdean government when entering into the MP included initiating a dialogue on visa facilitation, collaborating with the EU on border management and security, mobilising the diaspora for development and stimulating regular migration channels. Based on the overview of the impacts of the MP provided above, it is clear that while the government's first two

goals have to some degree been fulfilled, the objectives of diaspora engagement and increased mobility through legal migration channels remain unmet.

The specific objectives of the Georgian government in signing the MP focused on physical mobility and migration, including visa-free travel and more legal migration channels for its citizens to the EU. The government was especially interested in circular migration schemes and creating the ideal “triple win” situation, with the EU, Georgia and migrants themselves all benefiting from legal migration and promoting economic growth in Georgia. Based on the review of the impacts of the MPs provided above, it can be concluded that the Georgian government’s objectives are only partially met through the provision of visa-free travel.

In signing the MP the Moldovan government had two main goals: EU visa liberalisation and stopping the significant irregular outflow of Moldovans from the country. While the first goal of visa liberalisation has clearly been met, Moldovans continue to leave the country in high numbers and often work irregularly abroad. Given continued difficulties in the country, the goals of the Moldovan government have now shifted to focus on diaspora engagement and protection of migrants abroad. This new focus on the migration and development nexus has not been acknowledged by the MP, as in Moldova’s case, it remains focused on border security and stemming irregular migration.

How has the implementation of the MP been conducted / functioned?

The results of the evaluation show that implementation and monitoring structures within all three MPs studied are weak and ineffective to varying degrees. In all three countries, participation by MS was extremely limited in HLMs and (where applicable), LCPs. A mismatch of representation was reported in that partner countries would send much higher-level personnel to meetings than would MS, thereby limiting capacity for decision-making at such meetings. HLMs and LCPs were also found to be largely descriptive in nature and are not currently utilised for strategic guidance of the MPs. The frequency of meetings varied by partner country, with annual HLMs and regular LCPs occurring in Moldova, meetings occurring much less frequently in Georgia (only three meetings were conducted within the past nine years) and no LCP having ever been set up in Cape Verde.

The scoreboards utilised to monitor the results of each MP are outdated, poorly structured and are missing significant amounts of critical information. Considerable confusion also exists regarding the definition of the MP as a political framework and what should or should not be included in the scoreboard. Such poor data tools compound the weak monitoring and implementation meetings prescribed in the Joint Declaration to produce a political instrument that lacks an overarching vision or goal.

How have stakeholders, changing institutional settings and emerging landscapes influenced the evolution of the MPs over time?

One of the most influential elements in the evolution of the MPs has been the shift in EU and MS attention away from Eastern neighbourhood countries to countries in Africa and the Far East. This shift in attention can be explained by the Syrian civil war and resulting flows of asylum seekers into Europe in 2015, as well as increased mixed migration flows from sub-Saharan Africa within the same time frame. Additionally, the addition of 12 Central and Eastern MS in the accession rounds of 2004 and 2007 means that a huge amount of focus was placed on Eastern countries in order to strengthen border management capacities both within the EU and on countries that share common

borders with the EU. This shift in attention was widely acknowledged by stakeholders in Moldova and Cape Verde and to a lesser extent in Georgia.

In Cape Verde, the MP began with a strong focus on border security and irregular migration and with the involvement of key MS, several fundamental reforms were implemented. In recent years, however, EU-Cape Verde cooperation on mobility has lost momentum. The creation of the EUTF and Cape Verde's ineligibility for the Fund highlight the EU's shift in focus.

In Moldova, visa liberalisation is as seen as a hugely impactful event within the lifecycle of the MP, with the achievement of visa liberalisation and the meeting of the required benchmarks leaving the Moldovan government asking if the MP could be used in the implementation of other legal agreements, such as the Association Agreement. Relatively recent political changes in the country and large-scale corruption scandals also worked to impact the environment in which the MP was implemented.

In Georgia, visa liberalisation was likewise seen as a major event within the MP and after the achievement of VLAP benchmarks, the government re-dedicated human resources to the implementation of the MP. Economic growth over the past decade was seen to have not only increased the mobility of Georgians, but also enhanced aspirations of mobility due to increased international exposure of the country and the growing affordability of air travel. Government restructurings, such as the current (2017-2018) reshuffle as well as another in 2012-2013 after the victory of an opposition party were also noted as influential in that key government stakeholders changed.

How can the MPs be reanimated or redesigned to better fit the current context?

Throughout the fieldwork, interviewees openly communicated challenges they faced within the design and implementation of the MP, as well as their own suggestions for improving the MP and increasing its effectiveness in the future. This section works to link challenges and recommendations identified throughout the evaluation to create a solutions-oriented outlook. Challenges and recommendations have been categorised thematically and are detailed below in a series of tables. The text following each table highlights and expands on key recommendations.

Coverage of GAMM pillars based on stakeholder objectives	
Challenge	Recommendation
Absence of a mechanism to encourage projects on legal migration or migration and development within the MPF	Introduce quotas or thresholds within the MPF to ensure that GAMM pillars receive the appropriate amount of attention, according to the interests and objectives of major stakeholders involved
Lack of MS partner organisations interested in implementing M&D or legal migration focused projects	Encourage partner countries, with the help of the MPF, to seek out non-traditional MS partners to collaborate on M&D and legal migration focused MPF projects, such as NGOs and universities.

One of the most significant challenges mentioned by all three partner countries was the disproportionate focus of the MPs on border security and irregular migration issues. While partner countries were interested in these topics upon signing the MPs, significant gains have been made in these areas and partner countries are ready to adjust their focus to facilitate legal migration and explore avenues to link migration and development. Respondents felt that one of the biggest obstacles to achieving this was the need for an MS-based implementing partner within the

framework of MPF projects. It was perceived that traditional MS public bodies are not interested in migration and development or legal migration focused projects and therefore are not motivated to act as an implementing partner in MPF projects. It is recommended that the MPF aid partner countries in identifying non-traditional MS stakeholders, such as NGOs or public universities, that share the partner country's self-identified interests in, for example, migration and development projects.

Limited involvement of MS in MP implementation	
Challenge	Recommendation
MS fear of EU regulations in applying for funding and implementing projects	Promote the ease and simplicity of applying for and implementing MPF projects
Limited political interest of MS in funding and implementing projects in partner countries	Mobilise EU Delegations in MS signatories to highlight the opportunities presented by the MP and the MPF Highlight the importance of sustainable relationships with partner countries and the importance of good relations between the EU and Eastern Neighbourhood countries
Limited capacity for project administration among MS	Allow international organisations to more frequently implement projects under the MPF Create a larger role for EU agencies in the implementation of projects under MPF Encourage use of non-traditional partners in MS such as NGOs or universities within MPF projects Emphasise the partnership element of MPs, independent of projects, including networking and support in negotiating bilateral agreements

Another key challenge that was identified in the evaluation and experienced by all stakeholders was the limited capacity for project administration among MS. This is a critical flaw in the design of the MPs and the MPF as MS are relied upon to take a strong project management role. Accounts from all three partner countries show that MS have broadly failed to take on such a role, with many MS stating that this is due to an inadequate institutional structure to properly manage projects.

To address this, it is recommended that new roles be conceived for MS, international organisations and EU agencies within the MPs. International organisations are extremely adept at offering reliable and inclusive project implementation and administration, with many respondents noting that they would prefer international organisations such as ICMPD to lead project implementation. The role of international organisations such as ICMPD could be further expanded by acting as knowledge depositories to increase institutional memory and encourage more strategic programming under MPs.

It is also recommended that EU agencies play a larger role in the MPs in the future. EU agencies already utilise MS expertise in their activities and generally have strong project management units. The unified vision that EU agencies are seen to offer could be beneficial in that, instead of sharing the best practices and knowledge of a specific MS, agencies such as the ETF, FRONTEX and EASO offer a more cumulative and collective viewpoint.

Institutional and Contextual Challenges	
Challenge	Recommendation
Limited institutional memory within DG Home due to high turnover of staff	Implement a contract with DG Home desk officers in which they agree to keep the MP file for a minimum of three years Increase the financial and human resources of the MPF to act as the key source of institutional memory for all MPs
Limited institutional memory within partner country governments due to high turnover of staff (GE, MD, CV)	Introduce and strengthen knowledge management tools such as online knowledge depositories for each MP Improve the scoreboards and further promote their use
Inadequate involvement of EU Delegations in partner countries (GE, MD, CV)	Clarify the role of EU Delegations in promoting and implementing the MP
Limited project ownership/ sustainability (GE, MD, CV)	Require the inclusion of a sustainability plan in each project implemented under the MP Train and capacitate partner country government officials in project management
Complacent mindset of partner country government (CV, GE)	Make the agenda setting process for HLMs and LCPs more inclusive to empower partner countries to communicate their own interests and priorities

A variety of contextual challenges were identified throughout the evaluation; limited institutional memory on all sides was the most commonly experienced. This issue stems from an extremely high turnover of staff within partner countries and within DG Home. High turnover of staff within partner countries is not surprising given the low salaries offered to public servants and a high percentage of the population leaving as emigrants from each of the three countries. To address this, stronger and easier-to-use knowledge management systems need to be put in place and monitoring and implementation structures of the MP should be increased (discussed in greater detail below). The high turnover of staff within DG Home is more remarkable and has the potential to be detrimental, as a dedicated desk officer is needed for each MP to maintain momentum and visibility of the MP among EU services and agencies and MS. To address this, it is recommended that a mandatory minimum period of service be required of all desk officers. Furthermore, the MPF should be further capacitated (through increased financial and human resources) to account for shortcomings within EU institutional memory.

Communication	
Challenge	Recommendation
Differing objectives and expectations among the EU, MS and partner countries when signing an MP	Evaluate the interests of MS and partner countries for overlap before concluding an MP Create more reasonable expectations of the MP and engage in expectation management
Poor coordination and information sharing at the EU level	Utilise the MPF evaluation committee to increase communication on the MP among EU services Increase the financial and human resources of the MPF to enable it to better coordinating information flows between the EU and partner countries
Confusion over the definition and scope of the MP ^(GE, CV)	Identify and circulate a clear and well-defined definition of the MP that is suitable for each partner country Identify and circulate clear and well-defined inclusion criteria to determine which projects and actions fall under the MP framework Communicate definition and inclusion criteria to EU Delegations in partner countries to standardise information shared with partner countries
Confusion among partner country officials on EU terminology and jargon	Offer training on MP terminology, key stakeholders and processes for new MP partner countries, particularly those with limited experience working with the EU.
Low visibility of the MP	Use the MP to implement legal commitments such as AAs Make outcomes of the MP publicly available, including scoreboards and meeting minutes Regularly publish newsletters on various forms of social media and in a variety of relevant languages
Low visibility of the MPF among MS signatories and some partner countries ^(CV)	Increase the financial and human capacity of the MPF so that it can better promote itself at the regional and national levels

An issue of considerable weight identified during the evaluation was widespread confusion over the definition and scope of the MP framework. Without a broadly accepted definition of the MP from which to work, each stakeholder involved defined the MP in its own way. This led to numerous misperceptions and misunderstandings as to the purpose and objectives of the MPs, as well as how they should be implemented. Such a lack of clarity decreases efficiency and limits opportunities for stakeholders to create synergies in their work. The confusion over the definition and scope of the MPs also seems to have created divisions and contentions among stakeholders, which damaged both communication and collaboration. Through disseminating a widely accepted definition of the MPs, the EU could create a working culture that better emphasises collaboration and inclusive cooperation.

Monitoring tools	
Challenge	Recommendation
Low frequency of HLMs and LCPs ^(CV, GE)	Link LCPs to existing migration-focused project / donor coordination meetings in partner countries (only where applicable)
Limited involvement of MS at meetings ^(GE, MD)	Adapt the agendas of HLMs and LCPs to be more forward focused and to encourage analytical thinking
Low-level representation from MS at meetings ^(GE, MD)	Dedicate time for MS representatives to speak and voice concerns/ priorities at each HLM or LCP.
Descriptive nature of HLMs and LCPs ^(GE, MD)	Emphasize the need for more analytical thinking and critical discussion during monitoring meetings in relevant EU documents ⁸⁵
Confusion on inclusion criteria of scoreboard ^(GE)	Identify and circulate clear and well-defined inclusion criteria to determine which projects and actions fall under the MP framework Communicate definition and inclusion criteria to EU Delegations in partner countries to standardise information shared with partner countries
Scoreboard is not user-friendly ^(GE, MD)	Create online versions of scoreboards that are publicly available Clarify which stakeholders are responsible for updating online scoreboards and at what frequency Where applicable, utilise existing mechanisms in partner countries to monitor migration-related projects Translate scoreboards into partner country languages to increase usage by stakeholders

The majority of stakeholders were not satisfied with the current MP monitoring tools. This dissatisfaction stemmed from multiple reasons, including a low frequency of meetings, limited and low-level staff representation at such meetings and the descriptive nature of these meetings. In partner countries that have strong migration-related institutional capacity (such as Georgia and Moldova), it would be logical to link LCPs and perhaps even HLMs to existing project or donor coordination meetings that focus exclusively on migration-related topics to highlight synergies and prevent fatigue. In partner countries that do not have such institutional capacity, like Cape Verde, HLMs and LCPs need to occur more frequently and should be seen as a platform to discuss all migration- and asylum-related issues in order to increase their usefulness for partner country stakeholders. Additionally, the structure of HLMs and LCPs should discourage a simply descriptive review of past actions undertaken under the MP and be more forward focused, acting as a true platform to discuss the future of the MP strategically and with foresight. Such a shift in focus is likely to encourage more inclusive and higher-level attendance at meetings. To facilitate this shift, stakeholders should be required to present previous accomplishments under the MP in written form, which would then be collated and disseminated by the MPF to prevent descriptive discussion during the meeting. Stakeholders would also be required to create discussion questions prior to the meeting which would be utilised to stimulate analytical discussion on the future of the MPs. Such a model is also more inclusive in that it encourages input from all actors, not just those that are given the floor according to a pre-set agenda. Lastly, each meeting should conclude with the

⁸⁵ Specifically, within the document entitled “The modular implementation structure (‘architecture’) of the Mobility Partnership; Identifying country-specific approaches”

agreement of clearly formulated action points that require each stakeholder take action and work toward goals that are valued by all stakeholders and align with partner country interests.

The scoreboards utilised to monitor the progress of each MP should also be redesigned. First, widely accepted inclusion criteria for determining what should be included in the scoreboard should be disseminated to all stakeholders. In creating these inclusion criteria, stakeholders need to think through the purpose of the scoreboard, what they want to achieve from labelling projects in a specific way and what would be the most pragmatic approach going forward. Next, it should be clearly defined how the scoreboard will be used to encourage strategic programming under the MP. Scoreboard analysis could, for example, allow partner countries to highlight (to MS and other project funders) areas that need more attention. This could draw from a jointly created and agreed-upon document.

While this evaluation has identified numerous and significant challenges within the design, functioning and implementation of the MPs, it is recommended that the MP continue to be used as a political framework – as it represents a critical form of partnership between the EU, its MS and third countries. Improving the MP instead of abandoning it for a new form of cooperation increases cohesion and continuity in a topical area full of EU tools and instruments. The majority of issues identified within the evaluation are relatively easily addressed and several key changes can be made that would greatly increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the MPs, namely providing clear instruction on the definition and scope of the MPs, empowering the MPF to move beyond a project management role and act as a strategic overseer of the MPs and linking partner countries with non-traditional public bodies within MS to use the MPF to address their needs. Implementing these changes, as well as the additional recommendations listed above, would work to create new channels and avenues for progress within the MPs and revitalise their potential to achieve true partnership between the EU, its MS and third countries.

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Appendix 1: Elaboration of research questions

Evaluation Question	Place in Report
<p>Are the objectives of the various stakeholders met by the MPs in practice?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How did the concept of the MP emerge? What were the objectives or expectations of the EU, MS and partner countries upon signing MPs? 	<p>1; 4.1.1; 4.1.2; 4.2.1; 4.3.1; 4.4.1</p>
<p>What is the impact of the MPs?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> On the human, institutional and legislative capacities of partner countries to manage migration? On the implementation of legal commitments (including RAs, VFAs and VLAs)? In the field of irregular migration and border management in the partner countries? In the field of migration and development in the partner country? In the field of international protection in the partner country? On the mobility of various target groups? On cooperation and coordination (within the partner country, within the EU, between the EU and PC, and between the PC and MS)? 	<p>4.1.3; 4.2.2; 4.3.2; 4.4.2</p>
<p>How has the implementation of the MP been conducted/ functioned?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What were the impacts of the high-level meetings? What were the impacts of the local cooperation platforms? What were the impacts of the scoreboard? How did the funding structure of the MP work in practice? What structure was used to implement the MP by each partner country? How does the MP fit among existing EU instruments and tools? What other successes were encountered during the implementation of the MP? What other challenges were encountered during the implementation of the MP? What are the positive and negative aspects of the MPF and how could it be improved in future rounds? 	<p>4.1.4; 4.2.3; 4.3.3; 4.4.3; 4.5</p>
<p>How have the roles and interests of various stakeholders influenced the evolution of the MPs?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How have the MPs evolved over time? Which stakeholders have most influenced the MPs and how? 	<p>4.1.5; 4.2.4; 4.3.4; 4.4.4</p>
<p>How have institutional settings and emerging landscapes influenced the evolution of the MPs?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What has been the influence of political, economic or social events on the evolution of the MPs? 	

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How can the MPs be reanimated/ redesigned to better fit the current context?	4.1.6;
• Which, if any, new objectives should be included in the MPs?	4.2.5;
• Should the implementation process of the MPs be revised? How so?	4.3.5;
• What other changes could be made to the MPs to make them more effective?	4.4.5; 5

Appendix 2: Data collection tools

Interview Guide: EU Services	Interview Guide: Partner Countries
 Interview Guide_EU Services_All Countries	 Interview Guide_Partner_Count
Interview Guide: EU Agencies	Interview Guide: EU Delegation
 Interview Guide_EU Agencies.docx	 Interview Guide_EU_Delegation.
Interview Guide: Member States	Interview Guide: International Organisations
 Interview Guide_EUMS.docx	 Interview Guide_IO_General.doc

Appendix 3: Listing of organisations/ institutions interviewed

EU Services, Agencies and Delegations

DG Devco
DG Home
DG Near
EASO
EC Joint Research Centre
EEAS
ETF
EU Delegation CV
EU Delegation Georgia
EU Delegation to Moldova
FRONTEX

Member States

Belgium Ministry of Interior; Immigration Office
Bulgarian Schengen, Borders, Migration and Asylum Unit
Czech Department for Asylum and Migration Policy
French Embassy in Praia
German Federal Foreign Office; Division E12-8 – EU Migration Policy
Hungarian Embassy in Chisinau
Hungarian Ministry of Interior
Italian Embassy in Georgia
Italian Ministry of Interior
Latvian Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs
Latvian State Border Guard
Lithuanian Ministry of Interior, Intl. Coop. Depart.
Lithuanian Ministry of Interior, Intl. Relations and Treaties Division
Lithuanian Ministry of Interior, Public Security and Migration Policy Depart.
Netherlands Ministry of Security and Justice
Romanian Embassy in Chisinau
Slovakian Permanent Representation in Brussels
Spanish Embassy in Praia
Swedish Migration Agency
Swedish Public Employment Service

Cape Verdean Government

Ministry of Family and Social Affairs - DG Immigration
Embassy of Cape Verde in Brussels
Ministry Foreign Affairs

Georgian Government

Diaspora Department of the MFA

Ministry of IDPs

Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs

Ministry of the Interior: Bilateral Cooperation Unit

Ministry of the Interior: Project Management Dept.

Ministry of the Interior; Border Police

National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement

Office of the State Minister of Georgia on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration

Secretariat of the State Commission on Migration Issues

Moldovan Government

Moldovan Mission to Brussels

Bureau for Migration and Asylum

Bureau for Migration and Asylum, Coordination and Data Management Depart.

Diaspora Relations Bureau

General Inspectorate of Border Police of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Policies and Assistance Projects Directorate

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration

Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection, Depart. of Employment Policy and Regulation of Labour Migration

National Employment Agency

Organisation for Development of the Small and Medium Enterprises Sector

International Organisations

GiZ Georgia

ICMPD Brussels

ICMPD Georgia

ICMPD Moldova

ICMPD Vienna

ILO Georgia

IOM Brussels

IOM Georgia

IOM Moldova

Other Stakeholders

Association of the Private Employment Agencies (Georgia)

Georgian Centre of Population Research

Georgian Employers Association

Portuguese Cooperation - Instituto Camoes

University of Minho, Portugal

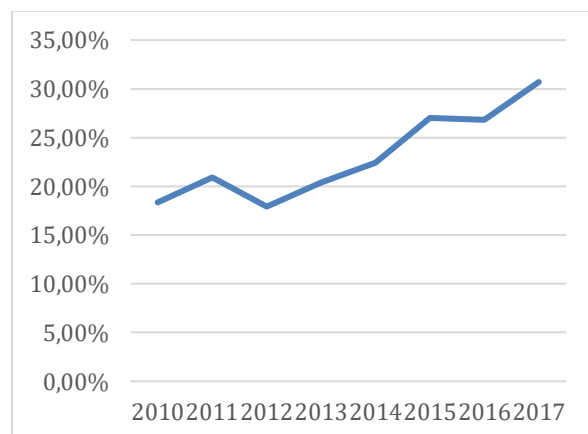
University of Georgia

Appendix 4: Impact of visa facilitation and liberalisation on mobility

Cape Verde

The evaluation report notes that while a VFA between the EU and Cape Verde came into force in December of 2014, there remains a perceived difficulty for Cape Verdeans in obtaining a Schengen visa. Data from the European Commission Directorate General of Migration and Home Affairs shows that the number of short-term Schengen visas issued to Cape Verdean citizens between 2010 and 2017 increased only slightly, with approximately 2,000 more visas being issued in 2017 than in 2010. However, the “not issued rate”, or the percentage of visa applications that were denied, almost doubled within the same time span, climbing from approximately 18 percent to 31 percent. This data seems to confirm the perception of interview respondents that the EU-Cape Verde VFA and the Common Centre for Visas in Praia has not improved the Schengen visa application success rate for Cape Verdean citizens.

Figure 2 “Not issued rate” of Schengen visas to Cape Verdean citizens



Source: EC, Migration and Home Affairs, 2018e

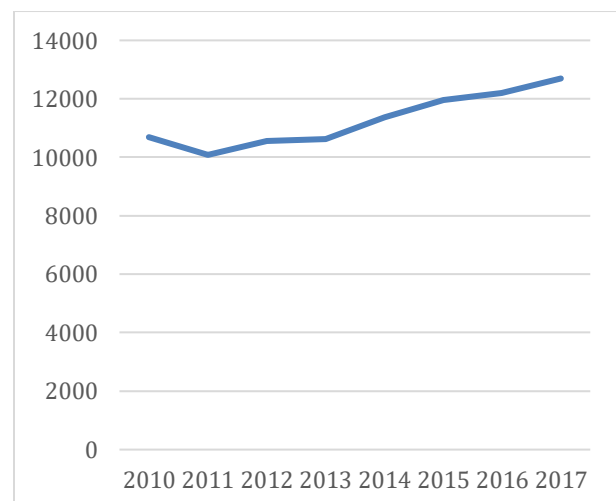
⁸⁶ From 2010-2013, short-term Schengen visas were categorized into three different types (A, B and C visas). From 2014 onwards, Schengen visas are categorized into two different types; airport transit

Table 18 Schengen visas issued and denied to Cape Verdean citizens

Year	Total Visas Issued	Not issued rate
2010	10687	18.33%
2011	10082	20.90%
2012	10553	17.92%
2013 ⁸⁶	10625	20.40%
2014	11372	22.40%
2015	11966	27.00%
2016	12195	26.80%
2017	12696	30.70%

Source: EC, Migration and Home Affairs, 2018e

Figure 3 Number of Schengen visas issued to Cape Verdean citizens



Source: EC, Migration and Home Affairs, 2018e

visas and uniform visas. Accordingly, data for 2010-2013 represents A, B and C visas issued and denied and data from 2014 onwards represents airport transit visas and uniform visas issued and denied.

Georgia

Table 19 Schengen visas issued and denied to Georgian citizens

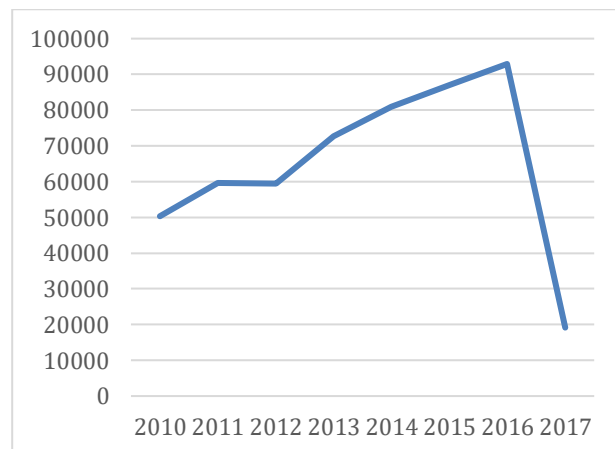
Year	Total visas issued	Not issued rate
2010	50324	15.08%
2011	59,603	14.40%
2012	59363	12.74%
2013 ⁸⁷	72,737	11.50%
2014	80,983	12.70%
2015	87,059	12.90%
2016	92,908	12.10%
2017	19,157	18.30%

Source: EC, Migration and Home Affairs, 2018e

In March 2011, a VFA between Georgia and the EU entered into force. Subsequently, visa-free travel to the EU/Schengen zone for Georgians was granted in March 2017. Due to the very recent nature of this development, it is not yet possible to statistically analyse the impact that visa-free travel will have on the mobility of Georgian citizens to the EU/Schengen zone. It is possible to note, however, that since the entering into force of the EU-Georgia VFA in 2011, the number of short-term visas issued to Georgians almost doubled (from approximately 50,000 in 2010 to approximately 90,000 in 2016) before dropping dramatically with the introduction of visa-free travel. The “not issued rate”, or the percentage of visa applications that were denied, slightly declined within the same period, from approximately 15 percent in 2010 to approximately 12 percent in 2016. While it is not possible to disentangle the effects of other external (political, economic, technological) factors, it is possible that the

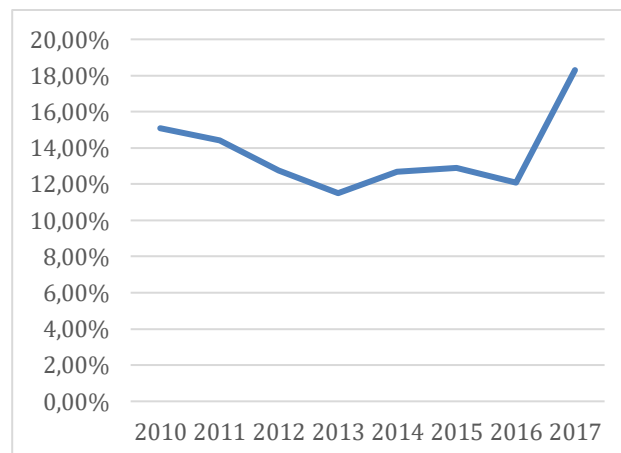
VFA was successful in increasing short-term mobility and slightly lowering visa rejection rates.

Figure 4 Number of Schengen visas issued to Georgian Citizens



Source: EC, Migration and Home Affairs, 2018e

Figure 5 “Not issued rate” of Schengen visas to Georgian citizens



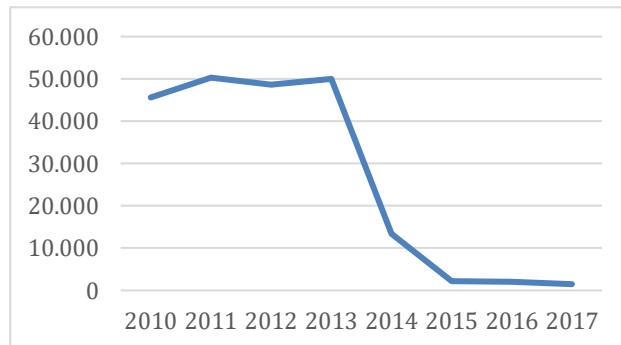
Source: EC, Migration and Home Affairs, 2018e

⁸⁷ From 2010-2013, short-term Schengen visas were categorized into three different types (A, B and C visas). From 2014 onwards, Schengen visas are categorized into two different types; airport transit visas and uniform visas. Accordingly, data

for 2010-2013 represents A, B and C visas issued and denied and data from 2014 onwards represents airport transit visas and uniform visas issued and denied.

Moldova

Figure 6 Total Schengen visas issued to Moldovans



Moldova is unique in this evaluation in that a VFA with the EU entered into force in October of 2007, before the signing of the EU Moldova Joint Declaration. The VFA remained in place until the granting of visa-free travel for Moldovans to the EU/Schengen area in April of 2014. The statistics represented in Figure 6 show that short-term Schengen visas issued dropped rapidly after 2014, from approximately 50,000 in 2011 to around 1,500 in 2017.

Source: EC Migration and Home Affairs, 2018

Respondents who participated in the evaluation exercise sometimes noted that they perceived the impact of visa liberalisation with the EU to be largely political in nature as many Moldovans have EU passports (Romanian or other nationalities) and those that do not still need to have a relatively significant amount of resources to travel to the EU, even after visa liberalisation, due to documentation requirements sometimes enforced at airports. As EU collected data on the short-term mobility of Moldovans to the EU post-visa liberalisation is not available, it is not possible to definitively determine the impact of visa liberalisation. However, data from the Moldovan Border Police Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs made available shows that approximately 1.5 million Moldovan citizens exited the country and travelled towards the Schengen area in the 4 years immediately following visa liberalisation (Table 20). While this cannot be directly compared with the number of short term Schengen visas issued in the 4 years prior to visa liberalisation due to the different in measurement unit (visa vs. person) and the fact that the Moldovan data counts all Moldovans travelling to the EU, not just those departing for a visit of 90 days or less, it is notable that the second number is significantly larger (Table 21).

Table 20 Moldovan citizens that exited Moldova towards the EU, 28.04.2014-23.04.2018

Chişinău International Airport	273,300
Land border crossing points to Romania	1,196,617
Total	1,469,917

Source: Border Police Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Moldova

Table 21 Comparison of number of Schengen visas to number of exits of Moldovan citizens towards the EU

Total short-term Schengen visas issued to Moldovans in the 4 years preceding visa liberalisation (2010-2014) ⁸⁸	207,863
# of Moldovan citizens that exited Moldova towards the EU, 28.04.2014-23.04.2018	1,469,917

Source: Border Police Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Moldova; EC Migration and Home Affairs, 2018

⁸⁸ Data disaggregated by month is unavailable and accordingly, data for all of 2014 is used.