



E-MINDFUL: Enhancing European Migration Narrative to Develop Further Union's Long-term actions – Independent Final Internal Evaluation

QUICK FACTS

Countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Serbia

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Evaluation timing: Final

Administrative Office: Decent Work Team/Country Office for CEE (DWT/CO-Budapest)

Technical Office: DWT/CO Budapest

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Key Words: [Use themes as provided in i-eval Discovery](#)



BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

The overall objective of the E-MINDFUL multi-party project was to promote a social and economic environment where everyone, migrants and nationals, can feel welcome and belonging so as to encourage effective migration policy-making, particularly in the field of economic migration. In this regard, the E-MINDFUL project aimed at generating evidence-based guidance to relevant stakeholders on how to communicate effectively about migration across multiple segments of society in six European countries: Austria, Bosnia Herzegovina, Germany, Italy, North Macedonia and Serbia. The specific project objectives included: i) improving understanding of factors influencing audience perceptions about migration; ii) testing lessons from stocktaking and awareness campaigns, iii) assessing the early impact of innovative formats, and iv) consolidating knowledge and tools. OSCE acted as the project lead and in this capacity partnered with the ILO and the Migration Policy Centre (MPC) of the European Institute University to achieve set objectives and overarching goal.

While the OSCE was in charge of the overall design, content creation and coordination of this experimental project, OSCE and ILO were each managing its implementation: OSCE managed the project activities in Germany, Italy, and Austria; ILO was tasked with the project management in Bosnia Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Serbia.

On the ILO side, the project was technically and administratively backstopped by the ILO Decent Work Team and Country Office for Central and Eastern Europe (DWT/CO), based in Budapest, which provide the necessary administrative support and technical and project-backup services. A project office was set up in Sarajevo to manage and coordinate the activities and the ILO team for implementation of the project consisted of: Senior Project Manager, Sarajevo (50%); Project Assistant, Sarajevo (50%); National Project and Communication Officer, Skopje (100%), National Project and Communication Officer, Sarajevo (70%), Senior Project Assistant, Budapest (33%)

The project team worked in coordination with the ILO National Coordinators and project officers in Bosnia and Herzegovina, North



Present situation of the project

Macedonia, and Serbia, and reported directly to the Senior Employment Specialist based in the DWT/CO Budapest, which communicated with the OSCE project management on strategic basis.

The E-MINDFUL project was conceived as response to the 2015/2016 migrant crisis. In 2015 the EU experienced an unprecedented influx of refugees and migrants. [More than 1 million people arrived in the European Union](#), most of them fleeing from war and terror in Syria and other countries. These developments resulted in the portrayal of migration as a security threat, urging the EU to adopt [the European Agenda on Migration](#). In this context, E-MINDFUL was designed to test separate communication strategies aimed at promoting a balanced and effective communication about migration and counter negative perceptions and stereotypes surrounding it. The project therefore involved countries in the EU and in the Western Balkans that have been facing relevant challenges related to the increasing presence of migrants: Austria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Germany, Italy, North Macedonia and Serbia, the countries along the Eastern Mediterranean migration route. The aim has been to provide various stakeholders with an evidence-based and action-oriented guidance, including innovative communication instruments. The project formulation was carried out throughout 2017 and 2018; it was approved for funding in 2019 but due to COVID-19 the implementation of the **E-MINDFUL** project started in mid-2021. The project was originally planned to last from June 1, 2021 until March 31, 2023 but was extended until the end of December due to delays in the implementation.

The OSCE supervised the implementation of activities of the ILO and the MPC at European Institute University. ILO was responsible for the implementation of project activities in Bosnia-Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Serbia.

During the project implementation, the scenery in the 3 countries under ILO supervision changed: the influx of migrants and refugees significantly decreased in these three countries which have been usually considered as transit and not the end destination for migrant population. However, in light of subsequent developments such as the COVID-19 pandemic, accelerated demographic changes, and emerging labour shortages, these countries have more recently initiated a re-evaluation of their migration policies. This reassessment



	<p>is particularly focused on aspects related to labour and economic development. In this context, the project has laid the groundwork for the ILO's future role in addressing migration-related challenges in the WB region, although the underlying design and approach to implementation led by the OSCE has not demonstrated a strong alignment and synergy with the ILO strategies and objectives.</p>
<p>Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation</p>	<p>Purpose -The evaluation is conducted under the framework of the regional M&E plan of the ILO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia to evaluate achievements made in the implementation recommendations on how to improve the sustainability of achieved results. The aim was to enhance accountability to the stakeholders and organizational learning. Scope - The scope of this evaluation encompassed all ILO activities and components implemented during the project's duration from June 1 2021 to December 31 2023 in Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Serbia. Clients of this review are the technical specialists and management of the ILO DWT/CO Budapest, project staff, tripartite constituents, and the donor.</p>
<p>Methodology of evaluation</p>	<p>The review used primary and secondary data sources to ascertain the plausibility of causal relationships between the project's achievements and respective outcomes. Mixed methods were applied to draw on multiple lines of evidence and multiple means of analysis to triangulate findings. Three main methods were used for collecting evaluation data: (a) document review, (b) interviews, (c) case studies/good practice examples. Limitations encountered: The evaluation was carried out from the beginning of November until the end of December 2023. Busy schedules of all parties caused by the programme and projects closures at the end of the year, Christmas and new year holiday season impacted on the pace of interviews. Despite the difficulties, 25 interviews were completed and only one curtailed. The breadth of topics, policy areas, programmes and services covered by the evaluation meant that not all could be covered in equal depth</p>
<p>MAIN FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS</p>	<p>Main findings Relevance: The E-MINDFUL project was conceptualised by the OSCE as a response to the migrant crisis of 2015/2016 affecting the</p>



European Union as well as the Western Balkans. In this context and overall, the project has been generally relevant for the three countries involved and under the scrutiny of this evaluation -Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia.

Coherence: The review shows that the project was developed with a clear intervention logic, with articulated goals, outcomes, and outputs. The project lacked proactive risk mitigation and adaptability during implementation and a strategic response was largely absent.

Effectiveness: The evaluation of the E-MINDFUL project revealed several critical aspects that impacted its overall success: i) the poor OSCE coordination affected ILO in its work in the three designated countries for which ILO was in charge; ii) insufficient methodological clarity and limited stakeholder engagement hindered the project's ability to navigate challenges effectively. Despite these setbacks, the project demonstrated unique features in bringing diverse parties together for a communication experiment.

Efficiency: The E-MINDFUL project has encountered serious delays and an extension of the project timeline. Despite encountered delays, the project delivered all planned outputs in the last six months of the project.

Sustainability The review of the project revealed weak ownership of national constituents over it. At the same time, the contextual changes during the project's implementation highlighted the importance of the project's theme related to the migration, particularly to the labour migration.

Conclusions

The assessment of E-MINDFUL pointed out to the complexity and challenges stemming from the multi-party projects design and implementation, as poor OSCE coordination impacted on the ILO as a project partner (as well as on the Migration Policy Centre (MPC) as the second partner), and on national partners and stakeholders, this all contributing to delays and ultimately resulting in weak national ownership. Despite the setbacks, the project achieved its objectives. At the same time, changed scenery, as accounted in this review, gradually highlighted the importance of the ILO's expertise on labour migration. This presents a unique opportunity for the ILO to capitalise on heightened attention to migration issues and the increased relevance of the topic amid the challenges faced by both EU Member

States and Western Balkan economies dealing with shortages in labour and skills.

RECOMMENDATIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

Main findings & Conclusions

RECOMMENDATION 1. ENGAGE IN STRATEGIC PLANNING TO ACHIEVE HIGHER IMPACT IN THE MULTIPARTY PROJECTS

Clarify roles and responsibilities early on, with clear lines of management, reporting and communication in the projects with multi-party leadership to avoid confusion and ensure effective coordination. Develop a robust risk mitigation strategy that anticipates potential challenges during project implementation. Regularly review and update risk assessments throughout the project lifecycle.

Addressed to	Priority	Resource	Timing
ILO DWT/CO Budapest	High	Low	Medium to long term

RECOMMENDATION 2. ADAPTATION PLANNING FOR IMPACTFUL PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Carry out regular Monitoring and Evaluation (ME) to enhance the efficient use of resources, particularly time, funds, partnerships, knowledge, expertise, and tools. Regular MEs will help identify areas for improvement and enable timely adjustments to strategies. Systematically collect and document lessons learned to inform decision-making.

Addressed to	Priority	Resource	Timing
ILO country offices	High	Medium	Medium to longterm

RECOMMENDATION 3. DESIGN AND CONTEXTUALISATION IN MULTI-PARTY PROJECTS FOR CONTEXTUAL ALIGNMENT

Ensure country-specific contextualisation and linkages to international frameworks in the multi-party projects. Create/contribute to detailed Theory of Change for the project to provide a roadmap that clearly outlines the causal pathways from inputs to desired outcomes. Integrate a gender perspective into the project activities to address gender-specific challenges related to migration. Gender and anti-discrimination shall be reflected in the Theory of change, while the Checklist for Gender Mainstreaming in

Project and Programmes can be a useful guide in determining access to resources, roles, and responsibilities, constraints, and priorities.

Addressed to	Priority	Resource	Timing
ILO DWT/CO Budapest ILO country offices	High	Medim	Medium

RECOMMENDATION 4. POLICY AND SOCIAL IMPACT

ILO’s watchdog role in safeguarding international labour standards particularly the ones related to migration shall be highlighted. For example, the E-MINDFUL exposed a lack of understanding of applicable international labour standards in the field of labour migration, pointing to the gap that ILO shall fill in. Strengthen the capacity of the tripartite constituents to enhance their internal planning processes and adapt their services to contribute to the development of effective national policies and actions related to labour migration.

Addressed to	Priority	Resource	Timing
ILO DWT/CO Budapest ILO country offices	High	Medim	Medium to long term

Main lessons learned and good practices

Lessons learned

Lesson 1: Lack of comprehensive risk mitigation and adaptability strategies hindered the Impact of the project. The lesson learned from this experience is that future projects, especially those forged in partnership and addressing complex issues like migration, should prioritize the development of robust risk mitigation strategies. Proactive risk management is crucial to addressing unforeseen challenges promptly and avoiding substantial delays in project implementation.

Lesson 2: Weak delineation of roles between OSCE and ILO affected project’s achievements The OSCE, acting as the project coordinator, was expected to collaborate with the ILO in a partnership capacity. However, the delineation of roles was ambiguous, and, as a consequence, the ILO found itself in a subordinated role. This lesson emphasises the vital importance of establishing clear lines of responsibility and authority among project partners from the outset.



A lack of clarity in roles not only hampers effective decision-making but also contributes to delays, misunderstandings, and operational inefficiencies.

Emerging practices

Good practice 1: Communication campaigns: results of the survey - Migration Policy Centre, the European University Institute (EUI) The results of the survey carried out by the MPC in 2023 measured the influence of the devised communication prototypes on attitudes toward migration in all the countries. These diverse campaigns which were created as a part of the project, revealed key strategies for both successful and failed communication campaigns. The results of the survey directly help policymakers and communicators to tailor strategies to local contexts, address campaign-specific challenges, and remain cognisant of the dynamic socioeconomic factors influencing public attitudes.

Good practice 2: National Multi-Stakeholder Creative Groups – The National Multi-Stakeholder Creative Groups (NMCGs) were formed in North Macedonia, Serbia and Bosnia Herzegovina. In each country NMGCs consisted of up to five members with diverse backgrounds (sociology, philosophy, communication, journalism, TV, cinema, arts, etc.). They were tasked to develop awareness-raising and edutainment campaigns on migration, tailored to specific audience segments and grounded in practical considerations. The NMGCs played a vital role in achieving the project's goals.