



Budapest Process – Thematic Working Groups

Terms of Reference

April 2023 - Revision in November 2025

1. Background and introduction

In December 2022, Senior Officials discussed the Chairmanship’s Proposals which aimed to provide a direction for the next chapter of the Budapest Process (BP) through five specific proposals, including Proposal 3 which suggested to consolidate the thematic focus of the dialogue and shift from Regional to Thematic Working Groups.

Regional Working Groups have been in place since 2011 and the adoption of the Istanbul Ministerial Declaration. Three Regional Working Groups (South East Europe, Black Sea, Silk Routes) have been meeting regularly and have also organised joint regional meetings on return and reintegration as well as other priority areas. Joint regional working group meetings became the norm in the last four years and were open to participation from all BP partners, not just the regions, with a view to ensure a whole-of-route approach. They thus became closer in practice to thematic meetings which highlight regional specificities but seeking a common response along the routes, with the core centre of dialogue being thematic areas through its priority goals. A shift to thematic meetings ensued. Thematic meetings can also consolidate the need to reach action-oriented recommendations within the dialogue linked to the six priority goals. The focus of the BP on Priority Goals 1 and 2 from “the Istanbul Commitments and its Call for Action” are reflected in the chosen thematic working groups (WG), which were proposed to the BP Partners namely on: Law Enforcement Cooperation (WG 1), Return and Reintegration (WG 2) and Legal Pathways for Migration (WG 3).

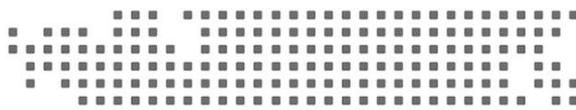
2. Working Groups set-up and objectives

WG 1: Thematic Working Group on Law Enforcement Cooperation

This thematic working group focuses on all aspects related to migrant smuggling, trafficking in persons and integrated border management. In addition, it is linked to COLEP, the Community of Law Enforcement Practitioners which serves as a catalyst for bilateral and multilateral initiatives on operational cooperation among law enforcement agencies and includes selected BP countries. These selected countries have agreed to share information and make exchanges concrete and organise training sessions, workshops and/or exercises based on hypothetical situations involving transnational investigation and prosecution.

WG 2: Thematic Working Group on Return and Reintegration

This thematic working group has developed a roadmap on return and reintegration for the BP to meaningfully support the Silk Routes countries – Bangladesh (observer country), Iraq and Pakistan – with inclusive, rights-based and sustainable returns and reintegration. The roadmap will guide future actions within and through the Budapest Process and the projects under its umbrella. In particular, the actions will be aimed at strengthening the capacity of various actors to manage returns in a systematic, humane and inclusive manner and support the sustainability of returnees’ economic, social and psychosocial reintegration.



WG 3: Thematic Working Group on Legal Pathways for Migration

This working group will focus on several aspects of legal pathways for migration, including on labour migration, student mobility, and skills partnerships (skills-making, reskilling, recognition of prior learning, etc.). Indeed, these topics are of increased relevance for European labour market needs in specific sectors such as care, hospitality and IT and, in parallel, the availability of good skill sets in a number of Silk Routes countries, as exemplified through the inclusion of Pakistan and Bangladesh in the EU's Talent Partnerships' Programme. A recent BP publication on TVET structures in selected Silk Routes and EU countries has provided strong knowledge base for further action-oriented recommendations and initiatives to be taken forward in this working group.

3. Co-Chairs of the Thematic Working Groups: Role

- *Co-Chairs Law Enforcement Cooperation: Bulgaria and Iraq*
- *Co-Chairs Return and Reintegration: Bangladesh, Iraq and Türkiye*
- *Co-Chairs Legal Pathways for Migration: Pakistan and Italy*

The Co-Chairs of the Thematic Working Groups will be supported by the Budapest Process Secretariat in all tasks. Their main roles are listed below:

- Agree on the date, location and agenda of the thematic working group meetings;
- Provide guidance on what kind of topics should be discussed in upcoming meetings of the Working Groups, as well as the type of format to pursue with support from the Budapest Process Secretariat and Chairmanship;
- Moderate and steer the discussion during the actual meetings of the Thematic working group with support from the Secretariat;
- Review the outputs produced as a result of the meetings, which are prepared by the Secretariat, and propose follow up actions or next steps.

4. Replacement or additional Co-Chairs: modalities

If a Co-Chair is no longer able to fulfil their role in a thematic working group, they should send a communication to the Budapest Process Secretariat. Another Chair will be sought after and appointed by Türkiye and Hungary as the BP Chairmanship. The Thematic Working Group can continue to meet with only one Co-Chair present.

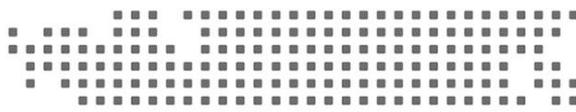
A third Co-Chair can be appointed to a Thematic Working Group upon approval of the other two Co-Chairs and the BP Chairmanship. In this case, one country holds the role of main Chair for the Thematic Working Group on an annual rotating basis.

5. Participation

The thematic working groups will be open to all Budapest Process participating and observer states and international organisations. Due to the specific themes being addressed, countries and organisations will be expected to nominate officials relevant to the themes, if and where possible.

6. Working Language

The working language will be English. Interpretation may be provided into Arabic, Russian and Turkish when needed and feasible.



7. Location and Timeline

One thematic working group meeting per year is foreseen. However, in case there is an interest from the majority of the working group members, then a second meeting can be considered but will ultimately be based on availability of funding and scheduling opportunities.

Locations of the meetings will vary and be subject to feasibility analyses. Countries will be open to host meetings, for which they will be expected to facilitate the issuance of visas (if applicable) and other related matters.

8. Reporting

The outputs of the thematic working group meetings will be shared with the plenary of the Budapest Process network. Follow up documentation shall include, inter alia: meetings conclusions/reports, contact information of attendees, presentations and other content delivered, media, as well as any post-meeting knowledge products developed as a result of the discussions during the meetings.

The Budapest Process Secretariat and/or Co-Chairs will report key points from the thematic meetings to Senior Officials' Meetings at the end of the year. Key points will also be discussed during meetings of the Reference Group in order to deliberate on ways to convert the points into tangible actions on the ground.

9. Budget and Logistics

Thematic working group meetings will be organised by the Budapest Process Secretariat. BP funds can be used to support meetings in person or to organise a specific activity linked to the thematic working group. Fundraising can occur if specific projects or capacity-building activities are identified in the thematic working group meetings. Coordination of logistics will also be conducted by the staff of the Secretariat in cooperation with the host country's delegated officials.