

# Budapest Process Reference Group

## **Terms of Reference**

*Revision November 2025*

### **1. Background to the set-up of the Reference Group**

In February 2019, the Budapest Process (BP) participating states reaffirmed their commitment to partnering with the Silk Routes countries and the dialogue itself. “The Istanbul Commitments on the Silk Routes Partnership for Migration” were adopted with its “Call for Action”, a five-year action plan with 41 action points in 6 priority areas.

In December 2019, Senior Officials agreed to focus on the implementation of the “Call for Action” and endorsed an Implementation Plan of the Call for Action, which includes priority topics and activities until the end of 2024.

In January 2020, the implementation of the Call for Action kick-started with a focus on Priority Goal 1 (Prevent and counteract irregular migration, facilitate return and readmission of irregular migrants, and combat criminal networks involved in smuggling of migrants) and Priority Goal 2 (Better organise and improve conditions for legal migration and mobility). This focus remained in 2021 and 2022 coupled with other activities from other priority areas in the Implementation Plan.

In May 2021, the BP Chairmanship set-up a Reference Group (RG) to enhance and support the dialogue’s activities and support the implementation of the Call for Action.

### **2. Objectives of the Reference Group**

As a general objective, the RG offers the chance to deepen engagement for the dialogue by developing a red thread between senior official and thematic meetings as well as on the ground operational cooperation and capacity building.

The Reference Group (RG) contributes to the implementation of the priority areas as agreed by Budapest Process Senior Officials, as decision-making body for the dialogue.

More specifically, the RG meetings are also the setting to build upon and follow-up on the conclusions and recommendations reached in the thematic working group meetings. The outcomes of the Reference Groups’ meetings are presented at the annual Senior Officials Meetings.

### **3. Tasks of the Reference Group**

#### **Strategic Guidance to the Dialogue**

- Provide advice and guidance to the Chairmanship of the BP on ways and means to ensure effective implementation of the Call for Action;
- Strengthen cooperation among BP partners and ensure long-term engagement within and through the dialogue;

- Report back to the annual Senior Officials Meeting to share the annual results of the dialogue and the projects and knowledge outputs under its umbrella;
- Advocate funding stability for the BP dialogue.

### Operationalisation of the Dialogue

- Follow-up on the recommendations made in thematic and ad-hoc meetings of all BP participating states and organisations, including providing feedback to the outputs produced (such as reports, resolutions, guidelines, standards, etc.);
- Reinforce the planned activities on the agreed priority areas and propose new activities and initiatives, based on current needs and the global and regional migration situation;
- Contribute to the preparation of annual and multiannual work-plans and preparation of projects for implementation;
- Support fundraising efforts for initiatives, programmes and projects developed under the dialogue; Identify areas for further enhancing the dialogue's knowledge-base.

## 4. Composition

Members of the RG should be limited to ensure effective cooperation in the process.

Respectful of a geographical balance, the composition of the RG takes into account the importance of including countries of origin, transit and destination. Membership requires a commitment to attend RG meetings and actively engage in its tasks.

The RG consists of a maximum of 13 countries as well as the European Commission. International organisations can participate as observers at RG meetings upon invitation on an ad-hoc basis.

The RG is composed of 11 permanent <sup>1</sup> and 3 rotating members as follows:

**Permanent members:** The BP Chairmanship, the RG Rapporteur <sup>2</sup>, the Co-Chairs of Thematic Working Groups <sup>3</sup>, Silk Routes and countries making principal financial contributions to the dialogue, as well as the European Commission;

**Rotating members:** Three participating/observer states of the BP dialogue join the RG as rotating members for a two-year period.

## 5. Appointment of rotating members

- Any participating/observer state of the Budapest Process may apply in writing to the BP Secretariat to join the Reference Group as a rotating member every two years;
- Decisions on the admission of rotating membership shall be taken by consensus of the Rapporteur, Türkiye as Chair and Hungary as Co-Chair, through a written procedure initiated by the Secretariat;

<sup>1</sup> Permanent members (11/2025): Bangladesh, Bulgaria, Hungary, Iraq, Italy, Norway, Pakistan, Sweden, Switzerland and Türkiye, as well as the European Commission.

<sup>2</sup> Sweden is the Rapporteur of the Reference Group since April 2022

<sup>3</sup> The three thematic working groups cover: (I) Law Enforcement Cooperation against Smuggling of Migrants and Trafficking in Persons (including COLEP); (II) Return and Reintegration; and (III) Legal Pathways for Migration.

- The Secretariat shall circulate a notification by email at least two months prior to the next Reference Group meeting. Interested countries shall submit a written expression of interest to the Reference Group Rapporteur via the Budapest Process Secretariat;
- The call for rotating members shall be launched at the end of the two-year term of office of the current rotating members. The procedure is as follows: (i) latest two months before the next Reference Group meeting, the Secretariat shall launch the call for rotating members; (ii) one month before the meeting, the applications shall be reviewed; (iii) and at the next Reference Group meeting, the confirmation of the new rotating members shall take place;
- The Rapporteur, assisted as appropriate by the Secretariat, formulates a proposal for the composition of the three new rotating members. A trilateral agreement between the BP Chairmanship and the Rapporteur shall be made and communicated accordingly to the new rotating members at least one week before the Reference Group meeting which shall be held back-to-back with the Senior Officials Meeting;
- The new rotating members shall be invited to the next Reference Group meeting. At the meeting, the Reference Group shall formally endorse the proposal for the new composition of the rotating membership. The new rotating members shall be officially welcomed at the next Senior Officials Meeting.

## 6. Replacement of permanent members and enlargement

Decision on the replacement of a permanent member shall be taken on the proposal of the Chairmanship, in consultation with the Reference Group Rapporteur, and adopted by a majority vote of the Reference Group members present.

Decision on enlargement of the Reference Group permanent membership shall be taken on the proposal of the Chairmanship, in consultation with the Reference Group Rapporteur, and adopted by a majority vote of the Reference Group members present.

## 7. Role of the Rapporteur/s of the Reference Group

The members of the RG are the main drivers of the RG. Work will be led and facilitated by a Rapporteur, supported by the BP Secretariat. As such, the Rapporteur will be responsible for:

- Leading the Reference Group's work, moderating meetings and prioritising the areas of discussion of the RG, keeping salient trans-regional issues and challenges as well as requests of RG member states in mind;
- Liaise closely with the BP Chair, Türkiye and Co-Chair, Hungary, to ensure alignment with the overall Dialogue in cooperation with the BP Secretariat, ICMPD;
- Review the outputs produced as a result of the meetings, and propose follow up actions or next steps;
- Liaise with the Chairs of the Thematic Working Groups on a needs basis in cooperation with the BP Secretariat.

## **8. Working Language**

The working language of the RG is English. Interpretation may be foreseen if requested on an ad-hoc basis.

## **9. Meetings occurrence**

The RG meets at least twice a year. Meetings can be held virtually or in person on the margins of BP meetings or as a standalone meeting.

## **10. Budget and Logistics**

The work of the Reference Group is assisted by the BP Secretariat and expenses related to Reference Group meetings are covered by the BP budget managed by the Secretariat;

Fundraising for additional activities, initiatives or specific projects can occur as deemed appropriate by the Reference Group.