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Experiences and Recommendations for the Improvement of Reintegration Assistance Provided for Migrants Returning to Kosovo (UNSCR 1244)

November, 2014

Budapest, Hungary

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- Caritas Austria
- Federal Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Austria (BM.I)
- International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD)

Hungary

- Menedék Association for Migrants

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¹ Hereinafter referred to Kosovo*. This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence. All reference to Kosovo in this report, whether the territory, institutions or population in the text shall be understood in full compliance with UN Security Council resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

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Acronyms

AGDW e.V.	Arbeitsgemeinschaft Dritte Welt e.V
AGEF	Association of Experts in the Fields of Migration and Development Cooperation
AVRR	Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration
AWO	Arbeiterwohlfart (Workers' Welfare Institution)
BAMF	Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (Germany)
BFA	Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum (Austria)
BM.I.	Federal Ministry of the Interior (Austria)
ERIN	European Reintegration Instrument Network
ERSO	European Reintegration Support Organizations
ICMPD	International Centre for Migration Policy Development
Integplan	Integrated Return Planning
IOM	International Organization for Migration
LEFÖ-IBF	Interventionsstelle für betroffene des frauenhandels (Intervention Centre for trafficked women)
MoI	Ministry of Interior
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	non-governmental organization
ON	Office of Immigration and Nationality (Hungary)
REAG/GARP	Reintegration and Emigration of Asylum-seekers/Government Assisted Repatriation Programme (Germany)
ReKoKo	Reintegration in Kosovo
SOLWODI	Solidarity with Women in Distress (Germany)
UAM	Unaccompanied minor
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
VAT	Value added tax
VMÖ	Verein Menschenrechte Österreich (Austria)
ZIRF	Information Centre for Voluntary Return (Germany)
ZRB	Central Return Counselling (Germany)

Introduction

Since 1999, the International Organization for Migration has provided assistance to more than 203,000 returnees to Kosovo* through Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration programmes.² Nearly two-thirds of these cases were supported in the first two years immediately following conflict in Kosovo*. In recent years though, persistent high unemployment and an underperforming economy continue to push thousands of Kosovars to migrate abroad, including through irregular means. More than 20,000 asylum-seekers in EU member states originated from Kosovo* in 2013,³ and this trends increased even further with that number of Kosovars applying for asylum in Hungary alone in 2014⁴.

In this context, the need to examine best practices in sustainable return and reintegration programmes in Kosovo* is paramount as asylum cases from Kosovo* based primarily on economic reasons are not being approved and readmissions are on the rise. In 2014 alone, IOM assisted 1,287 cases through AVRR programmes, representing a fraction of total return cases⁵. In Hungary, on average 70-75 per cent⁶ of the beneficiaries of the Hungarian AVRR programme were returnees to Kosovo*.

The main objective of this report is to provide recommendations for the improvement of reintegration assistance offered to the beneficiaries of the Hungarian assisted voluntary return and reintegration (AVRR) programme to Kosovo*⁷. In recent years, IOM office in Budapest has been gathering the feedback of beneficiaries and local and international experts to find new ways to improve return and reintegration assistance.

This has been done by various means. In 2010 extensive in-house research and beneficiary interviews were carried out to gather information on reintegration assistance⁸. In 2011 IOM Budapest, in partnership with the Hungarian Office of Immigration and Nationality (OIN) organized a fact-finding mission to Kosovo* on

² IOM Kosovo statistics, last updated in December 2014.

³ European Commission, "Asylum Statistics", 2014. Available from http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Asylum_statistics.

⁴ Office of Immigration and Nationality (OIN), 2015, "Statistics Issue 2013-2014". Available from http://www.bmbah.hu/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&layout=item&id=492&Itemid=1259&lang=en#statistic.

⁵ Data from January to September 2014 counted 3,352 cases (IOM AVRR cases: 1,287). 5,115 forced and voluntary returns in 2013 (IOM AVRR cases: 1,411).

⁶ In the current Hungarian AVRR programme 91.8 per cent of the beneficiaries are returning to Kosovo*.

⁷ The project "Improving Reintegration Assistance for Beneficiaries Returning to Kosovo (UNSCR 1244)" is financed by the European Return Fund and co-financed by the Government of Hungary and managed by the International Organization for Migration.

⁸ "The Assessment of Assisted Voluntary Return Programmes" (EVA/2008/3112; RT0264).

sustainable return⁹. Within the framework of IOM's information and awareness raising programmes, counsellors and phone operators have been gathering the information provided by the beneficiaries.

In 2013, in a reintegration programme specifically designed to assist Kosovar AVRR clients¹⁰, a detailed monitoring and evaluation questionnaire was completed by 30 returnees who successfully applied for reintegration assistance. The findings have been analysed in a detailed report¹¹. In 2014 the improved version of the same questionnaire is being used now, in the continuation of this project¹². In 2015, a more comprehensive evaluation exercise will be conducted with interviews to be conducted with Kosovar voluntary and non-voluntary returnees and experts on various aspects of return and reintegration.¹³

The project adopted a qualitative approach by gathering documentation and feedback from key stakeholders in the most significant countries of departure regarding returns to Kosovo*, Austria, Germany and Hungary and Kosovo* about their past and current reintegration assistance offered to returnees to Kosovo*, through a questionnaire targeting several organizations offering reintegration assistance, compilation of IOM's experience in reintegration, and a collection of best practices.

The findings of the questionnaire were presented at an international conference in Pristina on the 27th and 28th of October 2014 and served as a platform for the discussion and exchange of information on practices and procedures related to reintegration assistance programmes implemented in Kosovo*. This report is presenting both the findings of the questionnaire and the recommendations proposed by the participants of the conference.

The report is composed of three parts. *The first part* is intended to give a brief summary of the evolution of the Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration Programmes and the related services in Hungary in order to define the context of the current project. *The second part* of the report describes the information received through the above mentioned questionnaires on the assisted voluntary return and reintegration from the service providers in Germany, Austria and Hungary. In this part the views expressed are those of the respondents, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the International

⁹ "Country Information Gathering mission to Kosovo (UNSCR1244) on Sustainable Return" (EVA/2009/3221, RT0458).

¹⁰ "Reintegration Assistance to Assisted Voluntary Returnees to Kosovo (UNSCR1244)" (EVA/2012/112; RT0768).

¹¹ IOM, 2014, "Evaluation Report on the Reintegration Assistance of Assisted Voluntary Returnees from Hungary to Kosovo (UNSCR 1244)". Available at <http://new.iom.hu/sites/default/files/Evaluation%20Report%20-%20FINAL%20-%202012MAY.pdf>.

¹² Complex Reintegration Assistance to Assisted Voluntary Returnees to Kosovo (UNSCR1244) (EVA2013/112, RT0906).

¹³ "Evaluation of Reintegration Assistance Provided to Returnees to Kosovo (UNSCR1244)" (EVA/2013/113; RT.1055).

Organization for Migration (IOM) or the views of the donors, i.e. the European Union and the Government of Hungary. The *third part* of the report presents the main results of the international conference held in Pristina. The *fourth* part formulates recommendations to further improve return and reintegration programmes.

Chapter 1. Evolution of the Hungarian Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration Assistance

Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) Programmes are seen as adequate and humane alternatives for irregular migrants; providing people with the possibility to return to their respective countries of origin voluntarily rather than under constraint. A voluntary approach to return is preferable for all actors involved. However, if the decision to return by the migrant is made based on limited opportunities and restricted rights, such as absence of the right to work, fear of facing detention and denied legal status in the host country, the likelihood of sustainable return is extremely limited.

AVRR programmes facilitate dialogue on migration both in Hungary and in the country of origin, leading to better understanding – by policymakers, by practitioners and eventually by the general public – on the issues of asylum and return. As a result, return assistance improves reception from the authorities of the country of origin when receiving their nationals. Moreover, the AVRR programmes contribute to the realization of the main objective of IOM: to promote migration that is orderly, humane and beneficial to all. Recognizing the importance and value of AVRR programmes, this project represents IOM’s continuous efforts to identify the best ways and means to improve the quality and effectiveness of reintegration assistance activities.

The IOM Mission in Budapest has been implementing Assisted Voluntary Return programmes since the early 1990s. The first Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), signed in 1994 between IOM and the Hungarian Government, demonstrated the acknowledgement of the AVR programme as one of the legal instruments for addressing irregular migration in Hungary. Drawing from its experiences and lessons learned from the implementation of its AVR programmes, IOM Budapest has been gradually expanding the types of assistance and components to the original AVR activities. In order to reach out to as many potential voluntary returnees as possible, IOM Budapest started to complement its AVR programme with comprehensive information and outreach components.¹⁴ Moreover, with the aim of rendering assisted voluntary returns more sustainable, in 2006, IOM Budapest introduced reintegration assistance and reintegration grants within its AVR programme.¹⁵ Reintegration counselling was introduced in 2010. Through all AVR projects implemented by IOM Budapest thus far, more than 8,000 migrants have been assisted in their return to the country of origin, and more than 200 beneficiaries received reintegration assistance.

¹⁴ Hungarian Assisted Return and Information Program (HARIP and HARIP I).

¹⁵ “Enhancing Mechanisms and Harmonizing Standards in the Field of Voluntary Return of Irregular Migrants in EU Central European Member States” regional project for Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

The reintegration assistance component in IOM's projects is an addition to the general AVR activities and is intended to facilitate a sustainable return to those migrants who qualify for, apply and receive it.¹⁶ Since the start of its implementation in Hungary, the reintegration assistance component has shown not only quantitatively, but also qualitatively, that reintegration assistance contributes to sustainable return.¹⁷ Although relevant research and AVR experts agree that successful and sustainable return is impossible without efficient and effective reintegration assistance, so far this component has been applied merely as a limited financial incentive for potential clients who are considering the option of assisted voluntary return to the country of origin. The effectiveness of this tool is further decreased by the fact that, in its current form, it cannot be tailored to the specific needs of the beneficiaries. Currently, reintegration assistance is defined as an in-kind contribution of maximum EUR 3,000 for which the beneficiaries of the AVRR programme can apply by submitting a business plan or an education plan. These plans are approved or rejected by project management at IOM Budapest, taking into consideration the assessment provided by the IOM Mission in the country of origin.¹⁸

Fact-finding missions,¹⁹ in-house research,²⁰ years of first-hand experience and information from the beneficiaries,²¹ and feedback from questionnaires completed by returnees to Kosovo*²² suggest that these shortcomings of reintegration assistance should be and can be addressed and mitigated.

¹⁶ "Assessment of the Assisted Voluntary Return Projects in Hungary", IOM Budapest 2010.

¹⁷ One of the conclusions presented in the Assessment of the Assisted Voluntary Return Projects in Hungary.

¹⁸ To mitigate most of the listed challenges, IOM Budapest has recently designed a more complex and flexible reintegration programme with an increased amount of reintegration available to returnees to Kosovo* as of March 01, 2014 and to all other returnees as of May 01, 2014.

¹⁹ "Sustainable Return and Reintegration in Kosovo (UNSCR 1244) in Light of the New National Strategy", IOM Budapest 2011.

²⁰ "Assessment of the Assisted Voluntary Return Projects in Hungary", IOM Budapest 2010.

²¹ Feedback received from beneficiaries through outreach visits and the IOM AVR toll-free hotline service, carried out through IOM Budapest's awareness-raising information projects.

²² "Evaluation Report on the Reintegration Assistance of Assisted Voluntary Returnees from Hungary to Kosovo (UNSCR 1244)", IOM Budapest 2014.

Table 1: IOM Hungary's Reintegration Assistance to Returnees to Kosovo* (2006-2013)²³

Year	Number of reintegration grants disbursed
Return I (1 September 2006 to 28 February 2008)	5
Return II (1 November 2007 to 30 November 2008)	3
Return III (1 August 2008 to 31 January 2010)	4
Hungarian Assisted Return and Reintegration Programme I (HARRP I.) (1 January 2009 to 31 Jly 2009)	3
Hungarian Assisted Return and Reintegration Programme II (HARRP II) (1 August 2009 to 31 December 2009)	3
Hungarian Assisted Return and Reintegration Programme III (HARRP III.) (1 January 2010 to 31 December 2010)	10
Hungarian Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration Programme /HAVRR 2011 (1 January 2011 to 30 April 2012)	21
Hungarian Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration Programme /HAVRR2012 (1 May 2012 to 31 December 2012)	8
Reintegration Assistance to Assisted Voluntary Returnees to Kosovo* (1 January 2013 to 28 February 2014)	40
Total number of grants provided to Kosovars since 2006	97

In the framework of the national European Return Fund project, *Country Information Gathering Mission to Kosovo** implemented by the Hungarian Office of Immigration and Nationality (OIN) in cooperation with IOM in 2011, it was observed that specific challenges in the field of reintegration relate to adequate provision of information to beneficiaries prior to departure and post arrival, to the necessity of a closer cooperation between all stakeholders involved in the reintegration process, and the need to make the generation of sustainable employment opportunities core components of any reintegration initiative.

Final recommendations of the *Assessment of Assisted Voluntary Return Programmes in Hungary*, a project implemented in 2010, highlighted the need to either increase the financial amount available for reintegration (as not sufficient for sustaining a successful business) or access to loans for later injection of capital; creation of cooperatives among returnees to pool resources and create a network of support (with positive effects on

²³ IOM Budapest AVR Statistics, 2014.

the local community); expanding the options for types of assistance covered by reintegration (such as medical care, housing, salary subsidy), and training in financial and business management for returnees²⁴

In 2013 the general AVRR programme was complemented by a separate reintegration programme specifically designed for Kosovar returnees.²⁵ Based on the previous experience, feedback received IOM Kosovo* and the Donor, it has been agreed that additional resources need to be channelled towards the effective reintegration of Kosovar returnees and also that these efforts need to be more individualized. The dedicated programme offered a comprehensive reintegration package in the form of counselling and customized reintegration activities. The reintegration assistance aimed to facilitate the engagement of Kosovar returnees in income-generating activities, which would result in sustainable return. The case-by-case approach ensured that reintegration counselling and developed business ideas take into consideration the characteristics and capacities of individual returnee including age, gender, family status, educational and professional attainments or place of residence.

As part of the feedback provided by the returnees, the following recommendations were made with a view to provide more effective reintegration assistance that is able to facilitate sustainable return: to include business partnerships among the reintegration options offered to beneficiaries; to offer a greater variety of reintegration activities; to introduce support to mitigate immediate needs of beneficiaries; to increase the amount of reintegration grant; to provide one-on-one consultation to potential applicants already in Hungary; to reduce the paperwork of applicants for reintegration assistance and speed up the evaluation phase of applications for reintegration assistance; and to make the reintegration grant available for a longer timeframe.²⁶

In 2014 new guidelines and implementing rules were introduced, which gave the beneficiaries more flexibility in creating reintegration plans and using the reintegration grants they apply for. In addition to the small business start up the applicants may spend the money on salary subsidy schemes and also on setting up business partnerships. They may also use part of the total grant as needs-based support to solve issues and problems which would otherwise hinder their reintegration process, and to cover medical, administrative, accommodation and child care costs.

In addition, a new type of cash support for vulnerable returnees, such as unaccompanied minors, disabled people, elderly people, pregnant women, single parents with minor children, and persons who have been subjected to torture, rape or other serious forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence, was introduced.

²⁴ "The Assessment of Assisted Voluntary Return Programmes" (EVA/2008/3112; RT0264).

²⁵ "Reintegration Assistance to Assisted Voluntary Returnees to Kosovo (UNSCR1244)" (EVA/2012/112; RT0768).

²⁶ IOM, 2014, "Evaluation Report on the Reintegration Assistance of Assisted Voluntary Returnees from Hungary to Kosovo (UNSCR 1244)".

In 2015 IOM Budapest is working on another evaluation project to gauge the effectiveness of reintegration assistance by interviewing former beneficiaries and relevant experts²⁷.

²⁷ "Evaluation of Reintegration Assistance Provided to Returnees to Kosovo (UNSCR1244) (EVA/2013/113; RT.1055).

Chapter 2. Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration in Austria, Germany and Hungary²⁸

2.1. Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) in Austria

Introduction to AVRR in Austria

In Austria, the main actors involved in the field of Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration are the Federal Ministry of the Interior (BM.I) and the Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum (BFA), as well as the following organizations: the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Country Office for Austria, Caritas, Verein Menschenrechte Österreich (VMÖ), Verein Menschen.Leben, ORS Service GmbH, LEFÖ-IBF, the Carinthian Refugee Office, and ICMPD.

The BM.I sponsors the voluntary return of migrants who cannot fund it themselves and who fulfil certain criteria. Based on a Memorandum of Understanding between the BM.I and IOM from 2000, IOM implements a General Humanitarian Voluntary Return Programme, offering logistical and general assistance in organising the homeward journey before, during and after return, taking into consideration the special needs of unaccompanied minors, women, the elderly and persons with medical issues. Return is possible for nationals of all countries, including Kosovo*.

The BM.I is also the responsible authority for projects co-funded by the European Commission (e.g. in the past: the European Return Fund), and is the principle interlocutor for actors implementing projects under this funding mechanism. In this setting, it co-funds most of the return counselling institutions active in Austria, such as Caritas, Verein Menschenrechte Österreich, Verein Menschen.Leben as well as LEFÖ, an NGO specialized on providing counselling and assistance to female victims of trafficking. Return counselling is offered to nationals of all third countries, including Kosovo*.

²⁸ Chapter 2 is based on the responses collected through a questionnaire (Annex I) targeting several organizations offering reintegration assistance. The questionnaire served as a mapping tool to gather comprehensive and at the same time comparable information on reintegration support various organizations in Hungary, Austria and Germany provide for beneficiaries who return to Kosovo under one of the Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration programmes.

The BM.I also co-finances country-specific and target group specific projects providing reintegration assistance for voluntary returnees in their country of return. In 2014, reintegration assistance in the country of return was offered in the form of country-specific projects to returnees from Kosovo* (implemented by ICMPD), Nigeria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the Russian Federation/Chechen Republic (implemented by IOM), as well as in the form of target group specific projects for victims of trafficking (one project being implemented by LEFÖ-IBF and one by IOM).

According to the official figures of the BM.I, 3,518 persons returned voluntary (including assisted and non-assisted) from Austria to their countries of origin in 2013. In 2013 and 2014, the total number of IOM AVRR programmes participants amounted to 2,896 and 2,299 returnees, respectively.²⁹ The share of returnees to Kosovo* constitutes 15 per cent of the entire caseload (418 returnees in 2013 and 349 returnees in 2014).

Federal Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Austria

The Federal Ministry of the Interior (Bundesministerium für Inneres, BM.I) is the leading institution responsible for policies in the field of immigration and asylum matters.

The BM.I finances the voluntary return of non-Austrians who are not in a position to return to their countries of origin, but fulfill a certain number of criteria. To this aim, the BM.I signed a Memorandum of Understanding with IOM in 2000. In addition, the BM.I is responsible for the administration of EU funds allocated to Austria in the field of return management (in the past: European Return Fund), determining the number and nature of projects that are being implemented by different actors (e.g. return counselling, reintegration projects), the interlocution amongst these actors, and co-funding most of the activities funded under this mechanism. In the past, the BM.I also funded some return related activities on its own, such as the AVRR Afghanistan I project.

The BM.I is responsible for financing and maintaining initial reception centres for asylum-seekers, and has commissioned the care of asylum-seekers, including social assistance and return counselling, to the company ORS Service GmbH. In this setting, it co-funds most of the return counselling institutions active in Austria, such as Caritas, Verein Menschenrechte Österreich, Verein Menschen.Leben as well as LEFÖ.

The BM.I coordinates its activities with the Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum which is in charge of approving or rejecting requests for AVR cost coverage and AVRR project participation. The BM.I also has a Police Liaison Officer in Kosovo*, who is in contact with ICMPD and other actors on the ground.

²⁹ The figures on voluntary departures and IOM AVRR overlap, but are not identical caseloads.

Assisted voluntary return and reintegration to Kosovo*

BM.I funds the General Humanitarian Return Programme. In the framework of this programme, logistical assistance such as flight booking and airport assistance is offered to migrants in need of voluntary return assistance. Migrants from all countries can participate if they fulfil certain criteria.

Together with the European Return Fund, BM.I co-funded a project called “Reintegration in Kosovo (ReKoKO IV)” which is implemented by ICMPD. The BM.I does not offer consultation to returnees before return. This task is being fulfilled by actors commissioned by the BM.I.

Most beneficiaries have applied for asylum in Austria. In 2013, 935 Kosovars applied for asylum in Austria (ranked 6 in the national asylum statistics), but only 14 were granted some form of international protection. According to preliminary statistics, in 2014 (January to August 2014) 351 Kosovars applied for asylum (ranked 8 in the national asylum statistics). The overwhelming majority of Kosovars went to Austria for economic reasons.

Observations

Concerning the sustainability of return, according to the BM.I, it is important to determine relevant business models in the framework of AVRR projects which can be successful on the local market(s). It is therefore very important to be knowledgeable of the local environment and be able to identify the gaps and needs of the local markets. Much depends on the local community and the family background – the greater the willingness to welcome the returnee back, the greater his/her chances for sustainable reintegration. In some countries the general security situation has an effect on the sustainability of return. ICMPD is currently in the process of evaluating the “ReKoKO” project including the sustainability of reintegration assistance. Evaluation of these measures is of great importance to the BM.I.

Good practices

- Counsellors should have an accurate understanding of the returnees’ situation: The evaluation meetings organized by ICMPD in the framework of their “RekoKO IV” project provided the opportunity for Austrian return counsellors to meet with the local staff working in Kosovo* and thereby gather first-hand information on the returnee’s situation upon return.
- Special Assistance for vulnerable groups is foreseen to be implemented in the project “ReKoKo IV” by ICMPD.
- Social inclusion of beneficiaries can be facilitated by organizing meetings and social events in Kosovo*.

International Centre for Policy Development (ICMPD)

ICMPD is an inter-governmental organization that aims to promote innovative, comprehensive and sustainable migration policies and to function as a service exchange mechanism for governments and organizations.

In Austria, the organization works closely together with a number of stakeholders in the framework of the ReKoKO project, but they are not financed through the project. There is a close cooperation with organizations and institutions that provide return counselling to migrants such as the NGOs Caritas, Verein Menschenrechte Österreich, Verein Menschen.Leben, the company ORS Service GmbH, and the Office of the Carinthian Provincial Government (Department for Asylum and Integration). ICMPD has also established a network of organizations with which regular meetings take place to exchange information and knowledge, including IOM, UNICEF, UNDP and UNHCR.

Assisted voluntary return and reintegration to Kosovo*

The first Kosovo* related AVR project, “ReKoKO I” started in 2010, the current project (although a separate project in its own right) is the fourth. When the project series started out, reintegration services were only offered to returnees from two Austrian provinces (Vienna, Styria). Later, additional provinces were added (in ReKoKO III Salzburg and Upper Austria), and since ReKoKO IV returnees from all nine Austrian provinces could participate. In its original design of 2010, the project only foresaw individual assistance for returnees, but gradually other activities were added, such as group trainings, on the job trainings, a website that functions as an information platform on Kosovo*, as well as social activities. Originally, it was foreseen to offer only micro-credit facilitation. However, in ReKoKO I project beneficiaries were reluctant to take a credit. Since ReKoKO II micro-credit facilitation became a functioning form of support and in addition, it was decided that also in-kind assistance for starting a small business was a possible form of reintegration support. Over time, the number of beneficiaries increased, as did the number of partners involved in Austria and Kosovo*.

Most recently, ICMPD concluded a project called “Reintegration in Kosovo* – Cooperation with Kosovo* Authorities and the Economy (ReKoKO IV)” which aims to support up to 50 Kosovars returning from Austria with individual and tailor-made reintegration assistance, including for immediate and long-term needs. Furthermore, the project aims at promoting stronger inter-institutional cooperation on reintegration in Kosovo*. The project was funded by the European Commission’s European Return Fund (63.4 per cent) and the Austrian Ministry of the Interior (BM.I) (36.6 per cent) and was implemented from September 2013 to December 2014.

The project activities included 1) updating the information material for returnees, 2) providing reintegration assistance and monitoring including for returnees with special needs, 3) conducting social reintegration activities, 4) carrying out regular exchanges with staff of the Kosovo Office for Reintegration, 5) cooperating with employment centres and training institutes in Kosovo* and 6) organizing a project evaluation workshop. Moreover, the three ReKoKO predecessor projects (ReKoKO I – III), implemented by ICMPD and co-funded by the European Return Fund and the Austrian Ministry of the Interior, are being evaluated in light of the constant improvement in the delivery of service.

In case a migrant from Kosovo* wants to participate in the project ReKoKO, they also fill out application questionnaires which are sent to the Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum. The Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum checks the eligibility of the applicant to participate in the project according to their eligibility rules. It then notifies both the return counsellor and ICMPD on whether or not the applicant is allowed to participate in the project. If their client is admitted, the return counselling organizations informed ICMPD on the return flight dates so that reception assistance can be provided in Kosovo*.

Counselling

Before departure, ICMPD provides one or two consultations mostly over the phone, to everyone in need. These are brief consultations on the nature of the project, but not return counselling, which is carried out by other service providers in Austria. Additionally, to provide more up to date information on the situation in Kosovo*, the organization offers a web platform as well, with information on the situation in Kosovo* at www.rekoko.org. According to ICMPD, the cooperation with Austrian return counselling institutions works very well, although it would be sometimes good to have more time for the preparation of the return.

Reintegration

As ICMPD is responsible for the implementation of the reintegration support following arrival in Kosovo*, the organization is in contact with the beneficiaries throughout the whole project duration, sometimes even beyond that. This makes the follow-up easier, besides the possibilities to meet at the social events, for instance, to which beneficiaries are invited. Furthermore, monitoring is also part of the case management, which consists of completing questionnaires a few months after the return

The relevant reintegration assistance provided by the organization includes small business grants, education/training services, labour market assistance, medical/dental services, temporary housing support, legal support (referral to lawyers), psychosocial support, child care support and needs based support e.g. purchasing of basic goods and services (public transportation, purchasing of basic items, foodstuff, hygienic supplies, schoolbooks, etc.).

In order to benefit from the reintegration assistance, certain eligibility criteria have to be met. In the first Selection Process - criteria applied by the European Return Fund: beneficiaries entitled to participate in the ReKoKO IV project shall be asylum-seekers, recognized refugees, persons with subsidiary or temporary protection status, or persons who are not or no longer allowed to stay in Austria. In the second Selection Process - criteria stipulated by the Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum: beneficiary must be a national of Kosovo*, who has stayed in Austria for a minimum of 4 months, and has not received AVRRA assistance before; s/he must not have a serious criminal record (checked on case-by-case basis) and has always been cooperative in asylum and alien law procedures.

During the process, returnees communicate their needs and the possible support form is determined accordingly. They can express their needs throughout the project, but max. 12 months after their return (and until the end of the project) and only if already considerable assistance has been provided there may be limits. This approach is very useful, as it allows a lot of flexibility. People often only have their immediate needs in mind shortly after the return, but these needs may change after a while and the flexible approach still allows assisting them.

The reintegration assistance applications are approved by the ICMPD and it takes usually one or two days to give the approval, but the process of preparing everything in support of the assistance request may be lengthier. After the approval has been granted, it usually takes less than 4 weeks until beneficiaries receive the reintegration grant.

The amount of money spent on reintegration activities is not the same for each beneficiary. There is a needs-based allocation, i.e. the reintegration activities are determined on a needs basis. As regards the average total cost of a reintegration grant, it is between EUR 700 and EUR 1000 but the amount is flexible, so there is no maximum amount, only a limit for the business start-up assistance. Usually for business plans that foresee co-funding from micro credit institutions EUR 1,000 is granted, meanwhile for business plans without co-funding from micro credit institutions, this amount is EUR 700.

Monitoring

In order to make sure that reintegration needs are appropriately assessed, ICMPD colleagues in the field are in regular contact with the project beneficiaries, including during field visits, and carry out the assessment of their needs. Together with the Project Manager in Vienna the effectiveness of the proposed measures is discussed and the measures are agreed upon. The project's business expert in Kosovo* as well as feasibility assessments of business plans add to the chances of running sustainable small businesses.

ICMPD is in contact with the Regional Coordinators and the Municipal Returns and

Reintegration Officers and refers cases to them if possible. Returnees who fit the criteria of the national reintegration fund can apply for assistance. ICMPD supports project beneficiaries in applying for assistance in areas where the project cannot provide support such as long-term accommodation. ICMPD also refers beneficiaries to the vocational training centres that offer free of charge trainings, and facilitate participation in such trainings by covering transportation and/or living costs during the training; supports beneficiaries to register in the state's employment centres and organizes on-the-job-trainings with companies. Additionally, there also exists contact with similar projects like URA II (Germany) and a reintegration project of the AWO (Arbeiterwohlfahrt Nürnberg); the latter has psychologists in their team and in the past, ICMPD was able to refer beneficiaries to psychological counselling.

As regards the numbers, in the last project phase (IV) of the organization's AVRR programme, approximately 70 Kosovars applied and 55 of them could finally participate in the project and receive reintegration assistance.

Concerning the geographical distribution of the returnees, they return to all parts of Kosovo*, although most beneficiaries return to the West and North of Kosovo*. They mainly depart from Vienna and Lower Austria, but most of them have not been in Austria for very long. From a demographical point of view, there are a lot of single men, although lately the number of families and single mothers has increased. With a few exceptions, their level of education is not very high; many have just basic school education or not even that.

Within the project, vulnerable returnees are assisted as well, e.g. single mothers, big families, people with medical (e.g. psychological) issues, and persons who have been involved in blood feuds are the most relevant groups of vulnerable cases. To these persons special assistance is provided based on their needs. This assistance can encompass food and hygienic packages, temporary accommodation, child care during training, language courses and school start assistance. Women are encouraged to participate in business trainings to empower them; in general, it is tried to combine the support with the support offered by the state, if available.

Observations

The general conclusions of the organization concerning the provided reintegration assistance is that it is very difficult to have far reaching impact with this sort of projects due to the geographical proximity of Kosovo* to the EU and its dire economic situation. Success depends very much on the individual's potential – if there is potential, the assistance provided through the project can be a means to ensure that beneficiaries will be able to sustain themselves. So as a recommendation, ICMPD puts forward that state initiatives should not only address the individuals' immediate needs, but they should also take the bigger picture into account and invest in the development of Kosovo*'s

infrastructure (e.g. public transport, roads, social housing, kindergarten, schools, medical facilities, etc.).

Concerning funding, ICMPD considers that the amount is sufficient for the activities envisaged in the project design. However, there are certain things that cannot be covered because the funding is too limited, but could be considered relevant, such as long-term housing assistance or long term/expensive medical support. There are also challenges linked to the limited duration of the project implementation as well as to funding, e.g. feasibility of monitoring activities during the short project implementation period.

Good practices

ICMPD considers that the strongest aspects of its reintegration programme are, that they have:

- Managed to build a strong relationship with the beneficiaries in Kosovo*;
- Been able to respond well to individual needs;
- The flexibility of assistance and the network created in Kosovo* (e.g. with the Regional Coordinators and the Municipal Returns and Reintegration Officers, the Austrian Police Liaison Officer in Kosovo*).

International Organization for Migration (IOM) Austria

As the leading international organization for migration, IOM acts with its partners at the international community level to:

- assist in meeting the growing operational challenges of migration management;
- advance understanding of migration issues;
- encourage social and economic development through migration;
- uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants.

Migrants who are unable or unwilling to stay in Austria but lack the means to return to their countries of origin can be assisted in their voluntary return. In the framework of the “General Humanitarian Return Programme”, IOM Austria offers logistical assistance for the voluntary return of migrants in cooperation with non-governmental organizations and public authorities. IOM Austria works closely with organizations and institutions that provide return counselling to migrants such as the NGOs Caritas, Verein Menschenrechte Österreich, Verein Menschen.Leben, LEFÖ IBF (specialized on female victims of trafficking), the company ORS Service GmbH, and the Office of the Carinthian Provincial Government (Department for Asylum and Integration). The General Humanitarian Return Programme is not Kosovo* specific, but is based on a

Memorandum of Understanding signed between IOM and the Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior in 2000, establishing AVR services in Austria.

The assisted voluntary return services include booking of flights as well as airport assistance in coordination with the counsellors from designated return counselling institutions, as IOM does not provide return counselling in Austria. The programme is partly funded by the Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior (BM.I) (82 per cent); and migrants, whose costs are not covered by the BM.I but who can provide funds from other sources, can also be assisted as “self-payers”³⁰ (18 per cent).

In addition, IOM Austria implements a number of projects offering reintegration measures in the returnees’ countries of origin. Assistance has been provided in the Republic of Moldova, Georgia, Kosovo*, Afghanistan, Nigeria, the Russian Federation and Pakistan as well as to trafficked persons and unaccompanied minors. Upon request, IOM Austria also provides country of origin information in order to assist migrants in making an informed decision on whether to return.

Assisted voluntary return and reintegration to Kosovo*

The above mentioned “General Humanitarian Return Programme” provides logistical assistance for return journeys to migrants from all over the world, including an unlimited number of migrants from Kosovo*. In the event that a Kosovar migrants seeks to participate in the “General Humanitarian Return Programme”, their submitted requests for cost coverage are directed to the Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum. The Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum checks the eligibility of the applicant for participation in the programme according to the rules of eligibility outlined in the project. The Federal Office then notifies both the return counsellor and the IOM on their decision regarding covering of the costs.

IOM Austria does not provide pre-departure counselling to the returnees. Pre-departure consultation is provided by specialized return counselling organizations in Austria, such as the NGOs Caritas or Verein Menschenrechte Österreich (VMÖ).

IOM Austria does not provide reintegration assistance in Kosovo*.

Over time, the number of voluntary returnees assisted by IOM has increased (the peak occurred in 2010, the numbers have declined afterwards). In 2013, Kosovo* nationals were the second largest group of voluntary returnees assisted by the IOM Country Office for Austria (418 persons). The majority of Kosovar returnees are young men, between 18 and 30 years old and 1.9 per cent of the returnees are unaccompanied minors.

³⁰ It is possible that funding for self-payer cases is provided by local authorities.

Observations

In principle, according to IOM Austria the funding is sufficient. However, challenges emerge when dealing with unconventional cases, e.g. persons who need expensive medical treatment or escorts, as funding is insufficient to cover these needs. In addition, there is no funding foreseen for family tracing and family assessment of unaccompanied minors who wish to return voluntarily.

Verein Menschenrechte Österreich (VMÖ)

VMÖ is a private organization which implements projects in the areas of: the Dublin procedure (counselling and logistical movement assistance for persons who voluntarily comply with the decision – “Go Dublin” project), legal counselling for asylum-seekers, return counselling and counselling in detention centres, monitoring of forced returns, and integration of third country nationals in Austria. VMÖ is one of the key players in Austrian voluntary return, as more than 50 per cent of voluntary returnees return from Austria with the support of the organization.

VMÖ provides return counselling in its office, during visits to open reception centres (above all in Lower Austria) and in detention facilities. The return counselling includes coordination with donors of cost coverage, assistance in obtaining travel documents from the embassies of returnees’ countries of return, accompanying returnees in the airport, flight booking for returnees whose return flights are not booked by IOM and following up after return. The organization’s return counselling activities are funded by the Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior (BM.I) (50 per cent) and the European Return Fund (50 per cent).

Assisted voluntary return and reintegration to Kosovo*

In case a client wants to participate in the International Centre for Migration Policy Development’s (ICMPD’s) project “Reintegration in Kosovo (ReKoKO)”, VMÖ sends an application for participation to ICMPD. To procure the necessary funding, VMÖ sent requests for the cost coverage of return to the Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum; once it was granted, VMÖ contacted the IOM Country Office in Austria (which is in charge of the logistical arrangement of the travel), and the Embassy of Kosovo* in Vienna to procure the necessary documents for its clients.

All projects implemented by VMÖ are available for Kosovo* migrants.

Counselling

Prior to departure, usually one or two face-to-face consultations and one or two phone consultations are provided to the beneficiaries, but there are cases when more consultations occur. Counselling is provided in the returnees' mother tongue at various venues: in VMÖ's office in Vienna, in detention centres, as well as in reception facilities or at the returnees' private housing (the latter is provided e.g. in Lower Austria, where mobile counselling is offered in ca. 90 per cent of cases).

Reintegration

VMÖ does not provide reintegration assistance to beneficiaries. It only provides the returnees with some cash assistance (50-370 EUR per person) granted by the Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum which can be used for onward transportation, immediate needs upon return and the first steps of reintegration.

Monitoring

VMÖ counsellors call the returnees within one week after their return to check whether they arrived safely to their destination. The majority of returnees hold insufficient level of education, young single men (20-35 years old). In Austria the majority lived in Lower Austria and Vienna, sharing an apartment with other Kosovars; however, they return to different parts of Kosovo*, mainly to rural areas where they or their families own a house. Although some of them would prefer to stay in Pristina where there are better chances of finding employment, lacking sufficient accommodation it is extremely difficult to start a new life there. Some returnees had seasonal jobs in Austria (e.g. at construction sites), which they found through friends or other intermediaries, and they went to Austria to work for a few months per year. In such cases reintegration and return are frequently unsustainable.

Sustainability

VMÖ experience has identified major factors of impact, which affect the sustainability of return: individual factors such as personality, motivation, personal goals and willingness to work, education and family situation. Other factors such as religion or politics are also relevant. In many cases reintegration proved to be unsustainable, as many young men want to go back to EU countries to work. Some single men reappear in the VMÖ's office after they returned to Kosovo*. On the other hand, families that returned voluntarily usually do not return to VMÖ.

The return counsellors can attend 1-2 internal trainings per year. Some return counsellors take part in International Workshops for Return Counsellors organized by IOM. Returnees are usually very well informed about the situation in Kosovo*, as they haven't been away for a long time.

Observations

According to VMÖ, the amount of funding is in principle sufficient to cover the

necessary costs. However, in some exceptional cases, such as the ones found below, more means would be needed for:

- returnees who passed away in Austria before they were able to return home and whose bodies have to be transported to Kosovo*;
- returnees with serious and costly medical problems who need to travel for example with medical escort or need oxygen for the travel. In some cases an amount of maximum EUR 1,000 is granted by the authorities to cover these costs but this is still not sufficient for more expensive services;
- returnees who are homeless and need accommodation and food until they can return home (currently the available resources are limited and accommodation can only be provided for a period not exceeding one week).

In the case of the ReKoKO project, micro-credits did not prove to be very popular, above all due to their high interest rates. The majority of returnees chose vocational trainings and were assisted in finding employment; some took computer courses or started a small business. Some business start-ups in agriculture proved to be a success.

Caritas Austria

Caritas Austria implements non-profit charitable projects in Austria as well as in other countries (Development Cooperation, Emergency Aid, Migration and Development). The aim of Caritas Austria is to help people in need, offer social services, and support migrants in all stages of their stay in the country.

Caritas works in close cooperation with the Austrian authorities. Their services related to assisted voluntary return are funded by the European Return Fund (approximately 50 per cent) and the Austrian Ministry of the Interior (BM.I) (approximately 50 per cent). In some cases self-payers can also participate in the programme.

Assisted voluntary return and reintegration to Kosovo*

Returnees from Caritas could participate in ICMPD's AVRR Project "REKoKO" until December 2014 although there was no formal cooperation in terms of an agreement or partnership between the two organizations. Currently Caritas has no specific Kosovo* related project but provides usually five face-to-face consultations to every returning third country national before return.

In general the organization provides the following type of assistance to returnees to Kosovo*: promotion of AVR, counselling, movement and escort services, and psychosocial support prior to return. Other services include accompanying clients to appointments with the authorities, obtaining travel documents, contacting friends and

relatives in the country of origin, and translating required documents. On the other hand, Caritas does not provide reintegration assistance in Kosovo*.

Observations

According to the organization, the available funding is in general sufficient for the implementation of the projects. However, greater possibilities for direct support of returnees within the projects should be considered (lower administrative costs for example). The AVRR project from ICMPD's point of view should not only support returnees but also contain the opportunity for other measures. Currently, there are limited possibilities to assist people with medical needs (long term or expensive treatments). A different approach with broader possibilities to develop projects offering more direct assistance to returnees is needed. This has to be carried out at the EU-level where the aims of the projects have to be decided.

Good practices

- *Collaboration:* Caritas collaborates with LEFO, an organization specializing in human trafficking of female victims
- *Counsellors' training:* Counsellors are well trained and have an accurate understanding of the returnees' situation.

Recommendations

Based on the answers provided by the organizations in the questionnaire, the following general recommendations have been identified to improve AVRR:

- The reintegration project offered by ICMPD (ReKoKO IV) is considered to be extremely beneficial. However, there are a lot of external factors that, if improved upon, could further facilitate the reintegration process, such as the economic situation, local development, rule-of-law-related know-how, anti-corruption measures in Kosovo*, etc.
- Vocational training and learning an occupation would help returnees' reintegration. In some cases of business start-ups, the basis for conducting a successful business is difficult without an education.
- Pre-departure assistance: More time should be provided to develop the reintegration plan (Business plan, etc)
- Medical assistance: There are not enough funds to provide medical assistance. Currently, there are limited possibilities to assist people with medical needs (long term or expensive treatments, escorts).

- Family tracing and family assessment of UAMs who wish to return voluntarily. There are not enough funding opportunities available to cover this.

2.2. Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) in Germany

Introduction to AVRR in Germany

The German Ministry of the Interior (with the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees - BAMF) and the 16 German Federal States are jointly responsible for steering and jointly fund REAG/GARP (Reintegration and Emigration of Asylum-seekers/Government Assisted Repatriation Programme), in collaboration with IOM. In addition to the REAG/GARP program, there are a multitude of further initiatives to facilitate and promote assisted voluntary returns at the Federal level, the level of the Federal States as well as at municipal level in Germany. Legal competencies for assisted voluntary returns (as a service which does not entail any legal commitment on the part of the state authorities) rest with the 16 Federal States. In accordance with Section 75 no. 7 of the Residence Act, BAMF has competency to coordinate the programs and take part in projects to promote voluntary returns, and pay out funds approved under those schemes. All these further programs, projects and initiatives in Germany that provide voluntary return assistance to asylum-seekers, refugees or irregular migrants build upon and are complementary to the REAG/ GARP programme.

IntegPlan is a transnational project to promote voluntary return to countries of origin that are sometimes in the course of difficult political and economic reconstruction, such as Kosovo. The project executing agency is Micado Migration gmbH in the city of Saarbrücken which works together with the Office for Repatriation Assistance of the City of Munich. The offer of services provided by the network is mainly aimed at returnee advisory centres and their counsellors in the federal states involved via which potential returnees are to be connected to advisory centres in selected countries of return.

The “URA 2” project of the BAMF is the follow-up of a project for returnees that was supported by the European Commission. Building on the first project, the German Federal Government and the Federal Länder Baden-Württemberg, Lower Saxony, Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt and Thuringia have joined together with the aim of facilitating the reintegration of people returning to the Republic of Kosovo and of further improving the management of returnees as a whole. The “URA 2” offers Kosovo returnees comprehensive advisory services and numerous programmes to help and support their reintegration. The aim is to facilitate long-lasting reintegration in their former homeland. The distinctive advantage of the “URA 2” project is the physical presence in Pristina.³¹

³¹ For more information refer to <http://www.bamf.de/EN/Rueckkehrfoerderung/ProjektKosovo/projektkosovo-node.html>.

AWO³² Nuremberg's Kosovo project is another project for assisted return of Kosovo refugees to their homeland with an office directly in Pristina. The repatriation aid centre in Pristina offers support for people returning to their homeland and their families, as well as for people who are already living in Kosovo. In Germany, returnees are also supported and informed by counsellors.³³

IOM Germany

Germany has been a member of IOM since 1954 and has a long history of voluntary return, having established the first global AVR programme, REAG/ GARP (Reintegration and Emigration of Asylum-seekers/Government Assisted Repatriation Programme), in collaboration with IOM, in 1979. This programme has been widely used as a model for state assisted voluntary return programmes within Europe and elsewhere.

The Programme aims at facilitating the voluntary return of asylum-seekers, recognized refugees, irregular migrants and other groups of migrants with insufficient means of their own to support their return. It is a humanitarian programme that provides financial and operational support to facilitate voluntary return and onward migration to third countries. The programme covers travel costs and travel assistance, as well as start-up assistance for defined nationalities.

Since the beginning of this programme more than 36 years ago, IOM Germany has assisted more than 570,000 people to voluntarily return to their home countries or emigrate to third countries willing to accept them. In 2014 alone, IOM Germany assisted around 13,500 persons to return to their country of origin or migrate to a third country within REAG/ GARP.

In August 2011, the German Federal Ministry of the Interior and IOM signed a joint Memorandum of Understanding which highlighted the commitment to continue the longstanding and trustful cooperation with regards to assisting voluntary returnees and providing them with reintegration assistance. The goal of the Federal Government is to achieve an integrated return management system which ranges from return counselling through assisted voluntary return to the sustainable reintegration of voluntary returnees in their countries of origin. In the course of celebrating the 60 anniversary of

³² AWO is a workers' welfare institution in Germany. Since 1957 AWO in Nuremberg is active in consulting and supervising emigrants and people from other countries. The department "Migration and Integration" offers the organizational frame for a multitude of AWO services, that are both internally and externally networked and oriented towards the situations of migrants and serving their social integration.

³³ For more information refer to www.awo-nuernberg.de/en/startseite/wir-ueber-uns/migration-and-integration/the-kosovo-project.html.

the cooperation between Germany and IOM, both the German Federal government and IOM Director General William L. Swing once again emphasized the intention of continuing this cooperation.

In 2006, IOM launched the ZIRF-Counselling project in partnership with the Federal Government and Germany's 16 Federal States. The ZIRF-Counselling project aims to complement REAG/GARP by better informing potential voluntary returnees about the return process and the reintegration-specific circumstances that can be expected in their countries of origin. Providing both detailed country-specific fact sheets as well as an avenue to pursue individual-specific inquiries, IOM is helping potential voluntary returnees obtain information needed to arrive at informed decisions about return.

Arbeitsgemeinschaft Dritte Welt e.V. (AGDW e.V.)

The AGDW e.V. is a charitable organization that works with permanent or temporary immigrants (refugees and other migrants) in Stuttgart and the federal state of Baden-Württemberg. The organization supports migrants by counselling and providing public relations activities. The organization's goal is to promote international understanding and acceptance on migration issues.

As the office of the organization is seated in Stuttgart in the centre of social services and is also close to the office of the alien's office, this allows a better cooperation among these three parties.

The return project is part of a federal state funded network of counselling centres in the federal state of Baden-Württemberg. This network allows the organizations to have a better exchange of ideas and ability to hold network meetings on a regular basis. The organizations are also part of the "Integplan" return-counselling network of "Micado-Migration"³⁴. When return movements take place to countries of origin that are relatively close (e.g. Balkans), counsellors often have to fund bus tickets; but in other cases they cooperate with IOM to fund travel costs. ADGW e.V. also works with organizations in the countries of origin including reintegration centres and reintegration projects such as European Reintegration Instrument Network (ERIN)³⁵ and URA 2 project.³⁶ Cooperation with NGOs in Kosovo* only takes place on a case by case basis.

The AGDW e.V. is involved in the AVRR project through the return counselling project of "Zweite Chance Heimat" in which two counsellors provide counselling services for

³⁴ For more information refer to <http://www.integplan.de>.

³⁵ For more information refer to http://www.bamf.de/EN/Rueckkehrfoerderung/ProjektERIN/projekt_erin-node.html.

³⁶ For more information refer to <http://www.bamf.de/EN/Rueckkehrfoerderung/ProjektKosovo/projektkosovo-node.html>.

returnees and also help them apply for reintegration programmes or grants. This programme is not tailored towards any specific countries of origin.

Concerning the Kosovar returnees, the organization typically assists the following two groups:

- a) Ethnic Albanians who usually go to work in Germany and have already had better financial resources in Kosovo* thus their circumstances upon return are more favourable.
- b) Minorities, such as Roma and Ashkali who lived under very difficult circumstances in Kosovo*.

The demographic composition of the group is diverse. The majority of the returnees are single men between the ages of 18 and 30 with diverse educational backgrounds ranging from non-formal education to degrees from higher educational institutions. The time they spent in Germany varies from a few months to more than 11 years. In view of the living conditions in the reception facilities, some reconsider waiting out the process of their asylum application and only stay for a short period of time. Other returnees go to Germany out of curiosity, seeking opportunities but then decide to return rather quickly after discovering the difficulties in maintaining an acceptable minimum level of living.

Vulnerable returnees, such as the unaccompanied minors, the elderly, and persons with physical or mental illness receive special assistance, which depends on the return and reintegration project with which the counselling centre cooperates. Sometimes returnees with chronic medical conditions receive medication in coordination with the URA 2 project, for up to six months after the return. Furthermore, AGDW e. V also refers returnees to other organizations in Stuttgart that are specialized in traumatized cases, where returnees can receive counselling or therapy before return.

Assisted voluntary return and reintegration to Kosovo*

The project started in 2004 and was the first return project in the federal state of Baden-Württemberg. Initially, the project was funded by the EU and the city of Stuttgart; however, without an initial budget for return assistance. Support services other than counselling were funded from other sources: for example, the costs for travel documents were paid by the centre for social welfare in Germany, other costs were paid by other foundations. It was only in 2007 that a specific return budget was introduced. Initially, the funds came from the EU Refugee Fund and since 2008 from the EU Return Fund. According to AGDW e. V., since 2008 the funding has finally been sufficient.

The return and reintegration project was funded by three major donors: the EU Return Fund, the city of Stuttgart and the federal state of Baden-Württemberg. The funds were combined in the project's budget, out of which most counselling, return and

reintegration costs were paid. The city of Stuttgart did not have any specific requirements on spending their funds.

The total budget of the project is 45,000 EUR per year and a reintegration grant cannot exceed 4,000 EUR per returnee. This maximum amount is reserved to cases with a strong reintegration component (small business grants or health care). Otherwise the average grant is 1,500 EUR, but it depends on the beneficiary's needs; some returnees only require counselling without financial assistance, or only need minimal financial assistance. In 2014, three out of the six returnees applied for reintegration assistance and the other three returnees had no reintegration needs.

As regards the pre-departure assistance and consultation, the organization's counselling centre offers general AVRR counselling services, escort services (e.g. to the consulate, to get travel IDs), reintegration services in Kosovo* and the reimbursement of travel and travel documents' costs. In 2014, 17 Kosovars requested counselling in the centre, of whom 6 had already returned to Kosovo* at the time of completing the questionnaire.

The reintegration process can be described as below:

1. At first the office for social welfare makes appointments for the returnees in the ADGW e.V.'s counselling centre but returnees can also go to the counselling centre and seek advice on return possibilities themselves.
2. Usually 1 to 20 counselling sessions are provided before departure. The first consultation usually happens immediately; nevertheless the counselling process sometimes stretches over many months. The counselling is done face to face at the AGDW e.V.'s office except in cases where the person is hospitalized (which then takes place at the clinic), or if the returnee is immobile. Sometimes ADGW e.V.'s counsellors have to consult with the URA 2 project before they can make decisions concerning the return process.
3. A need for reintegration measures is identified during the counselling session. This need has to be well founded (e.g. health care measures require doctor's certificates etc., long absence from Kosovo*, no employment opportunities, no or limited language skills, insufficient health care in the country of origin).
4. Together with returnees, counsellors develop a reintegration plan. It is very important for ADGW e.V.'s that the reintegration support is flexible. Often the circumstances change and the plans have to be adjusted accordingly. The grant can be used for the following options: small business grants, education/training services, labour market assistance, medical/dental services, housing support, cash (initial start grant), needs based support, language classes, health insurance or medication. In terms of job opportunities after return, counsellors usually try to get the returnee back into their former professions, if possible. Some

returnees also have start-up ideas. The strategy for reintegration into the job market is then developed in cooperation with the URA 2 project.

5. A funding decision is made or when the need for subsidy is beyond the budget allocation of the counselling centre, an application is sent to a donor, who then makes a decision.
6. Funding is paid by the counselling centre.
7. The follow-up is not systematic. In some cases it was not possible to follow-up because contact could not be established after return. The counsellors try to stay in touch on a regular basis, as the returnees have to send receipts for the items they buy with the reintegration grants. This is usually handled by a partner organization in Kosovo* as well as the sending of feedback.

The counsellors are considered to be well trained by the organization as they receive regular training sessions, usually multiple times per year. In 2014, the counsellors received training sessions on German alien law, counselling methods, and strategic communication as well as information on a targeted country.

Observations

The most important factors, according to ADGW e.V's are the security situation in the country of origin, the economic situation of the returnee and the country of origin, available support mechanisms in the family of the returnee and personal motivation of the returnee. It is always important to consider the wider context: is the returnee returning because he wants to do so voluntarily or because he has no other options? Many returnees return because they have no residence permit in Germany and not because they see a good prospective for their future in their country of origin, thus it is very difficult to achieve a sustainable return for these returnees.

Good practices

- Collaboration with partner's organizations: All return projects are part of a counselling centre network. Many NGOs are also part of "Integplan", another return-counselling network.
- Contact with reintegration centres in the countries of origin and reintegration projects for various countries of origin, such as ERIN and URA 2 projects, both implemented by the BAMF.
- Special assistance is provided to vulnerable people suffering from medical or psychological issues.
- Good working relationship with the city of Stuttgart.

The Office for return assistance of the Division for social concerns in the City of Munich³⁷

The mandate of the Office for return assistance is to support the voluntary return and reintegration of migrants to their home countries. The organization's role in the AVRR consists of providing return assistance in order to support a humane return of migrants. These services include counselling, support for the processing of travel documents, contacting authorities, cooperating with doctors, counsellors, etc.

Throughout the EU funded project "Coming Home", the organization aims to support refugees, asylum-seekers and foreigners facing deportation. The goal is to foster voluntary return and support sustainable reintegration in the country of origin. The activities are not tailored to particular countries of origin and therefore no Kosovo* specific services can be identified.

The state collaborates with two other organizations in Germany: IOM Germany and SOLWODI (NGO "Solidarity with women in distress"). The returns are organized via IOM's REAG/GARP programme. The IOM works closely with the organization in providing financial and travel assistance (applications, scheduling of return flights, medical escorts, assistance at the airport, etc.). Ideally, upon completion, the Division for Social Concerns receives feedback from IOM on the success of the reintegration after return. SOLWODI is an NGO working with women in distress, which deals with applications for female clients willing to participate in the female returnee project.³⁸ The SOLWODI counsellor offers consultation to potential returnees. A decision is then made whether the person is eligible for funding within the framework of the project. Further counselling is done by SOLWODI's partner organization in the country of origin after departure. Both programmes are in addition to the assistance provided by the Division.

Assisted voluntary return and reintegration to Kosovo*

The organization's AVRR projects were funded by the EU (approximately 45 per cent), the state (approximately 18 per cent) and the commune (approximately 37 per cent) and the amount of funding is considered to be sufficient.

Consultations are provided by counsellors speaking the returnees' mother tongue. To support voluntary return and to improve reintegration, from 2000 to 2002, the project organized movements which provided the possibility for returnees to bring their furniture and equipment for start-ups with them to the country of origin. At the same time, women were able to participate in sewing classes offered in Albanian to improve their employment opportunities after return. Furthermore, counsellors received large

³⁷ Büro für Rückkehrhilfen der Landeshauptstadt München.

³⁸ More information can be found on www.solwodi.de.

information packages on the situation in Kosovo*. They regularly travelled to Kosovo* to get in touch with local organizations and to organize assistance and monitor the efficiency of the assistance already provided.

As the number of returnees to Kosovo* has decreased since 2004, there are no more Kosovo-specific AVRR offers available. Individual counselling and support are still provided by an Albanian-speaking counsellor who cooperates with the AWO Nuremberg project in Kosovo*. The assistance varies depending on the needs and the situation in the country of origin.

From December 2012 until December 2013, 21 persons (20 households) were given counselling, while 17 persons (16 households) actually returned to Kosovo*. The remaining chose not to return. 5 per cent of the group was minors. The gender breakdown constituted men in majority (96 per cent) whereas women were only 4 per cent. Their legal status was 91 per cent denied asylum-seekers and 9 per cent asylum-seekers. The time spent in Germany before return was 1 to 6 months for the entire group.

The return and reintegration of vulnerable groups is carefully considered and planned. The most common reasons for vulnerability cases are if the returnee is an unaccompanied minor, elderly, or has a physical or mental illness. In these cases, important factors for successful reintegration, among others are detailed counselling; sufficient time for counselling and return preparation; cooperation with counsellors, doctors, etc.; cooperation with interpreters; financial and material assistance; support in all areas of departure preparation; education; small business start-ups; contact with cooperating partners and assistance after return.

Concerning the pre-departure assistance and consultation, usually between four and six counselling sessions are offered to returnees. These are face-to-face consultations and take place in the office. During these meetings the counsellor promotes the AVRR, explains the different AVRR counselling, movement, escort and medical services and also offers the possibility for psychological support and reintegration assistance. The Division employs a counsellor, who comes originally from Kosovo*, who regularly travels to the country and is in contact with local organizations.

The eligibility for reintegration assistance is the lack of own financial means. The assistance is individualized and takes into consideration the local situation and the needs of the returnee. The grant may consist of small business grants, education/training services, medical/dental services, and cash and financial assistance to finance the initial period after return. In several cases the reintegration plan has to be modified because for example, in case of some small business start-ups, the original business idea planned in Germany should be adjusted to the realities faced in Kosovo* after return.

The financial assistance is approximately 500 EUR per person. People facing medical problems can get up to 1,500 EUR per person, small business grants are 3,000 EUR per person and when it comes to vulnerable groups the amount is decided on a case-by-case basis. Within this framework, the individual amounts are decided based on the following factors: the time spent in Germany, age, country of origin, family status, education, health, employment perspectives in the country of origin, situation in the country of origin, return to city or village, etc.

After the return, the organization gets in contact with the partner organization AWO Nuremberg in Pristina and the two counsellors (organization and AWO) start to coordinate the support assistance and notify the returnee about the amount of return assistance and grants which are to be given. The follow-up is usually done by the partner organization in Pristina. The duration of this follow-up depends on the assistance provided and lasts approximately 6-12 months. It is also the duty of the partner organization AWO to monitor reintegration and provide feedback to the organization; but if possible, also a counsellor from Germany travels to Kosovo* on a yearly basis and visits the returnees.

Between December 2012 and December 2013, 15 Kosovars received financial reintegration assistance.

Observations

The organization considers that the following factors are the ones impacting sustainability the most (long-term contacts with returnees have led to the same conclusion): assistance must be tailored to the individual needs of the returnee, family in the country of origin, employment perspectives, motivation of the returnee, counselling centre must have sufficient financial means, and stable political situation in the country of origin.

Good practices

- Personal counselling and individualized assistance, depending on the needs of the returnee.
- Very good cooperation with the AWO Nuremberg in Pristina.
- The counselling centre has sufficient means to adequately support returnees.
- Up to date info is available thanks to the ZIRF-Counselling project and ZIRF database³⁹ participation in the network “carinet”, which is an internal information network of Caritas.
- Cooperation with URA 2 project works very well because their work is very detail-oriented. They pick up returnees at the airport, they help them look for apartments or sometimes rent the apartments for an initial period, they provide

³⁹ For more information refer to <https://milo.bamf.de>.

small cash payment for food in the beginning, they assist with job searches, etc. This has proven very beneficial for the returnees.

Raphaelswerk Hannover⁴⁰ for the Diocese Hildesheim

Raphaelswerk Hannover is a Catholic organization that works according to Catholic social values and Christian ideas of respect for humans. The return counselling project “Perspektiven eröffnen” (Opening perspectives) is a part of the counselling services of the organization. They provide return counselling for returnees in the federal state of Lower Saxony. The project does not have an active reintegration component, but rather refers the returnees to other projects in which they are provided with reintegration assistance.

At the time of the interview the funds came from the EU Return Fund, the Ministry of the Interior of Lower-Saxony and the Catholic Church. The funds of Lower Saxony are bound to IOM return funds. If IOM does not approve the REAG/GARP application, the counselling centre cannot pay Lower Saxony funds to the returnee. The counsellors then try to cooperate with other partners such as the office for social welfare or others.

Raphaelswerk Hannover cooperates with the other Raphaelswerk offices (all over Germany), with other return counselling centres in the federal state of Lower Saxony (offered by AWO) and in Germany as a whole and with reception facilities that also often provide return counselling. Furthermore, there is also cooperation with Integplan network. As the sister organization Raphaelswerk Hamburg is part of the ERSO network (European Reintegration Support Organizations), the counselling centre can therefore also communicate with projects and other centres in the entire EU. Traumatized clients are usually referred to a trauma centre, which is part of the same network.

In certain cases, the organization works with partner organizations in Kosovo*. The counsellor participated in a study trip to Kosovo* (offered by Integplan) during which the counsellor is introduced to several local NGOs and organizations. The counsellor can then use these contacts for specific inquiries requiring cooperation with one of these organizations.

Assisted voluntary return and reintegration to Kosovo*

Raphaelswerk Hannover’s return counselling projects are not country specific, and the composition of clients has varied over the years. As part of “Integplan” (Micado-Migration), counsellors attend country related seminars and have meetings with other Caritas offices to exchange ideas with colleagues and other return counsellors. The

⁴⁰ A member of the German Caritas Association.

return counsellor has also been to Kosovo* and therefore has an accurate understanding of the situation there.

Anyone who is in need of counselling can seek return counselling in the centre. The first contact is usually made over the phone, and then the actual counselling takes place in the organization's office. In exceptional cases, people who are not able to travel can also receive consultation in their homes. Returnees go to the counselling centre and in an initial conversation the counsellors get background information on their residence status. Depending on their needs and status, the counsellors design the counselling sessions and work in a way to achieve a specific goal with the returnee. The organization provides a minimum of three consultations, up to approximately 30, depending on the situation and needs. The counselling also includes counselling on issues in Germany, so not all counselling is related to return.

Following face-to-face sessions the counsellor informs the returnee about reintegration possibilities. To be eligible for reintegration assistance, the returnees have to have spent a specific time in Germany. The reintegration grants can be used for different purposes such as small business start-ups, education/training, labour market assistance, housing support and other needs based support, language classes (either financial support to pay for language classes or organization of a teacher); sometimes for the translation of documents, the acquisition of furniture or some equipment for their job. The reintegration measures vary greatly depending on the needs e.g. the counsellor could provide funds to pay for medication in the initial months after return or organize a place to stay for the first days after return. In case the counsellors cannot provide assistance themselves, they will help the returnee with the application so they may take part in a return project, such as URA 2. It is the counsellor who decides on the usage of funds from the state Lower Saxony and evaluates the needs of the returnee and the costs in Kosovo*. Furthermore, s/he needs to determine the likelihood of success in Kosovo*, in which case the application is more likely to be approved.

Other than consultations, the counselling centre can also provide funds to the returnees on top of the federal state funds. These conditions are negotiated each year with the Ministry of Interior of Lower-Saxony. The funds may include either smaller costs (e.g. travel costs from the group home to the counselling centre) or even bigger ones (purchase of furniture in the return country, initial rental payments, medication or medical services). These funds are limited to and are only provided if deemed useful by the counsellors. Returnees who were in Germany for a long time usually receive more funding than returnees who were only in Germany for a few months. The counsellors also check if there are any institutions or organizations that could help, e.g. with the child care for a developmentally challenged child as unfortunately, Kosovo* does not have a sufficient system for care for the elderly or the disabled.

The amount that the Organization can spend on reintegration assistance is 1,200 EUR per individual and 3,200 EUR for families. This amount varies depending on needs, for

example, the costs can be lower in the event of obtaining documents and higher for a small business grant. However, this amount, according to the organization's expert, is insufficient to start a successful business venture; a business grant of 5,000 EUR is recommended instead. The centre also notes that if the counselling centre had additional funds from sources with fewer restrictions, the counsellors could provide the returnees with initial return grants to fund necessary expenses such as food, public transport, etc. without having to provide a receipt. As perceived by the organization, it would be of great assistance if, in addition to the business grant, beneficiaries could receive cash assistance in order to get started in the beginning.

Although no beneficiaries returned to Kosovo* during 2013, there were many in the previous years. According to Raphaelswerk Hannover, the decrease in the Kosovo* bound caseload is attributable to expectations of changes in the legal framework, which will enable Kosovo* nationals who have lived in Germany for six years with a "Duldung" status (deportation not allowed/possible) to get a residence permit.

In general, there are two categories of returnees (regardless of the country of origin): those who want to return voluntarily because of their own wishes, some even have a permanent residence status in the host country, and those who choose voluntary return as an alternative to deportation. Returnees who have stayed outside of Kosovo* for many years face difficulties with the lack of Albanian language and unfamiliarity with local circumstances.

The majority of people returning to Kosovo* are between 20 and 30 years old. They are mainly young, unskilled men. In many cases they have been in Germany for 4 to 10 years but more than 11 years is not unheard of either. Additionally, there are also some unaccompanied minors cases, who turn 18 at the point of return.

Since 2013, the counselling centre has put a special focus on vulnerable returnees, especially those with medical conditions or psychiatric conditions. These groups usually receive more counselling sessions than other returnees to address their complex needs.

Observations

Even though the counsellor would like to be able to give an initial reintegration grant which the returnees could use to get started after return, at the moment, the donors limit these possibilities. The returnees have to prove how they have spent the funds they received by providing a receipt, but the counsellor would rather prefer to give them an initial grant to help them get started because the returnees are busy with many administrative issues during the early period after their return and also have other costs (e.g. food) beside setting up a new business.

Good practices

- The counselling service always reacts to the changing situations in the target countries of return and quickly adapts. They never focus on a specific country, but they are always flexible depending on who wants to return.
- Cooperation with URA 2.

Central Return Counselling (ZRB) for Refugees in Northern Bavaria⁴¹

ZRB Nord is an NGO which supports asylum-seekers to return to their home country. The role of the organization in the AVRR programmes is to organize the returns and provide counselling to the returnees by supporting their decision-making, assisting in the development of a prospective (employment, family) and providing financial support.

ZRB Nord's projects were funded by the European Return Fund and the State of Bavaria at the time of data collection. The organization cooperates with IOM Germany while in Kosovo* they work with AWO. The counsellors at the AWO project in Pristina keep contact with other NGOs and organizations in Kosovo*.

Assisted voluntary return and reintegration to Kosovo*

In the AVRR process, first, there is a consultation in which information on the available reintegration opportunities is provided. The reintegration counsellors share information on the current situation, reintegration opportunities, available language classes, psychological counselling and escort services. Usually two to four consultations are provided to returnees: 10 per cent of the consultations are done by phone and 90 per cent of the cases are face to face consultations. The organization considers that they have an accurate understanding of the situation in Kosovo*.

Reintegration assistance is provided if the returnee lacks financial means and wishes to return voluntarily and permanently. The grant can cover a small business plan, education/training, labour market assistance, subsidized employment, medical/dental services, housing support, psychosocial support, child care support, needs based support, purchasing of basic goods and services (public transportation, purchasing of basic items, foodstuff, hygienic supplies, schoolbooks, etc). The amount and the type of support are always determined individually following a needs assessment. After return, the continuation of the counselling/assistance is done via counsellors in Kosovo* (AWO

⁴¹ Zentrale Rückkehrberatung (ZRB) für Flüchtlinge in Nordbayern.

Project) through the provision of home visits and counselling sessions. ZRB Nord receives feedback through these mediums

Regarding the composition of the beneficiaries, approximately 20 to 30 cases per year are from Kosovo*. Every Kosovo* beneficiary is eligible for reintegration assistance as long as funds are available. The different age groups are more or less evenly represented in the caseload, with one of four returnees being under 18 years of age. They are mainly single men (60 per cent), 35 per cent are families, and single male parents represent 5 per cent. In terms of immigration statistics, 95 per cent are in suspension of deportation while the remainder are 3 per cent of asylum-seekers and 2 per cent irregular migrants. The time that they spent in Germany is estimated to be between 6 to 12 months for 90 per cent, 1 to 6 months for 5 per cent and 1 to 3 years for 5 per cent of the AVRR beneficiaries.⁴²

Central Return Counselling (ZRB) Southern Bavaria⁴³

ZRB Süd is an NGO which supports and counsels refugees, who are considering voluntary return. The counselling does not have a specific goal in mind and depends on the returnees themselves. The counselling develops individual perspectives for the future, together with the client.

The project was funded by the EU (50 per cent), the state (Federal, Bundesland, local municipalities) (40 per cent) and by cooperating partners including Caritas, Diakonie and Red Cross (10 per cent).

ZRB cooperates in Germany with several other organizations and networks as well, which are the Micado Migration network, which provides information on the country of origin and on partner organizations in the country of origin; the ZIRF Counselling Project by IOM, which helps with individual inquiries regarding health care, housing and labour market; with the other two ZRB in Bavaria (Northern and Western Bavaria); and with Melonet which provides medical escort services.⁴⁴ In Kosovo* the ZRB cooperates with AWO Nuremberg which helps the returnees fill out applications for reintegration assistance measures, provides support for funding a business, pays out the funds, supports inquiries regarding health care, housing and job searches as well as psychological counselling.

⁴² Based on counselors' estimates.

⁴³ Zentrale Rückkehrberatung (ZRB) Südbayern.

⁴⁴ Melonet is a company accompanying medical cases on flights worldwide. The company provides their services for voluntary returnees, or the return of patients from abroad, but does not accompany forced returns.

Assisted voluntary return and reintegration to Kosovo*

If the returnee decides after the counselling in favour of voluntary return, the return is prepared together with the returnee by the counsellors. Apart from counselling, financial and organizational support is provided for travel arrangements and educational measures in Germany, or in some cases small business grants are funded by the organization.

The pre-departure assistance and consultation sessions are held in the office only. Counsellors are regularly trained, conduct field visits to Kosovo* with meetings and conversations with regional coordinators and commune-level administration. During the consultations the counsellors provide general information on the AVRR programme, information on reintegration assistance, country information on Kosovo*, legal assistance, medical and/or dental assistance and psychological assistance.

The organization provides also reintegration assistance. However, no additional reintegration is possible when the returnees were in Germany for a short time only. The maximum amount of reintegration assistance is 3,000 EUR. The reintegration assistance can only be provided once and can serve the following purposes: small business grants, business partnership, education/training services, labour market assistance, medical/dental services, housing support and psychosocial support. Beneficiaries can also receive cash or needs based support which means purchasing of basic goods and services (public transportation, purchasing of basic items, foodstuff, hygienic supplies, schoolbooks, etc.).

The organization considers reintegration as sustainable only when small business grants are provided to support a way of living. The project plan that is created can be modified and it is really useful because the situation in the country of origin has to influence the reintegration plan. Once the plan is validated, it takes less than 4 weeks for the beneficiaries to receive the grant. The follow up is done for up to two years in cooperation with organization in the country of origin. The verification of the use of reintegration grants is done via pictures and receipts.

During 2013, 26 per cent of AVRR participants were returning to Kosovo*, totaling 32 people. Most of them were under 50 years of age, men being in majority (65 per cent of the total). Within this group 50 per cent were families, 35 per cent single males, 10 per cent were single female parents and 5 per cent single females. In terms of education, the majority finished primary school (60 per cent), 10 per cent had no formal education, 10 per cent went to vocational secondary school, 5 per cent finished high school and 15 per cent had a post-secondary degree. All of them were asylum-seekers in Germany. The time they spent in Germany before return varies from 1-6 months (5 per cent) to more than 11 years (10 per cent), but the majority (60 per cent) spent 6 to 12 months in the country, 15 per cent spent 1-3 years and 10 per cent spent 4-10 years. The half of

the organization's vulnerable return clients has health issues and 5 per cent are unaccompanied minor children.

Observations

ZRB Süd considers the assistance effective even though the available funds are insufficient. When clients have medical needs, which cannot be planned in advance, the costs are usually higher and then the funds are not sufficient to pay for all of the small business grants that the organization would like to fund.

Good practices

- Small business grants and education measures to make the job search easier.

Recommendations

By summarizing the questionnaires filled out by the above listed German organizations, the following recommendations can be made:

- Support the job search and make finding employment as easy as possible.
- Consider the reintegration needs and abilities of children. Some children were born or raised abroad and in many cases have never been to Kosovo*. These children will probably have difficulties in adjusting to school, have difficulty with the Albanian language or may not speak Albanian at all. They could be in need of regular counselling, psychosocial counselling or educational assistance in Kosovo*. A separate reintegration assistance plan for children should be considered independently from their parents.
- Provide psychological counselling. Returnees who belong to an ethnic minority in the country of origin often have different problems from other returnees. While others often face a difficult economic situation, minorities usually have a difficult time accepting circumstances within their own family, such as divorce, or separation, the threat of forced marriage, children from outside a marriage etc. It would be important to involve the family in the country of origin before the departure of the returnees.
- Use more information technology to gather and systemize feedback. A good case management system was developed for a return project to Iraq whereby feedback is given automatically. It was used by the European Technology and Training Centre in Iraq which was developed by AGEF.⁴⁵ The tool enables partner organizations in the country of origin to look into the file from the return

⁴⁵ For more information refer to <http://www.agef.net>.

counselling centre and fill in further information later. Afterwards, the partner organization can enter data on spending, receipts, pictures and follow-up visits, which are always visible to the counselling centre in Germany and makes the follow-up process easier. More information is available on <http://www.ccm-return.net/>.

- Counsellors had a number of cases where they did not see any reintegration potential, especially in cases of minorities from Kosovo* who moved around and spent many years outside. This is especially true for Kosovars and ethnic minorities who left Kosovo* when it was still Yugoslavia. These families also have language difficulties and often do not speak Albanian. Language classes should be provided for them before their return. A better solution would be a more generous residence permit on humanitarian grounds.
- Improve employment perspectives and create more employment opportunities. Many clients leave Kosovo* because of the high level of unemployment. If there are any employment programmes in the country of origin, returnees should be able to participate as well.
- Provide funds for initial return to provide for basic expenses such as food, public transport, etc.
- Ensure that the use of the reintegration grant is as flexible as possible. Reality is often different from what it might look like during the preparation process.
- Bigger reintegration grants: the counsellors can only provide very small amounts of money to returnees. The amounts are often not enough to start a successful business.
- The time pressure from administrative bodies in the host country should be reduced and it is advised that sufficient time, within sensible limits, is allowed for the preparation of return.

2.3. Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) in Hungary

Introduction to AVRR in Hungary

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) Budapest has been running Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) Programmes and other related activities⁴⁶ in Hungary since the mid-1990s. In the past 10 years these have been funded by the European Return Fund and co-funded by the Hungarian Government. The projects have been implemented in partnership with the Hungarian Office of Immigration and Nationality (OIN).⁴⁷

OIN is a governmental institution dealing with the administration of asylum, aliens policing and citizenship cases in Hungary. The reception facilities operated by the Office ensure accommodation and supply for clients under asylum or aliens policing procedures at six points of the country. OIN implemented various AVRR related projects funded by the European Return Fund: for example, a fact-finding mission to Kosovo* which aimed to gather essential country information; projects to provide psychosocial assistance in the Community Shelter of Balassagyarmat, including return counselling and medical care; and exchange of experience with Sweden to facilitate voluntary return which aimed at studying the tools of facilitation of voluntary return, especially the communication tools.

Applications to the AVRR projects are processed by the OIN and eligible beneficiaries are referred to the IOM. Pre-departure return counselling is provided by the IOM Budapest and by the Menedék Association for Migrants. The return is organized by IOM Budapest, in cooperation with the OIN and implemented by the relevant IOM offices. When providing return assistance to unaccompanied minors, IOM works together with the various Child Protection Facilities in Hungary and the Guardianship Office of the 5th District in Budapest.

Reintegration assistance is coordinated by IOM Budapest and provided by the IOM offices in the countries of origin. Through all AVR projects implemented by IOM Budapest thus far, more than 8,000 people have been assisted in their return to the countries of origin. Since 2006 – the introduction of the reintegration component – more than 200 beneficiaries received reintegration assistance in the various Hungarian AVRR programmes.

⁴⁶ AVRR-related research projects, information projects, capacity building projects, etc.

⁴⁷ The Aliens Policing Directorate of the Office of Immigration and Nationality (OIN) is responsible for the coordination of return procedures, including forced and voluntary returns.

International Organization for Migration (IOM) Budapest

IOM is involved in the following three phases of AVRR:

Pre-departure

- Outreach, information and counselling
- Travel preparation (passports, visa/stamps assistance, escort, shelter, medical assistance)

Return

- Travel arrangements (ticketing/luggage allowance)
- Payment of reintegration grant/pocket money
- Transit assistance

Post-return

- Reception, information and counselling
- Reintegration support
- Evaluation and monitoring

Beneficiaries' group composition

Assisted voluntary returnees to Kosovo* constitute 70-80 per cent of the AVR caseload from Hungary. Under its current general AVRR programme, a total of 450 persons are envisaged to receive return assistance from IOM.

The majority of IOM Budapest's AVRR clients have continued to be men (single) from Kosovo*, ages 20-35. An increase in the number of Kosovar Roma families arriving to Hungary has been discerned in the recent months. During the outreach visits to detention and reception centres in Hungary, we have noted that the majority of them list the lack of job opportunities, housing and medical care as being the reasons why they have left Kosovo* and applied for asylum in Hungary.

IOM Budapest has established good working relations and cooperation with the IOM Mission in Pristina. IOM Pristina colleagues provide assistance with return cases from Hungary, reception assistance, post-return counselling on reintegration and in disbursing the reintegration grants. IOM Budapest also cooperates with *Menedék – Association for Migrants*, a Hungarian NGO providing services to migrants in reaching out to and accepting referrals of potential returnees.

Assisted voluntary return and reintegration to Kosovo*

IOM Budapest Kosovo*-related AVRR projects are funded by the national allocation of the European Return Fund 2013, which is disbursed by the Hungarian Ministry of Interior as the Donor. The amount awarded to IOM Budapest's AVRR projects is based

on the carefully developed project budgets, which take into consideration all of the costs that are required in order to implement all of the projects' components.

The current projects are a continuation of previous AVRR projects, using already developed mechanisms and following similar patterns of implementation. Since 2009, additional elements have been continuously added to the Hungarian AVRR projects. The AVRR programme has constantly been shaped by the accumulated experience and lessons learned as well as by the Donor's (Ministry of Interior) requirements. As such, a separate Kosovo*-specific AVRR project had been introduced and from 2014 includes an expanded reintegration component, offering a complex reintegration package in the form of counselling and customized reintegration activities. The reintegration component has been expanded in order to contribute to sustainable return and reintegration of beneficiaries.

Hungarian Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration Programme for Migrants

The purpose of the Hungarian Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration Programme for Migrants is to facilitate the voluntary and orderly return of up to 450 asylum-seekers, beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, beneficiaries of temporary protection, third country nationals who do not or no longer fulfill the conditions for entry and/or stay rules in Hungary and who, in accordance with the obligations to leave the territory of Hungary make use of voluntary return in Hungary, to their country of origin, and to contribute towards the sustainability of their return. The project consists of two components: 1) operational return component where beneficiaries will be provided assistance in arranging their voluntary return (obtaining travel documentation, purchasing travel tickets and travel insurance, providing departure, transit and arrival assistance, etc); and 2) an enhanced reintegration component, which focuses on providing returnees with assistance in finding and supporting the reintegration opportunities in their country of origin/return contributing therefore to the long term sustainability of return. An additional EUR 500 cash allowance is given before departure to those beneficiaries who are considered to be vulnerable according to Article 5, Section 2 of Decision 575/2007/EC, including unaccompanied minors⁴⁸. Return assistance for returnees to Kosovo* is provided within the framework of this programme.

Hungarian Information Project for Migrants on Assisted Voluntary Return

The project aims to facilitate the voluntary and orderly return of eligible third-country nationals by providing up-to-date and reliable information about the assisted voluntary return and reintegration (AVRR) programme implemented by IOM Budapest.

⁴⁸ The category "vulnerable returnees" includes: minors, unaccompanied minors, disabled people, elderly people, pregnant women, single parents with minor children, and persons who have been subjected to torture, rape or other serious forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence.

Information is provided to potential AVRR beneficiaries using various different media, such as an enhanced telephone hotline service, an enhanced dedicated website, printed and electronic promotion materials. Although IOM does not have physical presence at the various facilities in Hungary, it provides information through outreach visits to reception centres, asylum detention centres and alien policing detention centres carried out in accordance with IOM policies. The number of outreach visits is based on the joint recommendations made following consultative meetings with the Hungarian Government.

The project consists of four main components: i) an awareness-raising campaign about assisted voluntary return and reintegration (posters, leaflets, application forms), including how to apply and the benefits of participating in the programme; ii) a dedicated multilingual hotline service in Albanian, Urdu, Farsi and French; iii) a website to assist the beneficiaries in making a well informed decision on their voluntary return; iv) outreach visits by IOM staff to facilities to raise awareness of facility staff and detainees on AVRR and also hold one-on-one consultations and QandA sessions for interested migrants.

When required, consultations are also provided to potential beneficiaries at the IOM Budapest office. In addition to pre-return consultations, IOM also provides counselling on reintegration assistance in the country of origin following return. IOM staff working in the various AVRR projects is regularly updated on programmatic developments.

Complex Reintegration Assistance for Assisted Voluntary Returnees to Kosovo (UNSCR1244)

As already mentioned, given the large proportion of all voluntary returns from Hungary to Kosovo*, and Hungary being one of the principal countries of return for Kosovars, it was deemed necessary to develop a dedicated project focusing on reintegration assistance to Kosovars returning from Hungary.⁴⁹

The project encompasses three main activities:

1. Reintegration counselling to help beneficiaries find the best option of generating income in Kosovo*, taking into account their training and experience as well as the local economic circumstances.
2. Beneficiaries need to prepare and submit a detailed reintegration plan, which has two separate sections. In the income-generating component the applicant can choose from several options such as business start-up, business partnership, salary subsidy, on-the-job training and vocational and language training. In the needs-based component the applicant can focus on other aspects of his/her reintegration, such as child care, medical

⁴⁹ As in previous years, the return component (travel arrangements, departure, transit and arrival assistance, onward transportation, etc) continues to be implemented within the framework of the Hungarian Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration Programme for Migrants (above).

care, transportation, accommodation and administrative support.

3. The project also encompasses an overall evaluation of the reintegration support. The beneficiaries of reintegration grant will be requested to provide feedback by completing a questionnaire. The aim of this evaluation is to measure the extent of satisfaction with the reintegration assistance received, its impact in generating sufficient incomes to make a decent living for the returnees and their families once they return to Kosovo*.

Due to the limited availability of financial resources, the reintegration assistance can only be provided to a limited number of applicants. Reintegration grants are available to 15 per cent of all assisted voluntary returnees (50 grants of up to EUR 3,000). Only those who complete and submit a reintegration plan are considered for the disbursement of reintegration support. The best reintegration plans are selected for funding by IOM Budapest, based on the assessment provided by the IOM Mission in the country of return. It is very important that the beneficiary's reintegration assistance application is reasonable, feasible and sustainable. A beneficiary can apply for reintegration support only once in a project.

Good practices

- Good collaboration with IOM Pristina. Counsellors are helping returnees apply for business grants. The number of applications has increased.
- Reintegration support is application-based (not automatically given)
- The reintegration support can be used more flexibly with the aim of income-generation.
- The pre-departure stipend is automatic and can be used for necessary initial costs.
- EUR 500 stipend given to vulnerable cases.
- Pre-departure and post-return reintegration counselling provided to clients.

Menedék – Hungarian Association for Migrants

Menedék is an organization which works to promote the social, and cultural integration of refugees and migrants in Hungary. The organization works in alien policy detention centres, provides psychosocial care and psychological betterment as well as return counselling.

Regarding AVR and reintegration assistance programmes, Menedék provides return counselling, helps in the administration issues of migrants and promotes communication within the family. In cases of intention to return, Menedek helps individuals plan their return, calculate the cost of equipment, rental fees, tax matters, etc. Furthermore, it gathers data on tax, VAT, and reintegration possibilities. Menedék works with IOM in

Hungary and IOM in Pristina. The funding of the return counselling relies solely on the European Return Fund (100 per cent); however, Menedék submits its proposals together with the Hungarian National Commissioner of Police. Regarding the sufficiency of funding, the organization deems it sufficient for its activities.

Assisted voluntary return and reintegration to Kosovo*

The organization provides the following assistance to returnees to Kosovo*: promotion of AVRR, AVRR counselling services, medical screening/services, psychosocial support, as well as other services including communication skills, community programmes, computer, craft and (German and English) language courses. There is no upper limit on the number of participants in the organization's AVRR project.

Consultation

All the pre-return consultations are available to anyone and are done face-to-face in the reception/detention facility. The number of consultations, however, depends to a large extent on the language skills of the migrants. During the consultations, general information on the AVRR programme and reintegration assistance is provided as well as psychological assistance.

Counsellors receive monthly supervision and annual training with IOM, and conduct monthly discussions of the cases. Thanks to the face-to-face consultations, the organization considers that its counsellors have an accurate understanding of the returnees' situation. Due to the consultations taking place in detention facilities, it is not easy to improve their pre-departure assistance other than by inquiring about the date of return or whether the return application has been accepted.

Menedék does not provide reintegration assistance or pursue monitoring after return.

In terms of demographic composition, roughly 80 per cent of the participants are between the ages of 18 and 30, while the rest constitute the 30-50 age group. Currently the amount of returnees above age 50 is minimal; however the trends show that their numbers are increasing. All the returnees are single irregular migrant males who have spent between 1 and 6 months in the destination country prior to return. Roughly 70 per cent of them indicate that they have a family back home. Many do not have formal education. Vulnerable returnees with health issues (PTSD and chronic diseases) make up 5 per cent of the organization's case load.

A large portion of the beneficiaries do not have a livelihood opportunities in Kosovo* and they report lack of employment as the main factor behind their migration. Many would like to leave the country permanently. In addition to the lack of stable sources of income, fear of organized crime is becoming ever more frequent. Around 1-2 per cent of the returnees never want to leave again.

The organization observes that the major impact factors that affect the sustainability of return are the prospects and financial situations of the individuals.

Recommendations

Based on the answers provided by the Hungarian organizations in the questionnaire, the following general recommendations have been identified to improve AVRR:

- Reintegration assistance efforts by various actors need to be better coordinated both during the project development phase and the project implementation phase.
- More pre-departure counselling would be required before departure to allow the returnee and the potential service providers to get ready for the return and reintegration; pre-departure tailored and personal needs assessment would be useful.
- Flexible and tailored reintegration assistance needs to be provided. A needs-assessment is to be conducted in every case.
- Reintegration assistance also needs to be available to a larger percentage of the returnees.
- Provision of long-run, financed, supported trainings, especially vocational trainings secured with training contracts (in order to secure the cooperation of the beneficiary throughout the whole duration of the training course).
- Provision of more job opportunities.

Chapter 3. Findings of the international conference in Pristina

On 28-29 October 2014 in Pristina, an international conference was organized to provide participants from the three concerned EU member states and also from Kosovo* with the opportunity to discuss the challenges of pre-departure preparation of returnees and services provided to them after arrival.⁵⁰ The conference enabled the participants not only to present their views and activities, but also to discuss them and gather reflections from each other. In order to transform the various different experiences participants had due to their varied backgrounds and roles in AVRR into concrete recommendations, in addition to the presentations, workshops were also held. One of the workshops dealt with pre-departure preparations, the other with assistance provided to returnees following their arrival in Kosovo*. Below is a summary of workshop discussions and the most important challenges and recommendations voiced by participants during the workshop discussions.

Challenges of return and reintegration

Many returnees have medical and mental health problems, which creates difficulties for travel. For returnees who spend time in detention before returning (a majority in the case of Hungary) the environment itself presents a stressful situation. Migrants in detention often suffer from isolation, lack of information; often complain about bad food or lack of food which can create both physical and mental problems. The lack of access to any kind of information in detention, partly but not only, because of language and cultural barriers, creates frustration and a great deal of stress. In this environment it is obviously difficult for returnees to plan their return in a calm and realistic manner.

One of the major problems before return is an unrealistic expectation and misinformation about return and reintegration assistance available for the returnees. In detention, this is often exacerbated by rumours, unverifiable and often misleading information received from fellow detainees.

The most obvious challenge affecting the sustainability of return and reintegration is that return takes place to a country with great economic uncertainty. This is more pronounced in the case of those who did not manage to work in a destination country and acquire some savings. The time pressure caused by destination country authorities and also often the returnees' wish to go home as soon as possible, once they made the return decision, also restricts caregivers in providing adequate assistance during the preparation of return, especially in the case of those returnees who spent a long time

⁵⁰ Agenda of the event can be consulted in Annex II.

outside of Kosovo*. Also, stakeholders involved in the reintegration efforts in Kosovo* do not have enough time to do a proper assessment of the case and modify the reintegration assistance if needed. Children as a vulnerable group generally face difficulties. When a decision is made to return a child they are not always asked how they feel about the decision. Parents sometimes make the decision to return without taking all consequences for their children into account. When the return takes place during the school year, it often causes a negative impact on reintegration. Therefore **sufficient time should be allowed to prepare return.**

Children returning to their “country of origin” are a highly vulnerable group. Many children were born in the host or a transit country or left the country of origin at a very young age. As a result, many children do not speak Albanian, which poses a major reintegration barrier. Therefore, language skills of all family members should be identified in the initial return counselling session. Ideally, children with language barriers should participate in language classes already before returning from the host country. Since this is not always possible due to time constraints, return counsellors should register children for language classes in the country of origin, so classes can be started immediately after return. Communication with language schools or classes provided by the government is crucial.

A general recommendation that was unilaterally recognized by the working group was to always return families with children at the end of an education cycle. Although this may not be possible in some cases, return counsellors should always stress the importance of finishing the school year before returning to avoid uprooting children even further. This message should also be communicated with governments and applies to both voluntary and forced returns. Many children who return do not attend school. The problem is partly due to the fact that in many cases repatriation is organized during the school year, in which case the child loses the school year and needs to start again in the same grade one year later. **It would be important to take this into consideration when deciding on the timing of return.**

In general, return counsellors have a broad and important mandate when it comes to counselling families with children. Parents should be made aware of their children’s situation and should receive additional information regarding return preparation and integration for children. Children should receive a health check-up before returning, so any undetected illnesses can be treated immediately and a pediatrician and/or specialist in the country of origin can be notified in advance about the prospective patient. Additionally, parents should be made aware of the various documents that are required to register in school, so they have adequate time to prepare and collect the documents or have notarized copies and translations of relevant documents from the destination country, if necessary. In some cases, it may be advisable to apply to schools in advance before returning to the country of origin. On the other hand, participants recognized the need to provide opportunities for the social reintegration of returned children. **Children who return to Kosovo* should be brought together with children who have always**

lived in Kosovo*⁵¹; cultural or other events (e.g. sports activities, etc.) could be used to enhance their social inclusion.

In order to **respond to health concerns** of returnees, every returnee should receive a health screening prior to return on a voluntary basis. Potential illnesses that were previously undetected could be treated immediately and suitable treatment options in the country of origin could be organized in advance. While authorities in Kosovo* could enter information on the health care system, hospitals, contact information of health centres and health insurance agencies in all municipalities, return counsellors could contact specific health institutions with health concerns of the returnee and develop a treatment plan together.

Additionally, participants recommended that essential medicines be made available at clinics and health centres throughout the country, which is not the case today. The list of essential medicines is regularly published by the Ministry of Health of Kosovo.

Often, the available assistance does not aim at the individual situation of returnees, but “one size fits all” schemes are sometimes used that do not address individual needs. Support is often not offered for the longer term, aiming at increasing the economic stability for families. On the other hand, emergency action (e.g. food, etc.) for support immediately after return is also missing, specifically for those who left Kosovo* after the 28 July 2010 deadline⁵¹.

It was highly recommended that reintegration support be designed in a way that allows addressing the individual situation of each returnee. Workshop participants pointed out that the funding of reintegration packages should be substantial enough to make a difference, taking into account the economic context of Kosovo*.

Furthermore, **collecting and distributing relevant and personalized information on return and reintegration to returnees**, especially with regards to the reintegration of children and families. Such an undertaking would operate on an individual basis and provide the personalized information relevant to returnees. An exemplary project is already in place in Germany, co-organized by IOM Germany and the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees. Within the framework of the “ZIRF-Counselling” project, return counsellors can send individual inquiries with questions about Kosovo* and municipality of origin in areas such as health care, housing, labour market, social concerns, vulnerable groups or public administration to IOM. IOM then collects the requested information in the country of origin and answers the inquiry, which is returned to the counsellors. The counsellors can therefore advise clients about their individual situation in order to adequately prepare their return. The recommendation of

⁵¹ Only persons who left Kosovo before 28 July 2010 and who applied within a certain timeframe are entitled to benefit from the Kosovo Government Reintegration Fund, which provides emergency assistance to returnees.

the working group is consequently to set up similar projects in other destination countries to assist a larger number of returnees.

Not all information may be relevant for returnees who were absent from Kosovo* only for a short period of time, since their needs will differ from those of long-term absentees.

Information required from Kosovo* could include information on the social support system including contact information and documents required to apply; educational possibilities including information on the application process; information on the initial contact and how returnees will be received at the airport including information of a contact person in their destination municipalities; information on NGOs, social and reintegration projects and finally information on the labour market, ideally including information on the current trends, available training opportunities and job offers. In addition to the need to tailor reintegration schemes to the individual needs of returning individuals and families, it was also pointed out that current reintegration approaches often focus solely on returnees; **the needs of the local population however should also be addressed** in order to avoid discrimination of people who have never left Kosovo*.

All participants agreed that sharing information with each other was a vital element in improving post-arrival assistance for returnees to Kosovo*. However, a first step should be to ensure that adequate information is available. It was therefore also recommended that the **monitoring periods be extended from what they are currently to at least two years**. This would ensure a more comprehensive feedback and enable practitioners to better measure the sustainability of return when designing and refining reintegration schemes.

A crucial issue that cannot be adequately addressed by NGOs and social workers, are the push-factors causing migration from Kosovo* to various host countries. It is up to governments of countries of destination and origin to jointly address this issue. Bilateral agreements between destination countries and Kosovo* can contribute to tackling this problem. This may include trade agreements between countries of destination and Kosovo*, attracting investments from the destination countries. Moreover, creating business opportunities such as seasonal labour in the country of destination can open legal migration channels as an alternative for asylum applications. Bilateral student exchanges, scholarships or other opportunities for students from Kosovo* would be a similar measure addressing a specific target group and could even have a positive impact on the overall level of education in the country of origin. It is therefore recommended that **legal channels of migration are opened and trade barriers removed to the extent possible**.

The improvement of the coordination and cooperation in the development of reintegration strategies and programmes was a very important recommendation. In order to increase the coordination among relevant actors, a comprehensive

coordination network should be set up and properly managed. While such networks exist to some extent on the level of responsible authorities, it was suggested that the network be extended to also include other actors that are not usually concerned (only) with returnees, but whose actions (or lack thereof) could have an important impact on the returnees' well-being. This extended network should include stakeholders in the countries of destination and Kosovo* ranging from ministries to private companies, from diverse fields (e.g. health, housing, etc.). In view of the most important reasons that make Kosovar nationals leave today, the economic situation and the lack of employment opportunities, **partnerships with the private sector should be given special consideration.**

It was recommended that (at least) yearly meetings, e.g. in the form of conferences, be held in order to allow for exchange of information and best practices as well as for joint actions.

But also outside such meetings the need for exchange of information was emphasized, and all stakeholders were called upon to share their ideas and plans for the development and implementation of reintegration initiatives more pro-actively with each other. This should be taken especially seriously by EU Member States who wish to become active in Kosovo*: They should always involve the national responsible actors in order to avoid duplications and redundancies and to identify measures that meet the needs of the returnees.

The increase in information sharing could also lead to more joint programming on the EC level and among EU Member States, which to date remains limited. The individual activities of different EU Member States can cause irritation and frustration both on the sides of the returnees and of those administering the assistance in Kosovo*.

Chapter 4. Recommendations for improved reintegration assistance for returnees to Kosovo*

The below recommendations were drawn from discussions held during the conference and from the research questionnaires filled out by stakeholders and AVRR practitioners in countries of destination, detailed in Chapter 2. In addition to the practices and experiences of the respondent organizations they can and should not be addressed solely to the countries of destination or to Kosovo*; they are meant to provide stakeholders and practitioners in Hungary, Austria, Germany and Kosovo* with issues to consider when devising return and reintegration programmes. The International Organization for Migration hopes that in addition to improving reintegration of Kosovar nationals, the information and ideas presented in the publication will also assist interested governments, non-governmental and international organizations in their efforts to improve return and reintegration services offered to nationals of other countries as well.

Recommendations:

- Countries of destination should allow sufficient time for the preparation of return and adjust administrative deadlines accordingly.
- Timing of return should take into consideration the specificities of each case, especially when it comes to the return of children.
- Special programmes aimed at the reinsertion of children who may face difficulties and language barriers after return should be devised.
- Improvement to the health infrastructure and the access to health care, including the availability of essential medicines at health facilities, is needed.
- Reintegration assistance should be tailored to the individual needs of the returnee and personalized information provided prior to return.
- Reintegration assistance to vulnerable returnees needs to be expanded to include all types of vulnerabilities. Reintegration assistance needs to be provided to vulnerable returnees as defined by the Return Directive⁵². Special attention is to be paid to the return of minors. In addition, reintegration assistance should be provided to returnees with chronic medical conditions and to returnees who are facing extreme hardship such as total lack of income, homelessness or no access to health care. Returnees with illnesses that cannot be treated in Kosovo* should receive special attention. Pre-departure coordination with the Department for Citizenship, Asylum and Migration (DCAM) of Kosovo* should be enhanced.

⁵² European Parliament and the Council, "Article 9 of Directive 2008/115/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2008 on common standards and procedures in Member States for returning illegally staying third-country nationals", 16 December 2008. Available at <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32008L0115>.

- Relevant vocational training courses should be provided, especially to those who start business ventures.
- More funding should be provided for family tracing and family assessment for returning unaccompanied minors.
- Psychological counselling should be provided, especially in instances when returnees fear lack of family acceptance due to changes in family status while abroad (e.g. divorce).
- Pre-departure language courses should be offered to beneficiaries of minority background who often do not speak Albanian.
- Persons who did not leave and communities of returnees should also be considered in devising reintegration assistance programmes.
- Monitoring should be conducted through a local partner in the country of origin and extended from 12 to 24 months.
- Removal of trade barriers and bilateral agreements between countries of destination and those of origin and opening up of legal channels of migration such as student exchange programmes and seasonal work schemes.
- Partnerships with the private sector and the public should be intensified.
- Regular and coordinated information sharing among stakeholders in the form of conferences and workshops should take place.
- From the initial phase, reintegration activities should be coordinated with all stakeholders through, for example, a coordination network of all reintegration projects to be set up with the participation of stakeholders.
- Social accommodation facilities for returnees in need should be made available in Kosovo*.

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Annex I: Questionnaire

IMPROVING REINTEGRATION ASSISTANCE FOR BENEFICIARIES RETURNING TO KOSOVO (UNSCR 1244)

Dear Respondent,

Thank you very much for taking the time and filling out the below questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed under the project titled: *“Improving Reintegration Assistance for Beneficiaries Returning to Kosovo”* and implemented by the mission of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Hungary in cooperation with IOM missions in Austria, Germany and Kosovo.

The questionnaire serves as a mapping tool to gather comprehensive and at the same time comparable information on reintegration support various organizations in Hungary, Austria and Germany provide for beneficiaries who return to Kosovo under one of the Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration programmes. The overall aim of the project, of which the present questionnaire is one of the components, is to improve the efficiency and sustainability of reintegration support provided to beneficiaries returning to Kosovo.

The findings of the questionnaire will be analysed, synthesized and presented at an international conference to be held in October 2014 in Pristina. Together with the conference outcomes, the findings of the questionnaires will also feed into a publication on the identified best practices and the recommendations for improvement.

If you have questions regarding the questionnaire, please contact our colleague at IOM Budapest, Mr Bálint DÓRA (email: bdora@iom.int, phone: +36 1 472 2513) who is responsible for the coordination of this evaluation project.

Thank you very much for your cooperation,

I - ORGANIZATIONAL DATA

1- IMPLEMENTING ORGANIZATION	
1. Name of the organization	
2. Organization's type	
<input type="checkbox"/> NGO <input type="checkbox"/> Governmental organization, authority <input type="checkbox"/> Inter-governmental organization <input type="checkbox"/> Faith/church based organization <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify	
3. Please describe the organization's mandate:	
4. Address	
5. E-mail	
6. Phone	
7. Please describe the organization's role in the AVR and Reintegration assistance programmes:	

8. What partner organizations do you work with **in your country**, if any, in implementing your AVRR services to Kosovo nationals? Please describe their roles and the structure of your cooperation.

9. Do you work with partner organizations **in Kosovo**? If yes, please enlist them and provide a summary of their roles and the structure of your cooperation.

--

4. Where does funding come from, please check the relevant source(s)?

- EU funds, please specify:%
- State (Federal, Bundesland, local municipalities)%
- Private donors%
- Other please specify:%

5. Do you think that the **amount** of funding available to your organization is sufficient to implement your AVRR programme (s) efficiently?

If no, please tell us in what ways is funding insufficient and what other services you would be able to provide if more money was allocated

--

6. Please tell us how your Kosovo related AVRR project(s) have evolved over time?

--

AVRR BENEFICIARIES GROUP DETAILS : COMPOSITION AND SIZE

1. How many Kosovo nationals apply to your Organization's AVRR programme (per project)?
2. How many people can take part in your Organization's AVRR programme (per project)?
3. What percentage of your beneficiaries can benefit from reintegration assistance?
4. If not 100 % of your beneficiaries are eligible for reintegration support, please describe the selection process:
5. Is there a time limitation before a beneficiary can apply again to your AVRR programme?
6. Please describe the programme/ project target group by percentage of returnees
Age: Under 18.....% 18 to 30.....% 30 to 50.....% Older than 50.....%
Gender:

Female%

Male%

Family status, please select:

Single female.....%

Single male.....%

Single female parent.....%

Single male parent.....%

Other please specify:%

Educational background:

No formal education.....%

Primary school.....%

Vocational secondary school.....%

High (secondary) school.....%

Post-secondary degree.....%

Higher education degree.....%

Immigration status:

Irregular migrant.....%

Asylum-seeker.....%

Refugee

Beneficiary of subsidiary protection.....%

Qualified national.....%

Other, please specify.....%

Time spent in the destination country before return:

1-6 months%

6-12 months%

1-3 years%

4-10 years%

11 years or more%

Vulnerable returnees:

Unaccompanied minor.....%

Victim of trafficking.....%

Health issues.....%

Other.....%, please specify

7. Do you provide special assistance to **vulnerable groups**? If yes, what type of assistance do you provide and what are the most common vulnerabilities.

8. Any other information you feel is relevant regarding your beneficiaries, i.e. socioeconomic or other indicators, special and/or recurring vulnerabilities, typical migration, return and other scenarios, migration routes, patterns in geographical distribution of your beneficiaries in the destination country and/or Kosovo, etc.

PRE-DEPARTURE ASSISTANCE AND CONSULTATIONS

1. Where do the applicants usually stay before returning to Kosovo?

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Open facility.....% | <input type="checkbox"/> At the residence of friends, relatives |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Closed facility.....% | <input type="checkbox"/> Private residence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify.....% | |

2. Do you provide consultation to returnees before return?

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> To everyone | <input type="checkbox"/> To those who request it |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No | |

3. If no, why?

4. How many consultation sessions do you usually provide before departure?
5. What channel of communication do you use to provide the consultation?
<input type="checkbox"/> Phone% <input type="checkbox"/> Face to face% <input type="checkbox"/> E-mail% <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify:%
6. Where do consultations take place?
<input type="checkbox"/> In your office% <input type="checkbox"/> At the returnee's place% <input type="checkbox"/> In the reception/detention facility% <input type="checkbox"/> Migrant community centre% <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify%
7. Are counsellors trained regularly and/or updated through seminars and workshops?
8. Do you provide up to date information about the situation in Kosovo to your returnees? If yes, where do you find this information?

--

9. Do you think that counsellors have an accurate understanding of the returnees' situation?

--

10. What kind of information, assistance or services do you provide to returnees during the consultations?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> General information on the AVRR programme<input type="checkbox"/> Information on reintegration assistance<input type="checkbox"/> Country information on Kosovo<input type="checkbox"/> Legal assistance<input type="checkbox"/> Medical and/or dental assistance<input type="checkbox"/> Psychological assistance<input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify:

11. What are your recommendations to improve pre-departure assistance?

--

6. Do you provide reintegration support for beneficiaries on the basis of vulnerability ? If yes, please specify the eligibility conditions, percentage of vulnerable cases relative to the total number of those assisted and types of vulnerability
7. Does the programme take into consideration the development policies in the country of return and/or the development goals of the destination country? If yes in what way? Please describe
8. Do you think the reintegration support your organization provides is effective and sustainable, please explain?
9. Where do funds for reintegration assistance come from?

<input type="checkbox"/> EU funds please specify:.....% <input type="checkbox"/> State/governmental bodies% <input type="checkbox"/> NGOs% <input type="checkbox"/> Private donors% <input type="checkbox"/> Other:%
10. What is the maximum amount of the reintegration grant for one person in Euros?
11. If possible, please provide the average total cost of reintegration only , per beneficiary in Kosovo
12. Is the amount of money spent reintegration the same for each beneficiary? If not, please describe the method of allocation. If yes, please provide the amount.
13. How many reintegration grants can your organization provide per project?
14. How many times can one beneficiary be provided with reintegration assistance?
<input type="checkbox"/> Only once <input type="checkbox"/> Twice <input type="checkbox"/> More than twice:.....
15. Is there a time limit for applying for the reintegration grant?
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes,days/months/years <input type="checkbox"/> No
16. Please describe the reintegration process in detail

17. What is the deadline to use reintegration support?
18. Please tell us how your Kosovo related reintegration assistance has evolved over time, what were the lessons learnt?
19. Can the returnees modify their reintegration plan during the process? If yes, how many times?
20. Is this useful and why?
21. Who is in charge of approving the reintegration assistance application?

- Solely your organization
- Your organization in partnership with another organization in the host country
- Your organization in partnership with another organization in Kosovo
- A partner organization in Kosovo

22. How does the approving officer make sure that the reintegration needs are appropriately assessed? Please describe the procedure?

23. How long does it take for a reintegration plan to be approved?

24. After your reintegration plan was approved, how long does it take to receive the reintegration grant?

- Less than 4 weeks
- 4-8 weeks
- More than 8 weeks

25. Is the waiting time of the procedure a common complaint from beneficiaries?

- Yes No

26. How many people apply for the grant per year?

FOLLOW UP

1. Does your organization follow up on the reintegration activities after arrival? For how long?

2. If your organization follows-up on reintegration, please describe the follow-up process

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3. After return, does your Organization is keep contact with the returnee?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> I don't know
<input type="checkbox"/> No	

4. What do you think the major impact factors are affecting the sustainability of return?

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5. How does your organization evaluate the impact and the sustainability of the reintegration assistance?

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III – CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS
1. What would your overall evaluation be regarding the reintegration assistance you provide to your beneficiaries?
2. What would you say the strongest aspects of your reintegration programme are?
3. What are the weakest aspects of your reintegration assistance?

4. What would be your general recommendations to improve the **reintegration process** of returnees in Kosovo?

Thank you very much for your cooperation!

Annex II: Agenda

'Improving Reintegration Assistance for Beneficiaries Returning to Kosovo

Conference

28-29 October 2014

**Hotel Sirius
Agim Ramadani street , Pristina, Kosovo**

Day 1, Tuesday, 28th October

09:00 – 09:30	Registration
09:30 – 09:40	Official speech from Mr Izmi Zeka , Deputy Minister and National Migration Coordinator, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Kosovo
09:40 – 09:50	Official speech from Dr. István Sipos – Chargé d'affaires, Hungarian Embassy in Pristina
09:50 – 10:00	Official speech from Mr Jorge BACA , Chief of Mission, IOM Kosovo
10:00 – 10:30	Presentation of the project and the findings of the mapping questionnaires, Mr Bálint DÓRA , Programme Coordinator, IOM Budapest
10:30 – 11:00	Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration in Kosovo, Mr Esat Alickaj , Reintegration Assistant – IOM Kosovo
11:00 – 11:30	Pre-departure assistance project, Ms Ildikó Szász , Menedék Association, Budapest, Hungary
11:30 – 11:45	QandA
11:45 – 12:00	Coffee break
12:00 – 12:30	Pre-departure assistance, Mr Michael Hajek , Caritas, Austria
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch
13:30 – 14:00	Challenges posed by Readmission Agreements – Mr Fitim Qerimi , Readmission Division, DACM, MIA Kosovo
14:00 – 14:30	Challenges of the Government of Kosovo in the field of reintegration of repatriated persons, Mrs Fahrije Ternava , Director, Department of Reintegration/MIA, Kosovo
14:30 – 15:00	Labour market and social situation environment in Kosovo, Mr Defrim RIFAJ , Director, DOLE/Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Kosovo
15:00 – 15:15	QandA
15:15 – 15:30	Coffee break

15:30 – 16:00	Post-arrival assistance, Ms Cuzuioc-Weiss , ICMPD
16:00 – 16:30	Germany – Post arrival assistance – Mr Arben Hysenaj , AWO Nuremberg
16:30 – 17:00	New opportunities for agriculture, Mr Mark Wood, Director, NOA
17:00 – 17:15	QandA and closing

Day 2, Tuesday, 29th October

08:30 – 11:00	Working Group 1 – recommendations for the improvement of pre-departure assistance
08:30 – 11:00	Working Group 2 – recommendations for the improvement of post-arrival assistance
11:00 – 11:30	Coffee break
11:30 – 12:30	Presentation of recommendations, reflections, questions and comments
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch