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Supporting the Effective Reintegration of Roma Returnees in the Western Balkans

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Abbreviations

AVR	assisted voluntary return
BAMF	Federal Office of Migration and Refugees (Germany)
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
Fedasil	Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (Belgium)
FOIA	Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum
GAMM	Global Approach to Migration and Mobility
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für internationale Zusammenarbeit
ID	identification document
IOM	International Organization for Migration
OFII	French Office of Immigration and Integration
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MARRI	Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative
MS4	France, Belgium, Germany, and Austria
NGO	nongovernmental organization
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

Executive Summary

The European Commission's Directorate General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations approached the World Bank to develop an evidence base and to deliver policy advice and technical assistance for supporting the effective reintegration of (Roma) returnees in the Western Balkans: Albania, Bosnia and

Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo, and Serbia. This synthesis report presents the results of that research. It is intended to be a resource for the European Commission, European Union (EU) member states, the governments of the Western Balkans, and other stakeholders working on the agenda for reintegration in the Western Balkans, including nongovernmental organizations, international nongovernmental organizations, and international donors. Recommendations for future potential technical assistance have been endorsed by the Western Balkan governments, and as part of a technical assistance component, the World Bank team will be implementing pilot studies in the region with the potential to be scaled up into a broader engagement on the socioeconomic inclusion of returnees and marginalized communities.

Since the early 1990s, the Western Balkans have experienced high rates of out-migration into the European Union.

During the 1990s and early 2000s, conflicts in the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro, and Serbia) and their reverberating impacts led asylum seekers from this

region to seek refuge in EU countries. During the next one and a half decades, irregular migrants continued to trickle into the EU; although the increase in asylum applications slowed since 2010, following the gradual introduction of visa-free travel for citizens of the Western Balkans. During 2015, over 200,000 people from the Western Balkans joined the mass migration of asylum seekers from the Middle East and elsewhere to the EU, including a high percentage of ethnic minorities, particularly Roma.

However, EU-wide readmission agreements with Western Balkan governments significantly slowed the rate of out-migration from the Western Balkans to EU countries.

In the early 2010s, when an increasingly high number of Western Balkan citizens overstayed their visa-free period in the EU, readmission agreements were negotiated, initially by individual EU states and later by an EU-wide agreement with all of the Western Balkans. Before 2015, the number of returnees to the Western Balkans was low. In late 2015, the EU deemed Western Balkan countries as "safe countries of origin," which made obtaining a positive decision on an asylum application in the EU more difficult for migrants from the Western Balkans. At the same time, EU member states stepped up efforts at returning refugees, failed asylum seekers, and irregular migrants¹ who had either entered illegally or had overstayed their visas.

1. Irregular migrants are those who move outside the regulatory norms of the sending, transit, and receiving countries.

This report documents the main socio-economic factors that drive migration from the Western Balkans to the EU.

Returnees emphasize that they migrate to escape poverty, lack of housing, unemployment, the lack of or insufficient access to social security, and a consistent struggle and inability to provide a basic standard of living for themselves and their families. Poverty, discrimination, and historic marginalization reinforce one another and constitute strong push factors.

Estimates suggest a substantial number of returnees belong to the Roma minority and that Roma are over-represented in migration and returnee flows. In addition, Roma and ethnic minorities have had to contend with systemic economic and social exclusion and institutional discrimination. Roma communities lack access to basic infrastructure and social services, are more likely to be underemployed, and have limited earning potential due to low incomes from unskilled jobs in the formal and informal sectors.

Repatriation poses enormous challenges for individual returnees, as well as for receiving communities who require additional resources and capacity to provide returnees with reintegration services.

Existing frameworks in the Western Balkans do not offer practical reintegration solutions or, for several reasons, do not implement them effectively. This leaves returnees with inadequate and inconsistent support for their reintegration; reinforces their economic and social exclusion; and, in turn, increases the risk of secondary migration.

For vulnerable returnees, like ethnic minorities and Roma for whom socio-economic problems are more pronounced, the reintegration challenge is even greater.

Roma are at a considerably higher risk of socioeconomic marginalization upon their repatriation compared with their already poor circumstances prior to their departure to the EU. Roma report discrimination throughout the return process. They often return to informal settlements and may lack proof of address or other identification documents needed to register for social services, including those crucial to reintegration. A lack of formal tenure and ownership prior to departure, *inter alia*, can result in Roma not being able to return to their old homes; and discrimination affects their access to tenured housing. Roma children who have spent substantial periods in the EU often do not speak the local language—they only speak Romani. Returnees also face discrimination in their own communities—problematic given the extent of community reliance among the Roma.

There is no harmonized approach to the return and reintegration of migrants across the EU, including the special needs of vulnerable groups.

Across and within member states, there are various return programs managed by different actors, including central- and local-level governments, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and international organizations like the International Organization for Migration. These programs have established varying criteria and levels of return assistance but do not address many of the vulnerabilities specific to Western Balkan migrants, including the Roma.

There is a dearth of evidence to support more effective and humane return policies, partially due to the EU's focus on reforming information systems geared toward improving border security rather than reintegration. There is a deficit of information regarding the numbers, profiles, and vulnerabilities of returnees, as well as a lack of monitoring and evaluation for return programs in the Western Balkans. In the absence of relevant and timely data, it is nearly impossible to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of return policies and programs.

At the central level, gaps remain in the design and implementation of return policies throughout the Western Balkans. Policies for returnees are either not well defined or simply not implemented due to budget constraints and lack of coordination among relevant agencies. Even in cases where central-level coordinating bodies are specifically tasked with the reintegration of returnees from the EU, there is little to no progress in actual implementation.

At the local level, government institutions lack the capacity to deal with returnees. Across the Western Balkans, there are either very few or no local-level government strategies or plans for returnee reintegration. In addition to budget constraints at the local level, there is limited coordination between the central and local levels of government on key issues such as returnee registration, information exchange, and administration of services. Although NGOs, international donors, and volunteer organizations have addressed some of the service delivery gaps for returnees, there is little horizontal coordination

between them and local- or even central-level government institutions.

Considering the above challenges, the World Bank provides the following recommendations to support the effective reintegration of returnees. These recommendations have been formulated in close conversation with the EU and with the endorsement of governments and key stakeholders in the Western Balkans:

- **The institutional response to the return program needs strengthening.** EU member states must establish common basic principles regarding the return of migrants from the Western Balkans, including minimum standards on returnee assistance and the definition of a "vulnerable" returnee. Further, as part of the institutional response to the return program, the member states should create a strategic funding line within the EU Asylum and Migration Fund and the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance to launch and scale up high-priority pilot interventions for Roma and non-Roma returnees, communities accepting significant numbers of returnees, and local governments responsible for reinsertion and reintegration.
- **Western Balkan governments need to develop evidence-based and realistic reintegration strategies that clearly identify the roles and responsibilities of central- and local-level government actors.** Such strategies should be structured as multiyear programs, with budgets commensurate with the number of returnees and their needs and adequate

funding to support targeted programs for the integration of returnees.

■ **EU members and Western Balkan governments need to prioritize data collection, exchange, and monitoring.**

The current data-collection mechanisms of EU countries should be expanded or revised to include assisted voluntary returns and to help the Western Balkans build the necessary capacity for developing management information systems for registering returnees at various ports of entry. In turn, Western Balkan governments should avail themselves of such systems to facilitate access and information exchange among the central- and local-level government institutions mandated with returnee reintegration, enabling them to track the number of returnees—including those belonging to vulnerable groups—and monitor if returnees can access reintegration-related. Finally, an information exchange framework needs to be established between the EU and the Western Balkans that allows for proper tracking, monitoring, and evaluation.

■ **Programs to support local-level capacity building are crucial, particularly for Western Balkan municipalities receiving many returnees, including Roma**

citizens. Municipalities absorbing large numbers of returnees are challenged by their limited capacity to develop local-level action plans for the reintegration of returnees in a transparent and participatory manner and which involve service providers and community representatives. Integral to improving the return and reintegration process is capacity building for the municipalities as well as for intersectoral teams and civil society partners to implement such action plans.

■ **Communities experiencing high levels of out-migration could benefit from assistance in developing livelihood projects to address this push factor.**

Cooperative social enterprise programs to enhance livelihood and income-generating opportunities for returnees and other vulnerable community members could help tackle some immediate reintegration challenges and improve economic conditions and social cohesion over the medium term. Such initiatives might include the creation of self-help groups for (Roma) women returnees and vulnerable (Roma) non-migrants, which could provide them with better access to financial institutions and markets, leadership and entrepreneurial skills, and business incubation and entrepreneurship opportunities.

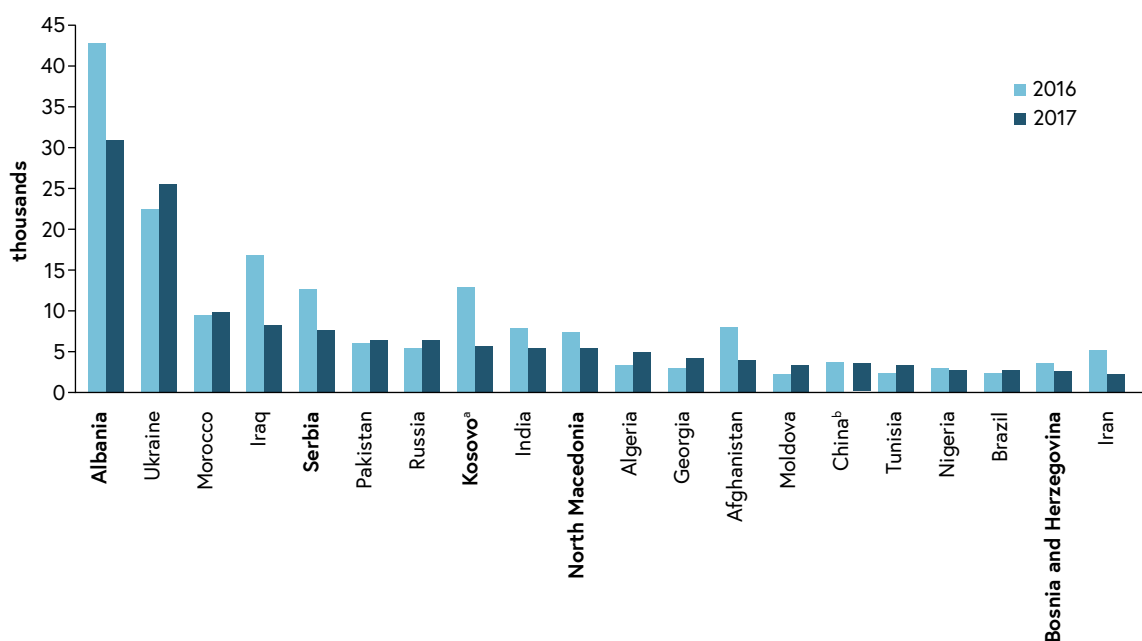
1 Introduction

Rates of irregular migration from the Western Balkans¹ to the European Union (EU) are high—as are rates of return. Since 2015, other than Montenegro, the Western Balkans were featured among the top 20 nationalities to be returned to their homelands from the EU. (figure 1.1).

The push factors giving rise to migration from the Western Balkans are ongoing. Most migrants leave to escape socioeconomic hardships, such as unemployment, low wages, a lack of social security, and poor living conditions. Data suggest that the Roma, a socially marginalized group, account for a majority share of migrants from and returnees

1. The Western Balkans include Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo, and Serbia.

FIGURE 1.1.
Non-EU Citizens Returned to Their Hometown, 2016 and 2017



Source: Eurostat 2018.

a. This designation is without prejudice on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the International Court of Justice opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

b. Including Hong Kong.

to Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia; and they represent a significant share from Albania and Kosovo (EASO 2013, 2015; EC 2011a, 2011b; European Stability Initiative 2015; MUP 2016b; Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees 2015). For Roma, historic exclusion, discrimination, and lack of social capital compound socioeconomic hardships.²

While these issues persist, so too do incentives for migration and remigration. Further, without appropriate mechanisms to support returnees' reintegration, returnees are at risk of faring worse upon return than when they migrated. The effects of poor reintegration can be long-term, multigenerational, and to the detriment of returnees as well as local communities. Successful return, on the other hand, promotes the inclusion of returnees, protects their dignity, and lifts up local communities (World Bank 2017).

Supporting the effective reintegration of returnees to the Western Balkans is thus a distinct policy challenge for the European Commission (EC), for EU member states, and for the governments of the Western Balkans. Comprehensive, development-led solutions that account for the vulnerabilities of returnees as well as broader local- and regional-level socioeconomic dimensions are needed in addition to and to complement immediate humanitarian-based responses.

2. The term *Roma* is used here to refer to a number of different groups (e.g., Roma, Sinti, Kale, Gypsies, Romanichels, Boyash, Ashkali, Egyptians, Yenish, Dom, Lom, Rom, and Abdal), including travelers, without denying the specificities of these groups. These groups are all considered under the wider "Roma" umbrella term under the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies.

Addressing the reintegration challenge is central to the EU's external migration policy and to the accession agenda. In February 2018, the EC reaffirmed its commitment to a "firm, merit-based prospect of EU membership for the Western Balkans." Accordingly, the EC included in its "credible enlargement perspective" an action plan for reinforcing engagement with the Western Balkans regarding security and migration (EC 2018b: 65).

The World Bank has ongoing global engagements in the fields of returnee reintegration and inclusion, in addition to other vulnerable groups, including ethnic minorities. The EC Directorate General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) approached the World Bank to develop an evidence base, offer policy advice, and deliver technical assistance to support the effective reintegration of (Roma) returnees to Western Balkans.

This synthesis report presents the results of that effort. It brings together original research conducted by the World Bank under the framework of its Supporting the Effective Reintegration of Roma Returnees in the Western Balkans project,³ including 45 pieces of analytical work organized around three key areas of investigation—or *mappings*—conducted throughout the Western Balkans: (1) institutional and policy frameworks regarding returnees, (2) governmental and nongovernmental stakeholders involved in the return process, and (3) vulnerabilities of returnees. The return processes of the four EU member

3. This report focuses on the Roma, but many of its findings are applicable to all returnees to the Western Balkans. Findings applicable only to the Roma are noted as such.

states sending the most people back to the Western Balkans—Austria, Belgium, France, and Germany are examined. The mappings involve a combination of desk research, focus groups, and structured interviews; and the World Bank also commissioned specialists to conduct additional academic research. Appendix A lists and briefly describes these reports. Appendixes C and D provide summaries of findings gleaned from the mapping exercises for EU member states and the Western Balkans, respectively. Together, the reports are intended as a resource for practitioners in the EC, EU member states, the governments of the Western Balkans, and other stakeholders working on the agenda for reintegration in the Western Balkans, including nongovernmental organizations, international nongovernmental organizations, and international donors.

Currently, the EU and member states largely focus their engagement in aspects of the return agenda relating to countries outside the Western Balkans. The focus here is on returns to the Western Balkans, but its findings encourage broader consideration of the EU's return practices and the coordination around reintegration between the EC, EU member states, and third countries of origin outside the Western Balkans.

1.1. STRUCTURE

This report is organized as five chapters. Chapter 2, which follows this one, reviews current EU policies and practices for the return and reintegration of irregular migrants to the Western Balkans. Two problem areas are highlighted: (1) a lack of coordination regarding return practices, and (2) insufficient reliable data to inform the policy agenda. Chapter 3 examines the current integration frameworks and practices in the Western Balkans and reveals promising trends as well as the considerable remaining gaps in policies and implementation, particularly around budgeting, institutional and stakeholder coordination, registration, monitoring, and evaluation. Chapter 4 describes vulnerabilities faced by returnees in the Western Balkans, focusing on the Roma. Chapter 5 summarizes the main findings from the research and offers recommendations to address the major challenges faced by returnees to the Western Balkans and to improve the reintegration and coordination frameworks of the EU and its member states as well as within the Western Balkans at the central and local levels.

2 Return Processes and Practices Among EU Member States

2.1. POLICY CONTEXT

Return and readmission is a central component of the European Agenda on Migration. The European Union (EU) approach to returns is part of its Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (GAMM), which has been the overarching framework of the EU external migration and asylum policy since 2005. Under GAMM, the EU has established instruments that provide non-EU citizens with opportunities for mobility while mitigating irregular migration, such as readmission agreements, which set out obligations of EU member states and non-EU countries around taking persons back who have been residing irregularly in the EU. Visa-facilitation agreements allow for limited visa-free travel for non-EU country nationals. For the Western Balkans, GAMM is also linked to the accession policies that manage the pathway to EU membership. Candidates for accession enter a committed process to adapt their national policies and legislative frameworks to those of the EU (also known as EU *acquis*).

In line with this agenda, all of the Western Balkans, except Kosovo, has concluded readmission agreements with the EU: Albania in 2005; and Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia

in 2007. Kosovo has concluded 22 bilateral readmission agreements with 18 EU member states.⁴ As of 2010, visa liberalization has been in force for all of the Western Balkans, except Kosovo.⁵ Consequently, anyone in possession of biometric passport is now able to travel to and throughout the Schengen area without a visa, but only for short stays.⁶

The EU's return directive governs the return and removal of irregular migrants from the EU.⁷ People returning to the Western Balkans from EU member states can be separated into two main categories: (1) irregular migrants who have illegally entered

4. Kosovo has signed agreements with 24 countries in total: Albania; France; Switzerland; Germany; Denmark; Austria; Norway; Slovenia; the Benelux Union countries of Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg; Czech Republic; Montenegro; Sweden; Finland; Hungary; Bulgaria; Malta; Estonia; Lichtenstein; Croatia; Italy; Turkey; and North Macedonia (EC 2018a).

5. Visa liberalization follows European Commission (EC) decisions to amend regulation 539/2001. Visa liberalization came into force for North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia in 2009 (15521/09); and Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2010 (PE-CONS 50/10). The EC confirmed in July 2018 that Kosovo had fulfilled the remaining benchmarks for visa liberalization, with a vote to amend regulation 539/2001 to follow.

6. Holders of passports from the Western Balkans are granted visa-free travel within the Schengen area for 90 days in any 180-day period.

7. 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. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32008L0115&from=EN>

or overstayed in the Schengen area, and (2) asylum seekers who have received a negative decision on an asylum application. Regarding the first, while it is now easier than it used to be for people from the Western Balkans to make short trips to the EU, their opportunities to migrate and work legally there remain limited. Work visas to EU member states typically require a minimum set of skills, which excludes many migrants and would-be migrants from the Western Balkans. As an exception, in 2015, Germany adopted the "Western Balkans regulation," which eliminated the minimum skills requirement for labor migrants from the Western Balkans.⁸ From 2016 to 2017, over 110,000 work contracts were submitted and approved by the Federal Employment Agency.⁹ The renewal of this skills elimination scheme is currently under discussion in Germany.

The likelihood that a person from the Western Balkans will receive a positive decision on an asylum application is low. The European Commission (EC), which maintains a "safe countries of origin" list based on the Geneva Convention and the Asylum Procedures Directive, considers a country to be safe if it is a democracy and if there is no general or consistent persecution, torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, threat of violence, or armed conflict.

8. Section 26.2 (§26.2) of the employment regulation (Beschäftigungsverordnung).

9. Bundesagentur für Arbeit (2017). *Zustimmungen u. Ablehnungen zur Arbeitsaufnahme von Drittstaatsangehörigen – Deutschland, Länder und Regionaldirektionen (Jahreszahlen und Zeitreihen) – Dezember 2017*. <https://bit.ly/2L8NhLP>. See also Bither and Ziebarth 2018.

All of the Western Balkans are on this list. Most of the EU member states that maintain similar lists also designate all of the Western Balkans as safe.¹⁰

Like many non-EU areas, applications by people from the Western Balkans rose sharply in 2015. However, applications from the Western Balkans to the EU have been successively increasing since 2010, partly due to visa liberalization (see for example Alscher, Obergfell, and Roos 2015: 23ff). Table 2.1 presents asylum recognition rates in the Western Balkans for 2015 and 2016. Over 1 in 20 asylum applications from Kosovo received a positive decision in both 2015 and 2016, while fewer than 1 in 100 asylum seekers from North Macedonia received a positive decision in 2016.

The percentage of people returned relative to the number of return decisions issued increased for each of the MS4 countries in 2015 and 2016 (table 2.2). Many EU member states treat their return policy as a priority due to the surge of asylum applications during that period, including the top destinations for irregular migration from the Western Balkans: France, Belgium, Germany, and Austria (referred to hereafter as MS4).

10. Among the EU countries maintaining their own list of safe countries of origin are several of the top destinations for asylum-seekers from the Western Balkans, including Austria, Belgium, France, and Germany. See https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/2_eu_safe_countries_of_origin_en.pdf.

TABLE 2.1.
Asylum Recognition Rates, Return Decisions, and Return Rates in the Western Balkans

Area	Asylum Recognition Rate (%)		Return Decisions		Return Rate (%)	
	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016
Albania	1.84	2.61	39,310	31,975	95	129
Bosnia and Herzegovina	3.50	4.20	5,675	5,080	71	73
Kosovo	2.60	5.20	21,320	13,545	80	96
North Macedonia	1.34	0.80	5,700	6,085	101	127
Montenegro	1.63	1.75	1,565	1,500	77	160
Serbia	1.86	1.95	14,985	13,870	87	89

Sources: EC 2017b (recognition rates); Eurostat (return decisions and return rates, accessed June 18, 2018); Migration Policy Institute 2018.

TABLE 2.2
Number of People Returned to the Western Balkans from the Top Sending Countries (MS4)

Member State	2015 Ordered	2016 Returned	2015 Ordered	2016 Returned
Austria	4,765	2,620	5,200	1,625
Belgium	3,680	1,245	3,155	1,305
France	9,675	3,560	7,885	3,280
Germany	35,920	47,255	30,750	54,380

Source: Eurostat (as of May 2, 2018).

2.2. THE RETURN PROCESS

The response to return migration calls for a unified set of policy concerns, but harmonization among the EU member states' return policies remains absent. To determine the reasons behind this, we first look at how the EU's directive on returns distinguishes between three types of return: (1) voluntary return of legally staying third-country nationals; (2) voluntary departure of illegally staying third-country nationals; and (3) removal/forced return of illegally staying third-country nationals.

EU countries, including the MS4, tend to adopt the approach prioritized by the EC (EC 2017a), which emphasizes voluntary return but reserves the right to use incentives and increasingly punitive disincentives as a pathway to forced removal. Return assistance is intended to incent voluntary return and promote sustainable return, which in the context of EU policy means that returnees do not remigrate and, more recently, that they have a positive impact on the development of their communities of origin (EPRS 2017).

Member states provide return assistance directly or in cooperation with international

organizations, such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Civil society organizations operating in the member states also provide return assistance. The efforts of member states, international organizations, and civil society organization apply to all types of return.

Consistent data on the type of reintegration support offered by EU member states have not been forthcoming. However, it appears that return migration processes in the EU are highly heterogeneous. Reliable data from 2014 show that 96 reintegration assistance programs were delivered by the 27-member states (EMN 2014; Matrix Insight, ICMPD, and ECRE 2012) were implemented by the IOM, domestic nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and national authorities,

except in France, where the process is exclusively managed by the Office of Immigration and Integration (OFII) (table 2.3).

Return assistance programs vary significantly across and within EU member states. Eligibility for and levels of assistance can vary based on legal status: whether the returnee is an irregular migrant or an asylum applicant, or if a deportation order has already been issued. Aid can vary according to a person's homeland: targeted return assistance to people from the Western Balkans is inconsistent across the EU and, in some cases, they are excluded completely. Eligibility and support can also differ based on who is deemed "vulnerable," with no commonly accepted definition in the EU and no requirements for systematic screening or identification in the MS4, except in relation to

TABLE 2.3.
Primary Institutions Involved in Return Services in MS4 Countries

Country	Institutional Set-up	Actors
Austria	Centralized; government, with some services delivered via international and domestic NGOs	FOIA, Human Rights Association, Caritas Internationalis, IOM, Verein Menschen Leben, LEFÖ, and ORS Service GmbH
Belgium		Fedasil, CGRS, IOM, Caritas Internationalis, CALL, Myria, Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen, and CIRÉ
France	Centralized; government-executed	OFII
Germany	Centralized and regional policies; government and large number of international and domestic NGOs, private service providers, and regional and municipal institutions	IBMI, BAMF, ZUR, IOM, Caritas Internationalis, Heimatgarten, BAG, AWO, Solwodi, VIA, several state projects, and municipal offices

Source: Stakeholder mappings (see appendix A).

BAG = Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Familienbildung und Beratung e.V. AWO = Arbeiterwohlfahrt; ; BAMF = Federal Office of Migration and Refugees; CGRS = Center for Gender and Refugee Studies; Fedasil = Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers; FOIA = Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum; BMI = Federal Ministry of the Interior; IOM = International Organization for Migration; NGO = nongovernmental organization; OFII = French Office of Immigration and Integration; ZUR = Common Centre for Return Support (Zentrum zur Unterstützung der Rückkehr).

some groups such as victims of human trafficking, unaccompanied minors, female headed households, etc. Of particular relevance to this study, return migration programs do not explicitly identify the Roma and other ethnic minorities in the Western Balkans as vulnerable.

Table 2.4 shows how such differences are manifest in the MS4. Particularly noteworthy are the discrepancies in cash benefits for returnees. For example, France offers generous return packages, while Belgian assistance is modest and limited to only the most

TABLE 2.4
Predeparture Reintegration Assistance in MS4 Countries

Member State	Programs	Eligibility	Services	Cash Benefits
Austria	Caritas Internationalis Austria: IRMA-plus	Kosovo and Serbia excluded; for "vulnerable" returnees only	Support of basic needs such as medical and psychological care, business assistance, and job training	None, but equivalent of €3,000 in kind.
	FOIA: Return assistance (basic care agreement)	All of the Western Balkans; limited assistance for forced returnees	One-time transportation costs absorbed; voluntary returnees receive material reception conditions until departure: food, health care, pocket money, clothes, school supplies, leisure activities, social advice and return assistance	€500 for a person who is returning after their first-instance asylum application; €50 for people who have appealed against a rejected decision
Belgium	Fedasil	None of the Western Balkans, except transportation costs	If there is proof of urgency, irregular stay, identity, and lack of money to pay for the ticket, Belgian authorities will absorb the cost of removal by air	None
	Specific project for people from the Western Balkans administered through IOM and Caritas Internationalis	All of the Western Balkans	Postreturn assistance with registration for social services, housing, education, unemployment via IOM/ Caritas International Belgium local offices. If necessary, the local service provider takes care of administrative costs, photos, document translation, and other items	For vulnerable groups only. Cash grant of €250 per adult and €125 per child; additional budget for in-kind benefits

(continued)

vulnerable. Divergent criteria result in significant variations in return migration assistance. Returnees to the same part of the Western Balkans from different EU member states—or

even from different parts of the same state—might benefit from very dissimilar return packages and could become aware of this fact upon their return.

TABLE 2.4
Predeparture Reintegration Assistance in MS4 Countries (continued)

Member State	Programs	Eligibility	Services	Cash Benefits
France	OFII	All of the Western Balkans	Assistance in formalities of leaving the country; plane ticket reservations; help obtaining travel documents; support for cost of transportation; other financial assistance	€300 for Kosovo; €650 for Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia; increased financial help available of up to €1,850 per person in exceptional circumstances
Germany	Reintegration and Emigration Programme for Asylum Seekers in Germany	All of the Western Balkans	Travel costs and additional lump-sum payments if returnees lack financial means to cover costs	Lump-sum payments, but only if returnees lack financial means to cover costs
	Government Assisted Repatriation Programme	Limited eligibility for Albanians and Serbians staying in Germany under a tolerated stay (Duldung) for at least two years	Additional financial benefit for initial reintegration assistance (Starthilfe)	€500 lump-sum payment plus additional reimbursements; reintegration support in benefits deemed appropriate, including up to €2,000 in housing costs for families and up to €1,000 for individuals; and up to €3,000 of medical costs for families and up to €1,500 for individuals. ^a

Source: Stakeholder mappings (see appendix A).

a. See <http://germany.iom.int/de/starthilfeplus> accessed April 9 2018.

Fedasil = Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers; FOIA = Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum IOM = International Organization for Migration; OFII = French Office of Immigration and Integration.

On June 28, 2018, The European Council on Refugees and Exiles emphasized the need to reform its migration and security policy and to make the process of returning irregular migrants more effective. In response, the EC announced legislative proposals at the State of the Union on September 12, 2018, although they encompass security and border control rather than the broader issue of reintegration support and assistance.¹¹

2.3. DATA MANAGEMENT

Given how important return is to the EU migration agenda, the deficit of relevant data and management is striking and limits the ability to effectively monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of policies. This data deficit is partly due to the lack of prioritization and coordination around migration movements among EU sending states and the receiving Western Balkans. Measurement methodologies also need improvement.

2.3.1. Prereturn

Within member states, systematic data collection regarding the number of voluntary return migrations and departures and, consequently, assisted voluntary return (AVR) uptake is lacking. IOM is the most systematic collector of return migration data, desegregated according to sex, gender, age, and destination, but it is not the only provider of return assistance. Caritas Internationalis,

as an example, is a major provider of AVR assistance in Belgium. In Germany, the IOM implements all federal AVR programs in collaboration with the respective authorities, but some Länder have also implemented their own programs, mainly on an ad hoc basis. The central governments of member states do not typically receive the data gathered on returnees through these channels (Kuschminder and Siegel 2018). Further, there is absolutely no data available on voluntary returnees arriving outside of a formal program.

Several additional factors prevent a meaningful analysis of AVR uptake. Because eligibility criteria vary across member states, collecting comparable data on uptake is problematic. Even when controlling for this, approaches to measuring AVR uptake differ (see Leerkes et al. 2016). The limited understanding of AVR uptake motivators is not surprising given the lack of and discrepancies in data collection, but a better grasp of these factors is key to promoting effective policies.

The method by which EU records the return rate is also arguably ineffective. Eurostat calculates the rate annually but, as Mananashvili (2017: 5) highlights, a "return decision taken in a given year does not always lead to actual departure or removal in the same year." On paper, the effectiveness rate is therefore distorted. A multiannual analysis would be a more appropriate way to measure the return rate. For example, Germany shows a return rate of over 100 percent in 2017, but under a multiyear analysis, it drops to 49.9 percent (Kuschminder and Siegel 2018).

11. The recommendations include recasting the EU's directive on returns (EC 2018c), regulating the European Border and Coast Guard (EC 2018d), and amendments to the proposed Regulation on the European Agency on Asylum (EC 2018e). See also similar observations by ECRE (2018a, b).

The EC increasingly recognizes the need to improve the management of return-related data. On May 16, 2018, it adopted a proposal to amend the migration statistics regulation about the obligations of member states to collect and transmit statistics on asylum and managed migration to Eurostat (EC 2018c). The changes would upgrade Eurostat's statistics by "providing a legal basis for statistics that are currently collected voluntarily" (EC 2018c). However, the proposal only addresses specific improvements for data that national authorities already collect and that is generally available.¹²

On May 16, 2018, the EC also adopted a proposal to revise the regulation on the European network of immigration liaison officers (EC 2018f). It seeks to address shortcomings identified in an evaluation of the regulation by improving coordination and more effectively and efficiently using European assets deployed outside of the EU. The proposal's key elements include the need for better horizontal information exchange between immigration liaison officers and other liaison officers in same location and vertical information exchange between the national authorities of member states and the institutions and agencies of the EU.

Good data management will also enable more comprehensive monitoring of

12. For this reason, ECRE calls for a more "ambitious and in-depth reform of the Regulation" (AIDA 2018).

the enlargement agenda. The enlargement reports published in April 2018 by the EC with respect to the Western Balkans explicitly emphasize the need for information exchange and data management.¹³

2.3.2. Postreturn

Lastly, there is a dearth of data on the postreturn experience of migrants, including regarding the evaluation of return assistance. Among the main sending countries to the Western Balkans, only Austria and Belgium have been actively engaged in identifying longer-term outcomes under AVR and reintegration programs (EMN 2016).¹⁴ However, these efforts do not tend to assess whether or not the returnees are successfully reintegrated, which points to a broader problem: the absence of global best practices for postreturn data collection (Kuschminder and Siegel 2018). Postreturn data collection by Western Balkan governments is limited, beginning with gaps in the registration of returnees upon arrival (see chapter 3.2.1).

13. See http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-18-3342_en.htm for the suite of reports.

14. Norway and the Czech Republic also collect postreturn data in this manner.

3 Return Processes and Practices in the Western Balkans

Readmission agreements provide the main coordination frameworks between European Union (EU) member states and the Western Balkans. Their focus is on return and border security rather than reintegration. Following return, the institutions of the Western Balkans, local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and the local chapters of donor and international organizations take over reintegration efforts.

3.1. TARGETED POLICIES AND FRAMEWORKS WITHIN THE WESTERN BALKANS

Between 2009 and 2017, targeted central-level policies for the reintegration of returnees that dovetail with existing readmission agreements in their scope and focus were adopted throughout the Western Balkans. As shown in table 3.1, some have or are shortly due to expire.

TABLE 3.1.
Targeted Policies for the Reintegration of Returnees in the Western Balkans

Area	Policy	Year of Adoption	Covered Period
Albania	Strategy on the Reintegration of Returned Albanian Citizens	2010	2010–15
Bosnia and Herzegovina ^a	Strategy for the Reception and Integration of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Nationals Who Return under Readmission Agreements and Action Plan	2015	2015–18
Kosovo	National Strategy for Sustainable Reintegration of Repatriated Persons	2017	2018–22
North Macedonia	Program for Assistance and Support for Reintegration of Returnees	2010	Not defined
Montenegro	Reintegration Strategy for Persons Returned on the Basis of a Readmission Agreement	2016	2016–20
Serbia	Strategy of Reintegration of the Returnees Based on the Readmission Agreement	2009	Not defined

a. The World Bank's Supporting the Effective Reintegration of (Roma) Returnees in the Western Balkans project is currently supporting the drafting of a new strategy for 2019–22.

In theory, central governments coordinate with local-level counterparts to achieve policy outcomes. In reality, the adoption of targeted local-level reintegration policies has been uneven. No local policies focused on returnees have been adopted in Albania, North Macedonia, or Montenegro, although one municipality in North Macedonia did include reintegration measures in its local action plans for the Roma. Eleven municipalities have developed and adopted local action plans for the reintegration of returnees in Bosnia and Herzegovina; 103 municipalities have done the same in Serbia. In Kosovo, 34 municipal action plans for returnees have been adopted.

Table 3.2 presents an overview of the central- and local-level institutions that are involved in various aspects of the reintegration process. The most active central-level institutions tend to be those responsible for health care, personal documentation, and social protection, as well as those tasked with migration and/or minority rights issues. The most active local-level institutions tend to be those focused on migration, the Roma, and/or social protection.

In addition to these targeted policies regarding returnees, numerous laws, bylaws, ordinances, and guidelines have been implemented in the Western Balkans to address specific issues around the reintegration of returnees; they do not specifically target returnees but apply to them nonetheless. Examples include regulations around housing, education, and access to services and vulnerable groups. These laws are not all under the rubric of central-level strategies, and there are no mechanisms aimed at synchronizing

access to social services and service delivery. Further details of these laws, bylaws, ordinances, and guidelines—and how they relate to each other—are set out in the respective institutional mappings compiled for the Western Balkans (see appendix C).

3.2. IMPLEMENTATION

Notwithstanding the existence of legal and institutional frameworks, gaps persist in the implementation of policies targeted at returnees as well as relevant nontargeted ones, which negatively affects the sustainability of return and thus increases the likelihood of carousel migration. Particularly prominent areas of weakness include the registration of returnees, communication and coordination among central-level governments and among central and local levels of government, and fiscal constraints.

3.2.1. Registration and Data Management

Registration on arrival. Systems for registering returnees differ across the Western Balkans, and they are only applied when returnees enter via air rather than by land. Kosovo has the most developed system. Electronic registration of people returned under readmission agreements takes place at the airport in Prishtina, and the information is integrated with referral to relevant municipal-level services at a returnee's previous place of residence. In Albania, the border and migration department of the state police collects data on the age, gender, and type of return (forced or voluntary) of returnees, but

TABLE 3.2.**Government Institutions Active in Relation to the Reintegration of Returnees**

Area	Central Level	Local Level
Albania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Internal Affairs • National Employment Service • Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth • Ministry of Finance and Economy • Ministry of Health and Social Welfare • Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Migration counters (National Employment Service)
Bosnia and Herzegovina	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Security • Ministry of Civil Affairs • Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centers for social work (Ministry of Civil Affairs)
Kosovo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Internal Affairs • Ministry for Communities and Return • Ministry of Education, Science and Technology • Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare • Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning • Ministry of Health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal Offices for Communities and Return
North Macedonia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Interior • Ministry of Health • Ministry of Labor and Social Policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centers for social work (Ministry of Labor and Social Policy) • Romani health mediators (Ministry of Health) • Romani information centers (Ministry of Labor and Social Policy)
Montenegro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Interior • Ministry of Health • Ministry of Human and Minority Rights • Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centers for social work (Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare)
Serbia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Interior • Ministry of Labor, Employment, Veteran, and Social Affairs • Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure • Ministry of Education, Science, and Technological Development • Ministry of Health • Commissariat for Refugees and Migration • Office for Human and Minority Rights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centers for social work (Ministry of Labor, Employment, Veteran, and Social Affairs) • Trustees for refugees and migration (Commissariat for Refugees and Migration)/local migration councils • National Employment Service • Health mediators (Ministry of Health) • Pedagogical assistants (Ministry of Education, Science, and Technological Development) • Romani coordinators

Source: Institutional mappings compiled by World Bank (2018).

discrepancies between its numbers and those served by the migration counters illustrate the fact that most returnees do not register upon arrival in their place of residence.¹⁵ The case of Serbia is broadly similar, with the commissariat for refugees and migration operating an extensive network to register and provide services to returnees at the local level, while only serving a small proportion of recorded returnees at the border. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the only data on returnees are those collected by the ministry of security, and these are limited to people returned under readmission agreements; they are not otherwise disaggregated. Finally, the respective interior ministries of North Macedonia and Montenegro record returns under readmission agreements, but the data they receive are fragmentary, and there are no databases maintained for this purpose.

Although most of the Western Balkans recognizes the need to establish a data management system for readmitted people, no hard requirements for such a system exist. As a result, records of the returnee experience are scant, and—as discussed in section 2.3.2 above—returnees cannot be tracked to determine if they are accessing their rights and entitlements.

Registration for services. Where returnees are not registered, their access to—and eligibility for—returnee assistance is compromised or delayed. Specifically, when returnees are not registered upon arrival, the burden to apply then falls on them. Stigma and lack

of knowledge about where to register are among the reasons for not doing so (Vathi, forthcoming).

Within the Western Balkans, the process of registering for services (including reintegration services) is further hampered by the document-related burden of registration. Registration for certain social services is conditioned upon accessing documentation from abroad, such as medical, education, and birth certificates. The mechanisms for the streamlining the transfer of personal records from the EU to the Western Balkans are limited; and depending on the extent of returns counselling, returnees might not necessarily know to acquire them prior to departure.

Further, even where such documents are available, administrative requirements of nostrification and translation can make completing the registration process expensive and cumbersome, as is reportedly the case in Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, and Montenegro (see chapter 4.2.2 and 4.2.6). In addition, identification cards can only be obtained with proof of address. Recent returnees, especially the Roma, can find this requirement challenging (see chapter 4.2.3).

3.2.2. Coordination

Targeted policies for the reception of returnees (table 3.1) envisage a coordinated response to returnee reception and reintegration. In practice, however, coordination is lacking among the central levels of government in the Western Balkans, and among the central and local levels of government.

Distinctions emerge at the central level regarding the respective involvement of

15. Migration counters are desks in regional labor offices that facilitate returnees' access to services, such as those related to housing, training, and employment.

central-level institutions in the reintegration process. Some institutions deal with the security and migration dimension under visa liberalization agreements, including the registration and reception of returnees and border management. These institutions coordinate most directly with EU member states on matters of returnee reception. Other institutions are involved in the process of reintegration—specifically in the areas of social protection, housing, and education. Horizontal coordination among these two groups of institutions is often lacking. At the core of this challenge is the scarcity of data and mechanisms to track returnees.

Compounding the problem is the fact that the coordinating bodies envisioned in the main policy documents for the reintegration of returnees are not functioning. In Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia, as examples, years after the adoption of these policies, any coordination that might exist remains effectively ad hoc. In Montenegro, the interdepartmental working group formed to oversee implementation of both the reintegration strategy and the strategy for integration migration management, meets and produces reports, but has not provided contact people for relevant institutions or appointed local teams to support the reintegration of returnees. Finally, the absence of provisions for a central-level coordinating body in Kosovo's reintegration strategy suggests the need for further attention in this area.

3.2.3. Local-level Capacity

Section 3.1 explains that across the Western Balkans, local-level reintegration policies are scarce. Without central-level coordination, local level capacity to reintegrate returnees is further limited. In Albania, North Macedonia, and Montenegro,¹⁶ where there are no established local-level coordinating bodies, some degree of central-local coordination exists. This is also the case in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where local readmission teams have been formed in 11 municipalities but where evidence of activities beyond the development of local action plans for the reintegration of returnees is lacking. By way of contrast, the coordinating bodies established at the local level in Kosovo effectively promote coordination between the central and local levels by including among their members local-level representatives of the central-level institutions responsible for the overall coordination of measures for the reintegration of returnees. Again, the absence of a management information system makes it impossible to achieve an efficient, cost-effective, and timely case-file approach to managing the reinsertion or reintegration of returnees. There is simply no means of handing over any details about returnee families, such as the date of their arrival, the size and composition of their family, and information regarding vulnerability and special needs.

16. Although Montenegro's Reintegration Strategy for Persons Returned on the Basis of a Readmission Agreement calls for the formation of local teams (of unspecified composition), by mid-2018, no such teams had been formed.

3.2.4. Fiscal Constraints

Inadequate or in some instances utterly lacking budget allocations limit the effective implementation of reintegration policies, strategies, and action plans. In the reintegration strategies set out in table 3.1, action plans designate the government institutions responsible for providing targeted social protection services as well as the level of government that should coordinate and monitor the service delivery. However, throughout the Western Balkans, the fiscal requirements necessary to implement these action plans are, to varying degrees, inadequate or altogether absent. Service provision for the reintegration of returnees in Kosovo compares favorably with the rest of the Western Balkans. However, in recent years, the rising number of returns coupled with reductions in funding has negatively impacted the implementation of the strategy regarding the reintegration of returnees. Under Montenegro's strategy, temporary accommodations are planned but unavailable due a lack of municipal-level funding allocations. Ironically, the lack of clarity around responsibility and the absence of coordinating implementation mechanisms means that allocated budgets are sometimes left unused. An example is North Macedonia, where a budget line item was included for the ministry of labor and social policy to implement the reintegration program in 2010–12, but because the budgeted funds were not used, there have been no additional allocations in subsequent years. There is also a further complication: in some parts of the Western Balkans, there is insufficient clarity

regarding the party responsible for implementing the different parts of action plans; and in most of the region, the responsibility devolves to local municipalities, which are expected to deliver services out of their mainstream budgets.

3.3. NONGOVERNMENT STAKEHOLDERS

NGOs, international organizations, and donors throughout the region have helped to fill the considerable gaps in service delivery left by the low levels of implementation of targeted reintegration policies. No formal mechanisms exist to allow governmental and nongovernmental stakeholders to meet, exchange information, or coordinate service delivery. Hence, the capacities of these organizations are not always efficiently leveraged.

3.3.1. NGOs

Several NGOs are active in the reintegration of returnees to the Western Balkans, including some whose primary focus is not the reintegration of returnees per se, but which may, nevertheless, offer returnees key services or targeted programs. Particularly noteworthy are the numerous organizations that are actively involved in the assistance of vulnerable groups, including the Roma and children. Table 3.3 provides a sampling of NGOs active in the reintegration of returnees to the Western Balkans.

A determination of which NGOs have successful service-delivery records relies on information from municipal officials or

TABLE 3.3.

Sampling of NGOs Active in the Reintegration of Returnees in the Western Balkans

Area	NGOs
Albania	Union for Development and Integration of Roma Minority in Albania; Roma Women's Rights Centre; Institute of Romani Culture in Albania; Romani Baxt Albania; Romano Khan; Disutni Albania; Voice of Roma; National Association Education for Life; Tirana Legal Aid Society; Help for Children Foundation; Roma—Egyptian Youth Movement; Social Organisation for the Support for the Youth; Roma Gate to Integration; Roma Versitas Albania; USHTEN; TREJA; Romano Sezi
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Association Vaša Prava (Your Rights); Local Democracy Foundation; Bosnia and Herzegovina Women's Network; Association of Citizens for Promotion of Roma Education—Otaharin; Kali Sara-Roma Information Centre; Romlen Kakani
Kosovo	Balkan Sunflowers Kosova; Bethany Christian Services; Kosova Education Centre; Kosovo Education Centre; Kosovo Foundation for Open Society; Nevo Koncepti; Syri I Vizionit; ShI-Kosova; The European Centre for Minority Issues in Kosovo; The Roma, Askhalia Documentation Centre; the Network of Roma, Askali, and Egyptian Women Organizations of Kosovo; Voice of Roma, Askhali, and Egyptians
North Macedonia	Ambrela—Centre for Integration (Skopje); Association for the Defense of Children's Rights; Association for Human Rights Protection of Roma; Association for Perspective, Integration, and Development "Roma Perspective" (Prilep); Association ROMANO NEVO DIKIBE; Centre for Integration of the Roma; European Policy Institute; First Children's Embassy in the World (MEGJASHI); Macedonian Young Lawyers' Association; National Roma Centrum (Kumanovo); Organization of Roma Youth Bela Kula; Roma Lawyers' Association; Roma Community Centre—DROM; Romano Vilo; SONCE
Montenegro	The Legal Centre; Minority Shareholders of JSC Gornji Ibar; Democratic Centre of Bijelo Poje (BDC); Democratic Roma Centre; Montenegrin Women's Lobby; Euromost; Institute for Entrepreneurship and Economic Development (IPER); Mladi Romi (Young Roma); Defendology.
Serbia	Roma Education Fund; Standing Conference of Roma Associations of Citizens (SKRUG); Roma Forum Serbia; Bibija Roma Women's Centre; YUROM Centre Niš; Roma Education Centre; Association Bakija Bakic; URBO

Source: Stakeholder mappings (see appendix A).

NGO = nongovernmental organization.

international stakeholders. The stakeholder mappings conducted for this study reveal that there are examples of NGOs throughout the Western Balkans that, notwithstanding their mission statements to the contrary, are largely engaged in advocacy with very limited involvement in service delivery.

Further engagement by local- and central-level institutions will help identify how these NGOs do and do not meet the needs of returnees and how to better leverage their expertise.

3.3.2. Donors and international Organizations

As table 3.4 shows, there is a strong presence of donors and international organizations in the Western Balkans, especially Kosovo and North Macedonia. Deutsche Gesellschaft für internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) are active throughout the Western Balkans. A summary of findings follows.

TABLE 3.4.
Primary Active Donors and International Organizations in the Western Balkans

Area	Donors
Albania	GIZ; IOM; Open Society Foundation for Albania; OSEC; Save the Children; Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation; Terre des Hommes; UNICEF; UNDP
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Catholic Relief Services; European Union; GIZ; IOM; MARRI; OSEC; Swiss Development Cooperation
Kosovo	Caritas Internationalis Kosova; Council of Europe; Danish Refugee Council; GIZ; IOM; OSEC; Save the Children; Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency; Swiss Development Cooperation; Terre des Hommes; UNCF
North Macedonia	GIZ; International Centre for Migration Policy Development; IOM; Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative; OSEC; Swiss Agency for Development and Coordination; Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation; UNDP; UNHCR
Montenegro	UNDP; UNHCR; IOM; European Union; GIZ; Red Cross; MARRI
Serbia	European Union; GIZ; IOM; Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation; UNDP

Source: Stakeholder mappings (see appendix A).

GIZ = Deutsche Gesellschaft für internationale Zusammenarbeit; IOM = International Organization for Migration.

MARRI = Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative; OSEC = Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe;

UNCF = United Nations Children's Fund; UNDP = United Nations Development Programme.

The primary point of administrative contact between member states and reintegration operations in the Western Balkans usually comprise international donors and organizations. In Belgium and Austria, the main institutional cooperation around returnee integration is through the agencies responsible for managing those returns, particularly IOM and, in Belgium, Caritas Internationalis. In France, there is formal policy collaboration, and given the centralization of authority regarding returns in the French Office of Immigration and Integration (OFII), administrative contact—when it occurs—is mainly through OFII and Kosovan counterparts. In Germany, GIZ indicates that it works closely with local authorities in the Western Balkans to support the reintegration of returnees. This also applies to Switzerland and Sweden, whose development agencies are also active in the Western Balkans.

Return projects focus on very specific target groups, parallel structures are set up

and financed by different EU member states, and information exchange is either nonexistent or limited. There is scant formalized, lateral, on-the-ground cooperation between these agencies; and coordination with Western Balkan governments is ad hoc and unstructured.

Reintegration programs run by international donors and organizations are primarily working alongside one another with different setups, regulations, and procedures—even if only one or two agencies are managing them. As a result, in most cases, long-term local capacity building for municipalities and NGOs is limited or nonexistent.

Like local NGOs, international nongovernmental stakeholders tend to secure funding on the merits of their respective programming. Therefore, in the absence of formal coordination channels at the institutional level in the Western Balkans, their coordination is not directly incentivized.

4 Profiles of Returnees

The importance of targeted policy responses becomes apparent when considering the complex and multilayered vulnerabilities of returnees to the Western Balkans. Notwithstanding the lack of consistent data collection on returnees, available qualitative data allows for a preliminary profile of the main challenges they face. The findings below are based on the vulnerability mapping conducted as part of this study as well as available academic and third-party reports. The research is explicitly—but not exclusively—focused on the push and pull factors that Roma returnees have identified rather than those experienced by non-Roma returnees.

4.1. PUSH AND PULL FACTORS

Socioeconomic factors are the main reported drivers of migration from the Western Balkans to the European Union (EU). Returnees emphasize that they migrate to meet basic needs rather than out of a desire to economically or socially advance. Overall, returnees in interviews and focus group discussions said that they left to escape poor economic

situations—poverty, lack of housing, unemployment, and a lack of or insufficient social security provision—and consequently, an inability to provide a basic standard of living for themselves and their families. Across the Western Balkans, returnees cited both push and pull factors as reasons for migration. Our findings are consistent across the region and with other studies (Vathi, forthcoming).

It is striking how many focus group respondents feel that their home economy had stagnated and that the likelihood of its improvement was low. Many made it quite clear that their departing came with considerable difficulties, such as the breaking up of families, disposing of assets, and fear of the unknown, with sometimes debilitating psychological effects on individuals and families. The impact of these stressors should not be underestimated, particularly as the return process produces a host of new ones. Pull factors are driven by a mix of hope, hearsay from people that had already migrated, and simply the knowledge that there were both economic opportunities and better social security, particularly health care, in the EU.

Some of the narratives collected during this research suggest that the average age among those leaving is increasingly dropping, although no empirical evidence is available to support these observations. If true, it would mean that pull factors are less likely to motivate families with heads of household in their thirties.

Roma-specific factors. There is scant consistent data collection on the ethnic makeup of migrants and returnees from the EU, but data collected in the Western Balkans suggest that the Roma are highly represented in migratory flows to Europe (Vathi, forthcoming). Data collected in Germany, for example, shows a majority representation of Roma among asylum seekers from Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, and Serbia (see table 4.1).

Many Roma and other ethnic minorities said they departed because of discrimination and marginalization. Roma face widespread discrimination in education, the labor market, and everyday bureaucratic encounters, such as when trying to access social services (O'Higgins 2012, Vathi, forthcoming). The result is a lack of regular and normalized interaction with local communities (Vathi, forthcoming). In interviews, Roma gave accounts of covert racism as well as instances of overt and racially motivated violence.

Discrimination and the poor socioeconomic situation of the Roma reinforce one another, producing strong push factors. Roma communities in the Western Balkans are characterized by lower socioeconomic indicators than non-Roma; they are prone to underemployment and low incomes from unskilled

TABLE 4.1.
Number of Asylum Applicants and Share of Roma (Germany)

Nationality	Year	All Asylum Applicants ^a	Roma Applicants ^b	
			Number	Percent
Albania	2015	54,762	3,118	5.7
	2016	17,236	1,116	6.5
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2015	7,473	3,979	53.2
	2016	3,190	1,827	57.3
Kosovo	2015	37,095	4,758	12.8
	2016	6,490	1,744	26.9
North Macedonia	2015	14,131	8,284	58.6
	2016	7,015	4,334	61.8
Montenegro	2015	3,635	735	20.2
	2016	1,630	431	26.4
Serbia	2015	26,945	23,338	86.6
	2016	10,273	8,484	82.6

Source: Deutscher Bundestag 2017.

a. In some cases, there are minimal discrepancies regarding the total number of applicants between this table and Eurostat data. In substance, the figures from the two sources are consistent.

b. Based on self-declaration of applicants.

"We had problems because drunk guests of local pubs were physically attacking us, throwing stones and bottles at us. That's why I left the job."

Alben, a 34-year-old Roma man from Montenegro, linking racism to why he left one of his jobs as a cleaner at a utility service

jobs in the formal and informal sectors. In some cases, the disparity in socioeconomic indicators is very high. For example, according to interviews with the leaders of the primary Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian organizations in Kosovo, the unemployment rate in these communities is 80–90 percent. Employment abroad is the only consistent source of available work for them and therefore the only way they can generate a substantial income.¹⁷

"We decided to leave ... because of the difficult economic conditions that we were in. We didn't have a job here, neither of us, so we sought salvation in Europe."

Ivo, a man from North Macedonia regarding the decision he and his wife made to migrate

During focus group discussions, some Roma returnees noted that while they remained marginalized at the fringes of their host EU countries, their experience of outright discrimination was much less common, partly due to their being identified as migrants or asylum seekers rather than as Roma, allowing them to go more unnoticed than in their homeland. Other returnees, however, claimed that, while still in the nascent

17. In 2017, the official unemployment rate in Kosovo was 30.5 percent (Kosovo Agency of Statistics 2017).

stage, some forms of discrimination were beginning to emerge in the EU. Interestingly, the overwhelming majority spoke positively of the social protection systems in EU countries and generally felt that they had been well treated and had not been discriminated against, as opposed to their experiences in their homeland. Discussion participants did not attribute this difference to less Roma-targeted discrimination inside the EU, however, but rather to the fact that service providers were unable to identify them as Roma.

While discussion participants expressed that **migration was a means to satisfy basic needs, many also shared their motivation to secure a better future, particularly for their children.** During qualitative interviews, men and women often referenced the trajectories of their own lives and their desire for a better future for their children. Their hopes focus on two opportunities. The first is education: children in the EU must attend school, and the standards are higher. When pushed to explain why they did not force children to attend schools in their homeland, many claimed that doing so was pointless because the education system is poor, the schools are segregated, and the educators are unwelcoming of Roma students. Some Roma parents said that if they believed that going to school would increase their children's opportunities, they would more actively encourage them to do so.

The second key opportunity is employment. Young men and, to a lesser extent, young women, can easily find low-level work in construction, hospitality, or cleaning

"Children's education is also an important cause for migration. It gives children opportunities to learn more."

Ramadan, the leader of a Roma organization in Kosovo

services. This work allowed families to better themselves financially and, as some respondents noted, was a process of creating in themselves a sense of worth and confidence, which could spill over into the next generation. For recent returnees actively planning to remigrate to the EU, education and jobs represent strong pull factors.

4.2. VULNERABILITIES UPON RETURN

Returnees often reencounter old problems upon their return. They also face a common set of challenges during the reintegration process. Gaps in reintegration support, as described in chapter 3, become apparent when considering their experiences. They lack a sense of belonging, institutional support, proper housing, employment, health care, psychosocial support, and educational opportunities. We consider each of these challenges below, with additional attention given to the specific vulnerabilities faced by the Roma.

4.2.1. Reception by Home Community

Returnees to the Western Balkans face discrimination on multiple fronts. Those who have spent many years abroad, particularly children, may struggle to regain acceptance in their home communities (see section 4.3).

One particularly damaging perception is that of "returnee wealth," which can foster feelings of resentment and expectations of wealth distribution within communities. This perception is common in other return contexts as well and can exist regardless of whether it can be substantiated (see Riiskjaer and Nielsson 2008). In fact, those who return after short periods abroad after being removed are less likely to return with additional financial resources; they may even be worse off. Such accounts were common during the vulnerability mapping phase. Returnees described a high degree of socio-cultural shame, leading to alienation from social networks—a phenomenon also common to returnees elsewhere (see for example, Schuster and Majidi 2013).

Additional issues faced by Roma.

The perception of returnee wealth is more complicated among the Roma, where social expectations of wealth distribution are strong and where wealth discrepancies between those who stay, and returnees are potentially higher. In addition to tensions in their own communities, returnee Roma face continued discrimination from mainstream society in the Western Balkans. Reportedly, this discrimination gets reinforced during bureaucratic encounters that accompany the return process, such as when registering as unemployed or for social services. Discrimination of this type, especially after living in countries where they have faced less discrimination, can compound the psychological trauma of return. These findings point to the need to bolster inclusion of returnees to the Western Balkans, including within Roma communities.

Cross-cultural studies suggest that social networks and inclusion make for a more successful return, a finding that can apply to the Western Balkans (UNHCR 2016).

4.2.2. Institutional Support

The implementation issues discussed in chapter 3 result in service provision gaps. Returnees do not benefit from available services partly due to the ad hoc registration of returnees upon arrival into central databases. In the absence of effective registration practices, the burden is put on returnees to register with local authorities.

Interviews illustrate the lack of effective information dissemination about the obtainability of services. When concerted efforts are made to bolster the awareness of services and assist returnees to connect with them, they are positively received, as interviews in Serbia demonstrate. Similarly, returnees in Kosovo appreciated being made aware of their rights and of the services and entitlements they could access. In some parts of the Western Balkans, returnees are disappointed with both the central and local civil service bureaucracy, which they believe actively undermine their efforts to access documentation and services. Many simply give up and no longer retain any interest in the process. When comparing officials at the central and local levels, the general sentiment is that local level officials are better to work with, but most returnees would prefer to work through nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). In fact, many returnees approach NGOs and ask them to intervene on their behalf, further demonstrating that these

organizations are more about advocacy than service delivery. Returnees did not express a clear preference for working with a local or international NGO.

Additional issues faced by Roma.

Roma face additional barriers in accessing institutional support. One practical problem revolves around the need to have a state-issued identification document (ID) to access social services. An applicant needs to record a formal address, and herein lies the problem. Many Roma—whether returnees or not—live in informal settlements that lack formal street names and house numbers, resulting in their being unable to obtain an ID, and consequently being denied access to social protection, welfare services, and sometimes education for their children. Furthermore, because they lack ID, many Roma parents do not register their children at birth; these Roma children therefore do not have birth certificates, further denying them access to essential services. During qualitative interviews, Roma in Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, and Montenegro all noted issues

"We were afraid to go to the social center and to fill an application to receive benefits, we were afraid that the representatives would cut the benefits which belong to us. They might have asked where we have been until now, why we didn't register every month, who we were with abroad etc."

Roma man from North Macedonia
(Focus group, Tetovo, male, 31 years old, Roma, completed secondary education, Tetovo)

around registration for social services linked to a lack of ID.

Other barriers to accessing support are sociocultural. Given their long history of social exclusion, Roma are prone to mistrust authorities, and when combined with discrimination, this can disincentivize them from registering for IDs or key services. Combined with misinformation or a lack of quality information, the consequences can be particularly negative.

4.2.3. Housing

Many returnees no longer have a home of their own in the Western Balkans and therefore must secure housing upon their return. Some men and women sold or terminated the leases on their homes in preparation for their journey abroad. Others invested a substantial amount of money from the sale of their homes and other assets to finance their voyage. Compounding this problem, migrants do not always receive fair value for the homes they sell. There are "agents" who target potential migrants and offer package deals to handle the selling of assets. Returnees noted that without an agent's assistance, they could not have managed to secure the finances necessary to migrate, but that at the same time they felt cheated—overcharged to migrate and underpaid for their assets. There are no laws prohibiting such practices anywhere in the Western Balkans, and while government officials acknowledged the problem in discussions, they noted that it was difficult to legislate against. Returnees also bemoaned the fact that there were no government-led

awareness campaigns to warn potential migrants about working with agents. As a result, some—especially those returning after spending only a short time in the EU—do not have the money required to repurchase or build new housing. Many who save during their time away use that money to pay back debts related to funding the journey. Practical barriers also impede their ability to obtain housing. Securing a permit to build a home or access land rights can be difficult, particularly in Serbia and Albania.

Additional issues faced by Roma.

Housing is an issue for many Roma in the Western Balkans and can serve as a push factor. Multigenerational living, sometimes in close quarters, is common. A considerable share of the Roma population lives in spatially segregated, rural, or peri-urban areas with poor access to basic services (UNDP 2017). The living conditions that migrants leave—and return to—can be dangerous and stressful. In the absence of adequate housing

"When they return...they have to move back in the same small house. So, housing is a problem, but not a new one. It is a problem that is inherited."

Isuf, leader of a large Roma organization in Kosovo

assistance, returnees come to these areas—sometimes to stay with family.

Additionally, many Roma lack documents establishing their legal ownership/use of their dwelling. Those who find their homes

reclaimed, damaged, or looted upon return have limited legal or financial recourse.

4.2.4. Employment

Despite modest improvements in recent years, unemployment rates remain high in the Western Balkans compared with the EU. Throughout the Western Balkans, a large proportion—a average of 23.5 percent—of the youth population were reportedly not in employment, education, or training (NEET). The highest rates are in Kosovo, Albania, and Bosnia and Herzegovina at 26–30 percent (World Bank 2018). Returnees can register with unemployment offices on return, but many described the experience as unproductive due to a lack of jobs. Returnees who were self-employed prior to departure face a loss of business and clientele. For many youths, the solution is to participate in cycles of oscillating migrancy—traveling to the EU and staying for a fraction of the under-90-days permitted while they "legitimately" work, and then returning to the Western Balkans for a few weeks or months before returning again to the EU. There are numerous instances that such oscillating migrants enter into medium-term arrangements in EU countries with employers who encourage the practice, including using the young migrants to recruit others for the same purpose. Several key stakeholders described this as a win-win-situation: EU businesses get cheap off-the-books labor, and the young migrants earn money that they must bring home due to the forced

90-day limit to their stay. This practice, is not new. It has been going on since the 1960s from what was then Yugoslavia, and it is not conducive to long-term healthy living. Most economic reintegration support consists of access to existing active labor market policies or—typically donor-financed—self-employment programs. These programs are usually a mix of access to assets (e.g., machinery) and micro-grants. Interviews suggest that, while these programs help refugees stay economically afloat during the duration of the program, for the most part, the support does not allow them to establish a functioning self-employment set-up or create a sustainable income.

Additional issues faced by Roma.

Economic reintegration is much more difficult for Roma due to their low levels of education and professional skills, their limited social capital with the majority population, and discrimination. Roma confront higher rates of unemployment than the general population as well as a propensity for employment in the informal sector. During qualitative interviews, Roma expressed a stronger recognition of this as an issue after their return, possibly due to a lower threshold of acceptance on their part as their attitudes toward formal employment and state institutions shift during their time abroad. These changes in perceptions and aspirations can in and of themselves hamper reintegration by contributing to the emotional strain of return, increasing the desire to migrate again, especially among youth

(Vathi, forthcoming). However, with the right support, aspirations can be transformed into assets (see section 4.4.1).

4.2.5. Health Care and Psychosocial Support

Returnees face two main health-related challenges upon return. First, there is the stress experienced during the return process. Psychological stress stands out as a key vulnerability generated by return, especially among the forcibly removed. Second, there are difficult administrative requirements to accessing health care in the Western Balkans. Many returnees lack access to health care upon their return if it depends on registering as unemployed—or even registering at all. Interviews with returnees throughout the Western Balkans reported problems related to registering for health care, with delays resulting in periods without health care, including for those in acute need.

Additional issues faced by Roma.

Across the Western Balkans, Roma suffer with lower health indicators overall than the mainstream population. Given the higher propensity for their being unemployed and resistant to registration, this population is more likely

"Imagine now, you go out of the misery and the shell, you start to live normally [in Europe] and then you are forcibly returned."

A prominent Romani activist in North Macedonia encouraging the consideration of the jarring effects of return on the Roma

to suffer temporary or long-term gaps in health care. Poor living conditions compound the psychological effects of return, with the forcibly returned most at risk.

Most returnees have an inadequate understanding of mental health issues or how to access mental health interventions.

4.2.6. Education

Interviews and discussions revealed the experiences of returnees who are parents of school-aged children as well as those pursuing education for themselves. The primary issues of concern involve enrollment, certification of diplomas or degrees, and discrimination. In some parts of the Western Balkans, such as North Macedonia, enrollment in secondary school depends on the provision of school certificates from abroad, which are not readily available to all returnees. Throughout most of the Western Balkans, returnee children with school certificates that indicate their level of education are unable to submit them to the appropriate authorities because they are issued in the language of an EU country, further compounding the problem. The logistical and cost barriers related to translations, nostrification, and the apostil process is more than most returnees can manage. Consequently, children are placed at the level they were at when they migrated, leading to demotivation and gradual dissociation from their educational experience. From an institutional perspective, the timing of return is impactful because children cannot enroll in school at any time; many children lose a year of schooling because

"When we left, my daughter was in fifth grade. Now we are back [she is 13 years of age] and she was enrolled in the same grade. [...] She is 13 and is ashamed to go to school, she doesn't want to go. [...] Her teacher says she is bored because she is big; she writes fast and learns fast, and is now bored. [...] And then they will tell you that Roma children do not study!"

A woman from North Macedonia

they return in the middle of an academic year. Interviews with returnees reveal that some of these issues could have been avoided with appropriate action prior to their departure from EU member states. Counseling on these and other issues before departure—ideally by an organization independent of state authorities—is therefore crucial.

Additional issues faced by Roma.

Documentation-related problems can have negative effects on Roma children seeking to reenroll in school. First, the money and knowledge required for nostrification presents a particularly high burden for many Roma. Second, Roma children face specific language barriers upon return. Many families speak Romani at home, and if their children received education abroad, they may lose touch with the language of their original homeland. Without adequate support, these children are susceptible to poorer learning outcomes and placement in lower grades. Roma families described the reenrollment process as emotionally taxing, which disincentivizes school participation.

4.3. INTERSECTIONAL VULNERABILITIES

As discussed, ethnic discrimination against the Roma compound their lower socioeconomic status. Age, gender, and disability can also negatively affect the experience of return. When such factors intersect with being Roma, vulnerabilities increase.

4.3.1. Women

Problems accessing health care and social services can be more acute and jeopardizing to the health of pregnant women (Vathi, forthcoming). In general, female returnees encounter specific vulnerabilities linked to traditional gender norms and lower levels of employment. Female employment rates in the Western Balkans are low compared with European standards (World Bank 2018). This is linked to patriarchal family structures that ground expectations of women to stay at home to care for children and the household while men seek paid work. Because this division of labor encourages women to be financially dependent on men, single mothers and widows find themselves in a particularly vulnerable position upon return.

"I stayed in Germany for three years and had my second son there. But the person I lived with abandoned me (...) Now, I live at my parent's. I live there with my two children, together with my brother, his wife, their, three children and our mother. But the place has really deteriorated."

Lindita, a divorced Egyptian woman from Shkodra with two children

These vulnerabilities are even more prevalent and acute among Roma women. While variations exist within and across Roma communities, gender roles are generally more perfectly preserved among Roma in the Western Balkans, with higher levels of stigma attached to a woman being employed (Boudet, Petesch, and Turk 2013), UNICEF 2017). Even when Roma women seek to participate in the labor market, gender and ethnic discrimination in the broader community intersects to create strong barriers to employment (O'Higgins 2012). In this study, Roma women claimed a widespread assumption on the part of employers that they were only suited for lower-level work and/or that they are prone to several pregnancies in the space of a few years.

4.3.2. Children

There is insufficient research on children and adolescents classified as returnees; however, evidence collected for this study in addition to other research in the Western Balkans reveals a prevalence of reintegration difficulties and socioemotional problems among children (Zevulun et al. 2017; Vathi and Duci 2016). For those who were either born in or taken to the EU at a very young age, the experience is particularly traumatic. First, there are the language and nostrification issues as discussed in section 4.2.6. Second, versed in the culture and socioeconomic realities of EU countries they have left, their learning curve is steep and the support mechanisms for their reintegration are largely lacking.

When we returned, our children lost a school year because the school did not want to accept the certificate of the completed grade in Germany. I know a lot of kids who don't go to school because they don't have money for a snack or a sandwich to take to school, not to mention nostrification of documents. We plan to go back to Germany if nothing changes here."

Mihrija, a Bosnian woman from Rozaje in North Macedonia

There are also gender considerations for children. Returnee girls face particular problems as they encounter more traditional gender norms than those to which they have become accustomed, especially the expectation of early marriage as a means of gaining acceptance in home communities. Communities may be wary of the more liberal gender norms of EU countries. This research revealed reports of young girls being discriminated against on the grounds of suspected sexual impurity and even being subjected to virginity tests to secure marriage prospects.

The most vulnerable returnee children are older adolescents from an ethnic minority group who experience irregular migration. These young people tend to live isolated lives after their return. Most drop out of school early, rarely leave their homes, and have little contact with peers or the wider society (Zevulun et al. 2017). For parents, the experience of these children can compound existing difficulties and incentivize later remigration.

4.3.3. People with Disabilities

Gaps and delays in social assistance have a particularly negative effect on people with disabilities. Those who have become used to better care have a particularly difficult time acclimating to lower standards. This adjustment can be particularly taxing on a child with a disability, who encounters multiple hurdles to schooling and access to health care. Multiple studies in the Western Balkans have recognized this as an important issue. Research in Kosovo finds that vulnerable groups among returnees include children with disabilities, single mothers, Roma, and people with mental health issues, and leads the call for improved policy and action (Arenliu and Weine 2015). Given the traditional nature of families and the difficulty women have entering the workplace, the impact of a disability can be particularly debilitating for a family whose male breadwinner falls ill.

"In Germany, I stayed for 18 months as an asylum-seeker. But, I got sick and was operated on for a serious disease. (...) I have been back for two years, but I have not received my disability payment yet. My wife is unemployed, and we do not receive economic aid. Honestly, I live on charity (...)."

Isuf from Fushë-Kruja in Albania

4.4. ASSETS UPON RETURN

Returnees arrive in the Western Balkans with more than just problems and vulnerabilities. Many have benefited from their stays abroad and have acquired a set of distinct assets in the form of human and social capital. This seems particularly true for Roma returnees, according to this research. If systematically leveraged, returnees could use these acquired assets to benefit themselves and society. Studies show that those who return with assets, such as human and social capital, generally fare better upon return (World Bank 2017) and may contribute positively to their communities (Debnath 2016). In so doing, these returnees can become role models and agents of change for their families and for their communities. Some key assets identified by the vulnerability mappings are set out below.

4.4.1. Skills

Identifying the skills that returnees bring with them is an important stage in the reintegration process and one which can help smooth the transition to work and into local communities. In practice, the skills of returnees will vary depending on where they are returning from, how long they were there, and when they returned. Further, the returnees' ability to leverage their new skills depends on local demand for them; where such demand exists, returnees tend to fare better (World Bank 2017).¹⁸

18. See also Thomas 2012 for examples from Eastern and Southern Africa.

Men and women from the Western Balkans often return from the EU with new language skills. Some youth report having engaged in internships and other training while abroad. These assets are more common among those who spent long periods of time abroad and who were able to benefit from learning opportunities in Europe. However, those who had spent less time abroad also reported new skills, such as for short-term, contract-based work. For Roma and others who tend to occupy unregulated professions in the Western Balkans, there are transferable skills that come with working in a regulated and structured environment, including time management and discipline.

The matching of skills to jobs will remain a challenge while job opportunities are few in the Western Balkans. In the case of Roma, the structural discrimination adds another obstacle to employment and thus to the application of skills in the workplace. So too does Roma's spatial segregation from mainstream communities. Bolstering the inclusion of these communities into mainstream society and into local livelihoods is crucial to capitalizing on the skills of returnees.

"As Roma, we are often discriminated against on the job market. People have prejudices that we are thieves, we do not dress nicely, we do not smell nice, etc. I think we can pay attention to details, we quickly learn any job. Especially the Roma who lived abroad—in Germany for example."

Džema, a Roma man and returnee to North Macedonia

"We have learned to work there and respect deadlines and co-workers. After returning from Germany it is much more difficult to integrate into society than before leaving."

A Roma returnee in Kosovo

4.4.2. Aspirations and Confidence

Experiences of more equal treatment in Europe translate to higher aspirations and confidence among Roma men and women. Both returnees and community leaders made note of this transformation in this study and others (e.g., Sigona 2012). For Roma women, the shift in attitudes can be particularly apparent. Experiences in the EU can foster more positive attitudes about women in the workplace among both Roma men and women. Young girls who have spent most of their formative years in the EU, might especially share these views. However, as previously noted (section 4.3), a reversal of such gains can occur upon return.

4.4.3. Entrepreneurship

In qualitative interviews, aspirations were manifest in a willingness to take on new challenges, including any available entrepreneurship opportunities. The literature suggests a higher tendency for returnees to self-select into entrepreneurship than stayers with the same skills and financial capital (Marchetta 2011; Piracha and Vadean 2010; Demurger and Xu 2011). Lack of credit is a major constraint to the establishment of new small-scale enterprises (Beck and Demirguc-Kunt 2006), for example, when returnees lack collateral

or access to formal financial institutions, as is often the case among Roma.

4.4.4. Children

Regular school attendance positive impacts the behavior of Roma children. Some educators are quick to point out that returnee Roma children are willing students—more attentive

and curious than children who have never left. It was unclear whether the parents of Roma returnees were more vigilant about their children attending school or if had reverted to their original behavior. Rather than capitalizing on this human resource, the education system punishes the children for their lack of acceptable certification.

5 Main Findings and Recommendations

This paper has demonstrated that existing frameworks in the Western Balkans do not offer practical reintegration solutions or, for several reasons, do not effectively implement them, leaving returnees with inadequate and inconsistent support for their reintegration, reinforcing their economic and social exclusion, and in turn increasing the risk of secondary migration. For vulnerable returnees

such as ethnic minorities and Roma for whom socioeconomic problems more pronounced, the reintegration challenge is even greater.

The following recommendations were formulated in close conversation with the European Union (EU) and were endorsed by the governments of and key stakeholders in the Western Balkans.

5.1. EUROPEAN UNION (EU)

Finding	Recommendation
Policies and frameworks	
1. In the absence of an overall EU reintegration framework, member states are filling the vacuum with their own approaches. There are inconsistencies and blind spots across these approaches.	<i>Develop a set of common basic principles for the return and reintegration of returnees.</i> The legislative changes proposed at the State of the Union 2018 go some distance in harmonizing return policies, but they focus on increasing the number of returns. A holistic, longer-term approach to migration would also consider the effectiveness of reintegration. Common basic principles around return could serve as a roadmap for member states as they develop their return-related policies and interventions. An example of such an approach is the Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion (2009). Based on this study's findings, these principles should—at a minimum—apply to recommendations 2–4 below.
2. There is no commonly accepted definition of vulnerable groups within the EU, resulting in differential treatment of returnees based on varying sending-country definitions. Policies do not address many of the vulnerabilities specific to migrants from the Western Balkans.	<i>Establish a definition of vulnerable groups among returnees, with sensitivity to the impact of intersectional vulnerabilities.</i> Most EU national assisted voluntary return (AVR) programs have specific criteria for specific vulnerable groups. However, there is no common legal definition of "vulnerability" regarding returnees. The adoption of a common definition would prevent service provision and assistance gaps to the most vulnerable returnees, would help identify intersectional vulnerabilities, would facilitate reintegration, and would mitigate the risk of carousel migration.

(continued)

Finding	Recommendation
<p>3. There are gaps in pre- and postreturn assistance across member states, some stemming from the absence of commonly accepted definition of vulnerable groups.</p>	<p><i>Develop minimum standards for pre- and postreturn assistance.</i> Return counseling and support programs exist within EU countries, but they vary both in terms of their depth of content and their applicability. These programs should be standardized to the extent possible and made compulsory in terms of their being administered to all returnees.</p>
<p>4. Evaluation of evidence on the effectiveness of reintegration programs and postreturn life is scarce to nonexistent.</p>	<p><i>Cooperate and coordinate between sending countries and the Western Balkans, including information exchange and a management-on-return process.</i> The onus of responsibility for monitoring returns should be on the Western Balkans as part of their reintegration strategies and programs. However, it is evident that providing a comprehensive reintegration program like that of Kosovo's is expensive; and the EU could help with funding for these programs. The monitoring of reintegration outcomes would also help EU member states evaluate the strength of their return policies.</p>
<p>Coordination and financing</p>	
<p>5. Coordination among the EU and the Western Balkans focuses on border control and security rather than on the underlying reasons for migration and remigration.</p>	<p><i>Strategically use funding provided through the Asylum and Migration Fund and the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance to launch and scale up high-priority pilot interventions for Roma and non-Roma returnees, communities, and governments.</i> The findings of this study support the idea that it is crucial to address the vulnerabilities and socioeconomic needs of Western Balkan communities crucial to mitigate migration and remigration. This recognition should guide the financing of interventions. See local-level recommendations (section 5.4) for examples of interventions.</p>
<p>Registration and data management</p>	
<p>6. Across the EU, there is an information deficit on the numbers, profiles, and vulnerabilities of returnees. In the absence of this data, it is nearly impossible to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of return policies.</p>	<p><i>Establish common parameters and standards for data collection and reporting regarding returns from member states.</i> Current proposals to improve reporting to Eurostat through the Migration Statistics Regulation could be more ambitious in their scope, including regarding the identification of vulnerabilities. In addition to basic demographic information like gender and age, assessing the vulnerabilities and needs of returnees requires access to sensitive information, such as disability, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. In terms of data sharing, initiatives like the European Travel Information and Authorization System (ETIAS) seek to improve the interoperability of systems, for the purposes of security and border control. However, the question of if and how to tailor such systems to satisfy a sustainable return agenda demands additional consideration.</p> <p><i>Revise the measurement methodologies related to return and reintegration.</i> The EU return rate should be based on a multiannual projection. Additional indicators, such as a reintegration index, should be developed and used to measure return effectiveness. Steps should be taken to harmonize measurements of AVR uptake and decision making. Determining the percentage of eligible individuals who participate in programs is key to understanding how to improve the overall effective return rate.</p>

(continued)

Finding	Recommendation
7. Information exchange on return between EU member states and the Western Balkans is lacking.	Design and implement a shared management information system for sending countries and the Western Balkans. The system should formalize the information required from member states for reintegration in Western Balkans, such as identification of special needs, records of education attained while in EU member states, and data on civil registration documents. Building the capacity of central governments in the Western Balkans would improve monitoring of the implementation of return and reintegration policies. The EU could support the development of such a system by establishing the prototype and by supporting its roll-out across Western Balkans. (See box 5.1 for the Philippines' experience with a management information system).
8. Data are absent in enlargement reports, even though migration and border management are central to the enlargement agenda.	Standardize reporting on returnees in annual enlargement progress reports. Include more detailed data in enlargement progress reports to promote understanding of current issues and to bolster accountability to the agenda. The Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations should establish a standard format for all progress reports to make them comparable and to allow for the tracking of progress over time. The format should use a common set of indicators and priority topics.

5.2. EU MEMBER STATES

Finding	Recommendation
Registration and data management	
1. There are gaps and inconsistencies in the collection of return-related data in member states.	Formalize monitoring and evaluation of pre- and postreturn data, in country. Ideally, monitoring and evaluation standards will be set by common basic principles. Member states should set basic controls and procedures to ensure that monitoring and evaluation is: (1) conducted on a regular basis; (2) captures all generic categories of returnees; (3) captures all aspects of reintegration—social, economic, and psychological; and (4) captures all forms of returns, not just compulsory ones.
Coordination	
2. There is little direct coordination with the Western Balkans around reintegration programs; member states work through donors and international organizations, encouraging parallel integration structures.	Work with and through Western Balkan government institutions at the central and local levels regarding integration programs. Working through the central government will promote an efficient allocation of funds and resources and help shift from the current parallel integration structures in the Western Balkans.

(continued)

BOX 5.1.**Management Information System for Marawi Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Program in the Philippines**

Between May and October 2017, the Armed Forces of the Philippines was involved in a five-month battle and siege to liberate Marawi City and surrounding municipalities from a coalition of four organizations, including an ISIS splinter group. More than 77,000 families were displaced during the conflict, of which about one third had returned by March 2018. A task force comprising 52 government agencies was created to oversee the rehabilitation of damaged houses, roads, schools, health centers, electrical and water and sanitation supply, and other infrastructure, as well as the return of internally displaced people.

A World Bank team is assisting the Government of Philippines by providing a management information system that will streamline assistance delivery to internally displaced people and act as a decision-making tool for planning, organizing, and monitoring interventions for the early recovery, reconstruction, and

rehabilitation of Marawi City and surrounding areas. The technology platform will also facilitate a coordinated process for the delivery of programs, projects, and activities that aim to rebuild the lives of displaced families, restore damaged properties, and resurrect socioeconomic activities. The system's infrastructure will be designed to ensure the necessary data collection modalities are in place to gather, analyze, and process the data necessary for over 900 projects to inform programming geared toward the reconstruction of damaged infrastructure, the revitalization of economic activities and improvement of people's means of livelihood, and the delivery of social services in the affected areas. The system will enable the storage of 77,000 family beneficiary case files—including all household members, fingerprint records, and photographs—to ensure that every household member has access to and receives all relevant services.

Finding	Recommendation
3. There are patterns of circular labor migration from Western Balkans to the EU but a lack of regular pathways for it.	Identify options for strengthening cooperation around skills transfer and filling seasonal labor market needs across the EU and in the Western Balkans. Migration can benefit host societies and migrants when used to address labor market gaps. Further, there are costs associated with irregular migration and failed asylum outcomes. Germany's Western Balkan Regulation is one example of a policy seeking to harness such benefits and mitigate costs by providing pathways for labor migration.
4. Returnees leave member states without the key documentation required to register for services, such as birth certificates and education certificates.	Ensure all returnees receive the necessary core documentation to ease their reintegration process—especially as it pertains to education abroad. Prereturn counseling should raise awareness about the importance of these documents and assist in securing them. Data suggests that, too often, returnees seek to secure these documents after their return. Given their importance, EU member states should ensure that they offer such services in the EU rather than only providing the documents through agents operating in the Western Balkans.
5. There are limited mechanisms for the streamlined transfer of records from member states to Western Balkans.	Increase cooperation between registration agencies in the Western Balkans and corresponding institutions in EU member states to ensure that all parties share and recognize all relevant returnee data. The management information system described above is one approach to streamlining data sharing.

5.3. WESTERN BALKANS: CENTRAL LEVEL

Finding	Recommendation
Policies and frameworks	
1. Gaps remain in the design of targeted returnee policies in the Western Balkans.	Develop reintegration strategies that are evidence-based and realistic, clearly identifying the roles and responsibilities of governmental actors at the central and local levels. This strategy should be evidence-based, consider lessons learned from past experiences and detail how this multisectoral agenda will synchronize horizontally across line-ministries and vertically among central and local levels. Roles and responsibilities around the reintegration agenda should be defined at the central and local level, and coordination and cooperation mechanisms should be established. Action plans should be concrete and results-oriented, including a results matrix, indicators, and a timeline as well as a clear budget attached to the implementation of planned reintegration activities.
2. Budgeting issues hamper the implementation of reintegration strategies, even when strategy plans are included in policy documents.	Develop multiyear program budgets for the integration of returnees, commensurate with the number and needs of the people returned. The ability of a local government to address the needs of returnees and implement reintegration strategies is contingent upon this. Funding is also required to increase the capacity of public health institutions so they can accommodate the increased demand resulting from the rising number of returnees with health problems. This recommendation should be considered in tandem with those for improved implementation mechanisms to ensure that funds are properly allocated and used.

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Finding	Recommendation
Registration and data management	
<p>3. Nonregistration upon return is a major obstacle to returnees' access to services and reintegration support. Typically, returnees are registered only if they travel by air and, even then, inconsistently.</p>	<p><i>Develop and roll out efficient and effective electronic data recording systems that can capture returnees at different places and times of their movement.</i></p> <p><i>Establish a reintegration office or desk at all major airports.</i> A reintegration office should be established at major airports throughout the Western Balkans. It should be visible and accessible to returnees. This is essential as a first point of contact for registering returnees and collecting data.</p> <p><i>Establish return reception posts in local municipalities.</i> To promote registration regardless of the means of travel, returnees should have the option to register at local-level institutions in their own community or at the local employment office. Municipalities can then register any returnee who was not previously identified at the airport as well as follow up with returnees who were. The intersectoral teams described in recommendation 2, section 5.4, would help in this regard. Services to be delivered through the teams could include registering returnees, issuing proof of returnee status, and providing information on available services. Additionally, any interviews with returnees regarding their migration experiences could be conducted in the space allotted to the intersectoral team rather than at a police station. Such a program would strengthen local readmission teams by expanding their membership, authorizing them to carry out specific tasks, and providing them with office space and an assistant.</p>
<p>4. Information exchange regarding returnees to Western Balkans is poor. Oftentimes, local-level partners are not informed of a returnee's arrival and needs unless the person self-reports.</p>	<p><i>Develop a case management system with electronic data recording to share at the local and central level.</i> An efficient and effective electronic data recording system could capture returnees at different places and times of their movement. A case management system could follow returnees through the reintegration process and indicate that data should be collected at various times. As a first step their registration at the airport, the returnee's data should be sent through the system to local municipalities.</p>
<p>5. Where cooperation between central governments in the Western Balkans and implementing partners exists at all, it is mostly bilateral and reiterative.</p>	<p><i>Mechanisms should be established for the regular and systematic exchange of information among implementing partners active in reintegrating returnees in the Western Balkans, in addition to the local and central government.</i> Partners could include: donors, international organizations, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) involved in the delivery of services for returnees at both the central and local levels. This information exchange should examine the activities of various stakeholders as well as how well they fit in with and support the implementation of central-level reintegration strategies to avoid duplication and coordinate or complement efforts as needed.</p>

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Finding	Recommendation
<p>6. In the absence of effective registration practices, the burden is put on returnees to register with local authorities and communicate their needs. Stigma and lack of knowledge are reasons why they do not do so.</p>	<p>Actively destigmatize return through information campaigns to increase self-reporting to local authorities and promote cooperation. Ideally, the measures set out in recommendation 5 above will serve to lessen the registration burden on returnees. However, the cooperation of returnees is still crucial to promote effective registration, including of their needs.</p> <p>Generate a program of awareness, transparency, and access to information among returnees. With the intention of making out-migration less attractive to those most likely to be returned, accessible and accurate printed information regarding social services should be disseminated, primarily in Romani communities, as well as in centers for social work, employment bureaus, public health facilities, and pre- and primary schools. Additionally, representatives of relevant central-level institutions should be posted at the border crossings that returnees use the most often, so people returned due to reintegration agreements can be provided written information and be personally consulted regarding available services. Institutional representatives stationed at border crossings could also issue proof of returnee status to serve as a basis to access services and to monitor that access. Citizen monitoring and evaluation of public service delivery, complaint-handling mechanisms; and institutionalized citizen feedback mechanisms could be built into a larger program of this kind.</p>
Coordination	
<p>7. A lack of central-level coordination hampers the implementation of returnee policies. Reintegration policies in some parts of the Western Balkans include plans for coordinating bodies, but they are not yet active.</p>	<p>Create a central-level platform tasked with improving coordination and information-sharing between government institutions and their partners, including donors, international organizations, and NGOs. Central bodies should have two primary tasks: (1) ensure that the implementation and monitoring of the reintegration strategy is on track, and (2) improve coordination among government institutions and partners. A third task of such a body would be to assist with the establishment of a network of regional centers for integration that are operated by local municipalities and/or NGOs who have experience working with returnees. Technical assistance for building the monitoring and evaluation capacity of the coordinating bodies should be made available.</p>
<p>8. In some parts of the Western Balkans, registration for services is conditioned on the presentation of an identification document (ID). The administrative burden of obtaining these documents can impede access to services, especially for returnees having difficulty providing proof of residence and an address.</p>	<p>Simplify access to ID cards. Situations in which people are unable to provide the proof of residence or address necessary to obtain an ID card under current legislation should be addressed by introducing provisions that allow applicants to register an address at the local center for social work or another address determined by the municipality where the applicant lives. In places where this has proved to be very difficult in terms of an unwillingness to resolve such situations by making use of existing legal provisions, the relevant legislation should be changed so it mandates that centers for social work register such people as described.</p> <p>Simplify access to birth certificates and registration. The central-level institutions responsible for birth registries in the Western Balkans should explore possibilities for cooperation with the corresponding institutions in EU member states to obtain copies of birth certificates for children born abroad to people from the Western Balkans. Additionally, the Western Balkans should develop and implement procedures to recognize alternative evidence of birth in cases where no birth certificate is available.</p>

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Finding	Recommendation
9. There are additional problems with the translation and nostrification of education-related documents. Children are particularly hard hit.	<i>Simplify access to certification of education completed abroad.</i> A process is needed to facilitate the formal recognition of education completed abroad. The central-level institutions in the Western Balkans responsible for education should explore possibilities for cooperation with the ministries responsible for education in EU member states to obtain diplomas and transcripts of education completed abroad by Western Balkan natives and their children. Consideration should be given to waiving fees for notification of educational documents in cases of need. Additionally, a procedure should be established for assessing the knowledge of returnee children where no documentation of completed education can be provided.

5.4. WESTERN BALKANS: LOCAL LEVEL

Finding	Recommendation
Policies and frameworks	
1. Across the Western Balkans, there are no or limited targeted government policies for the reintegration of returnees at the local level.	<i>Develop local-level action plans for the reintegration of returnees in a transparent and participatory manner, involving services providers and community representatives.</i> These plans should include mechanisms for coordinating with central-level government, budgeting, and pathways for capacity building at the local level. They should be incorporated into targeted central-level policies.
2. Local-level, capacity to deal with the influx of returnees is limited.	<i>Build the capacity of local governments and their partners to implement central-level policies for the reintegration of returnees.</i> Intersectoral teams should be established to reintegrate returnees in localities where a significant influx has taken place or is expected. At minimum, the membership of the teams should include centers for social work, employment offices, public health facilities, pre- and primary schools, the municipal administration, and relevant NGOs, with capacity-building and financial support provided as needed to enable NGOs to contribute as partners of the state in implementing central-level policies for the reintegration of returnees. Central-level institutions should authorize the teams to carry out specific tasks, with office space and staff allotted to each team.
Supporting community-level integration and development	
3. Poor socioeconomic conditions are the main drivers for migration. Men and women are unlikely to face a better situation upon return and may even encounter worse conditions.	<i>Support income generation in local communities.</i> With an eye to addressing the primary push factor behind migration from the Western Balkans to Western Europe, donor and international organizations should devote attention and resources to the development and implementation of initiatives that create conditions for sustainable (self-)employment among members of socioeconomically vulnerable groups.

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Finding	Recommendation
4. Returnees coming back to marginalized communities often bring with them nonfinancial assets that can be capitalized on upon their return, including hard skills and higher aspirations.	<p><i>These nonfinancial assets should be considered when designing interventions through active engagement with service providers.</i> Instead of viewing returnees as only as "beneficiaries" of services, reintegration initiatives should include elements that allow returnees to capitalize on and further develop their acquired skills, especially livelihood skills such as leadership and agency. Investing in youth leadership and youth-led community programs will be an important complementary activity to the already ongoing reintegration efforts that mostly focus on addressing challenges rather than exploiting assets. Initiatives for women and Roma more generally are also warranted, as discussed below.</p>

Addressing Specific Needs of Vulnerable Returnees

5. For Roma: Discrimination and socioeconomic marginalization compounds vulnerabilities and push factors.	<p><i>Beyond reintegration, develop interventions focused on breaking down social barriers between the marginalized and broader communities through community-based initiatives rather than information campaigns.</i> Evidence suggests that antidiscrimination campaigns have limited and sometimes even adverse impacts in overcoming the root causes of discrimination because they can deepen the perceptions of "us" vs. "them." A more effective way to overcome hostility, stereotyping, and discrimination is to bring members of different communities together around a shared cause or task. Intersectional vulnerabilities, such as those faced by Roma women, should be considered a priority when developing and implementing such measures.</p> <p><i>Develop and implement cooperative social enterprise programs for returnees and other vulnerable nonmigrants in the community to enhance livelihoods and promote social cohesion among groups.</i> Reinsertion and reintegration are the immediate objectives of such initiatives, but there is also the long term-objective of strengthening livelihoods and community cohesion among ethnic minorities and mainstream inhabitants. The active participation of local governments and municipalities is crucial. So too is the involvement of private sector businesses, to link upstream and downstream activities and to provide mentorship support, as well as NGOs, whose core business is involved with the creation of social enterprises and cooperative and small businesses. Activities would involve identifying municipalities that are willing to take an active lead on such initiatives; participants from target communities willing to participate in such ventures, including in-kind investing; and a cadre of private sector businesses and individuals (mentors) and NGOs to assist with implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. The pilots would be conducted in both rural and urban sectors, focusing on manufacturing and production rather than services. There could be similar pilots targeted at vulnerable groups—such as women, the elderly, and youth—while improving social cohesion within the community.</p>
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Finding	Recommendation
<p>6. Some Roma dwellings are informal and cannot therefore be formally owned or assigned an address. This creates an obstacle when a returnee is required to provide an address to register for services.</p>	<p>Prioritize the formalization of property rights, i.e., tenure and access to civil documents for ethnic minority returnees. Providing returnees with a means to document their housing will enable them to register for services. Further, for those returnees who are returning to previous dwellings, formalization of their rights will allow them to reclaim housing to the extent others have claimed it.</p>
<p>7. Roma children face specific challenges when they reenter the school system related to discrimination, lack of language skills, and cultural differences.</p>	<p>Introduce targeted accelerated learning programs to support the reentry of child returnees into the education system, with sensitivity to the reentry of Roma. These programs would address the host of Roma-specific learning disadvantages, with a focus on students in primary education who, unlike their peers, did not attend kindergarten; who do not speak the main language of the curriculum; and who face other-ing from a very young age. A targeted support program should address these challenges and help develop the requisite coping mechanisms to prepare these children for mainstream education. Such an effort can align with or be led by the Roma teaching mediators in schools where they exist. As an example: Lebanon implemented accelerated learning programs throughout the country to integrate children from Syria into mainstream education.</p>
<p>8. For women: Traditional gender norms encourage financial and social dependence. They have less voice and agency in the return process.</p>	<p>Support the creation of women's self-help groups for (Roma) returnees and vulnerable (Roma) nonmigrants so they can gain better access to financial institutions and markets and learn leadership and entrepreneurial skills. A proven model to achieve this outcome is the establishment self-help groups for women, with links to banks, business incubation, and entrepreneurship. Through these groups, women can develop livelihoods through their communities that are based on market opportunities. Community business promoters are provided with a grassroots business development training to incubate businesses. Groups can link to identified government programs, and the process is facilitated. Where there is critical mass of women engaged in similar enterprises, multiple groups can form cooperatives for collective bargaining and economies of scale.</p>
<p>9. Of major concern are the mental health issues related to return and problems with reintegration.</p>	<p>Establish low-intensity mental health programs that can be adapted to meet the varying needs of refugees, including adults, children, ethnic minority groups, the Roma, the disabled, and the mentally disadvantaged. Similar programs for returnees could serve as a model for such programs (see box 5.2). The objective would be to provide local-level support, particularly for communities lacking infrastructure and trained professionals. The design of such programs would focus on low-intensity, simplified, and scalable problem-solving counseling or therapy delivered through educators, social welfare counselors, and NGOs working in the sector that regularly interact with returnee communities or that focus on mental health. These types of preventive measures would strengthen community resilience with the establishment of community infrastructure and a network to prepare, cope, and respond to return-related trauma.</p>

BOX 5.2.**Piloting Psychosocial Support to Conflict-Affected Populations—
Community Resilience and Low-Intensity Mental Health Programs in Ukraine**

Four years of conflict in the eastern Ukraine have resulted in the displacement of over 1.6 million people while also negatively impacting the lives of many more. Practitioners and recent studies of mental health issues have noted high levels of mental health problems among internally displaced people and host populations in conflict-affected areas. These populations have experienced or continue to experience numerous stressors, such as exposure to violence; loss of home, family members, and communities; unemployment and scarcer economic opportunities; declining incomes and increasing costs of utilities; and difficulty gaining access to housing and basic services. The results of a nationwide mental health survey of internally displaced people conducted between March and May 2016 reveals a 32 percent prevalence rate of posttraumatic stress disorder, a 22 percent rate of depression, and an 18 percent rate of anxiety among this group. The World Bank is piloting two programs to provide support to the government of Ukraine to improve prospects for comprehensive and effective psychosocial support

at the community level, particularly for those areas lacking infrastructure and trained professionals. Specifically, the Bank will support the launch and operation of a community resilience program that improves the long-term well-being of its members with the establishment of community infrastructure and a network to prepare, cope, and respond to emergencies on a local and regional basis. This program will strengthen community resilience as a preventive measure, identify gaps in the psychosocial field—emergency and routine, and develop subprograms to assist those suffering from anxiety, psychotrauma, or grief on an individual, family, and community level. As part of the subprograms, the Bank is designing and initiating a Ukraine-relevant program focused on low-intensity, simplified, and scalable problem-solving counseling or problem-solving therapy for schools, social workers, and nongovernmental organizations working in this sector. The program focuses on problem management that will align with the objectives of the State Targeted Mental Health Program.

6 The Way Forward

Moving from evidence to action on the effective reintegration of returnees requires a comprehensive engagement around reintegration measures, with an increasing focus on addressing the socioeconomic push factors motivating people from the Western Balkans to consider remigration. Evidence gathered during this research for the Supporting Effective Reintegration of (Roma) Returnees shows that socioeconomic considerations related to lack of jobs and income, limited access to health care services, low educational quality, and poor socioeconomic support/feelings of marginalization are the most common push factors for citizens of the Western Balkans to migrate or remigrate. Findings also showed that readmissions strategies are lacking in some places; and the overall management of data, both within European Union (EU) member states and in the Western Balkans, is poor. As a result, as extension of this project, technical assistance is provided to several areas in the Western Balkans to support the development of returnee reintegration strategies and action plans and to develop a prototype

management information system that monitors and evaluates returnees.

Technical assistance toward developing returnee reintegration strategies and action plans involves: (1) designing/updating outdated reinsertion and reintegration strategies that are needs-based and supported by empirical evidence, and (2) ensuring that these strategies include action plans that are realistic, clearly identify the roles and responsibilities of governmental institutions at the central and local levels, and have clear budget lines. In addition, action plans are being developed for both the central- and local-level stakeholders. Technical assistance toward developing a prototype management information system includes creating a systematic case file management system that collects data and tracks progress of returnees at both the central and local level, which all social protection agencies can access.

However, a well-intentioned strategy and management information system that supports a policy focused on return and reintegration alone is short-sighted. For marginalized groups such as the Roma, who leave the Western Balkans to escape hardship,

reintegration into the status quo is not an effective solution to safeguard their dignity or mitigate their desire to migrate again. Further, where push factors persist that can significantly impact an entire minority community, irregular migration will continue, even if returnees are given incentives to stay. Interventions should therefore focus on the broader socioeconomic inclusion of returnees from minority communities. The World Bank proposes three pillars of interventions to achieve this outcome, which move away from addressing immediate reintegration challenges toward the more comprehensive aim of promoting social inclusion.

Addressing these push factors requires a bundle of interventions: from addressing the immediate and most pressing needs of returnees to developing comprehensive interventions that are integrated into social protection and social services systems and that address the root causes of remigration.

The World Bank therefore proposes to structure this engagement around three pillars that incrementally move from a reintegration angle toward a comprehensive structural engagement on inclusion.

Pillar 1. High-impact Pilots and Technical Assistance

For the first phase—pillar 1—the World Bank proposes high-impact pilots and technical assistance formats to address the most pressing challenges of reintegration support. These are based on the targeted recommendations discussed in chapter 5 of this report. Interventions should be based on the following guiding principles: (1) they should be

evidence-based, (2) they should be requested by the relevant government, and (3) they can be scaled-up. The most pressing challenges to effective reintegration are:

- **Policies and frameworks.** There are gaps in policies on return and reintegration within both the EU and the Western Balkans. Among EU member states, no harmonized approach exists regarding the return and reintegration of migrants, including minimum standards for reintegration assistance. There is no common definition of a *vulnerable* migrant and, as a result, the challenges faced by Roma are not specifically addressed. Within the Western Balkans, strategies and action plans for return and reintegration are poorly articulated, lacking, or expired. There is also a lack of policies at the local level.

- **Coordination.** Coordination on reintegration is a cross-cutting problem within and between the EU and the Western Balkans. There is little harmonization on reintegration among EU member states. Some mostly channel reintegration efforts through international donors and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), resulting in parallel projects. Within the Western Balkans, there is little horizontal coordination between NGOs and central governments. There is also a lack of coordination between central and local levels of government in the Western Balkans. As a result, service delivery is blunted at the local level. Newly created management information systems are perfect vehicles to initiate such coordination through

data collection that allows for monitoring and evaluation and that develops further evidence.

- **Financing.** In the Western Balkans, funding issues at both the central and local levels hampers policy implementation. Issues of coordination and implementation also result in funds not being properly allocated in some places.
- **Local capacity building.** Across the Western Balkans, there are either very few or no local-level government strategies or plans for returnee reintegration. Budget constraints at the local level also severely hamper service delivery, especially in municipalities absorbing high numbers of returnees. NGOs, international donors, and volunteer organizations have been crucial to filling some of the service delivery gaps, but because they rarely coordinate horizontally, their capacities are not fully leveraged.
- **Registration and data management.** Management information systems that support a case file management system that collects data, tracks progress, and connects returnees to all social protection agencies at both the central and local level are being designed. However, a concerted effort will be needed to register returnees and their progress at all junctures during their reintegration journey. Where returnees are not registered, the provision of support services is hampered. The continued absence of relevant and timely data makes it impossible to draw accurate conclusions about the effectiveness of return policies and programs.

- **Community-level integration and development.** Roma returnees in particular largely return to conditions of socioeconomic exclusion. There is a need to strengthen livelihoods and community cohesion between Roma, ethnic minorities, and mainstream inhabitants. Doing so would limit the push factors that encourage out-migration. Inclusion efforts should be sensitive to the intersecting vulnerabilities experienced by Roma women, children, and persons with disabilities.

Pillar 2. Identifying Solutions to Address Key Vulnerabilities and Push Factors Related to Social Inclusion and Integration

Over the medium term, support to returnees should be streamlined and integrated into the social protection and social services systems in the Western Balkans. Therefore, as second pillar, functional reviews of the social sectors and services in the region are proposed. These reviews should include:

- An analysis of the effectiveness of social programs and services to address the vulnerabilities and needs of marginalized population groups, including but not limited to returnees. The focus should be predominantly on government-led programs, but there should also be a review of significant programs and pilots implemented by international organizations, bilateral donors, and civil society organizations.
- Assessments of the composition of programs, including financing; institutional

and coordination capacity; case management and referrals; joint tools for beneficiaries' selection and management (e.g., social registries and payment systems); and comprehensive community needs.

- Identification of international best practices relevant to the Western Balkans.
- An analysis of options for integrating and streamlining select successful returnee support pilots from pillar 1 as well as other relevant pilots into the social inclusion systems of the Western Balkans.

Based on these functional reviews, the World Bank can support governments in identifying priorities for high-impact social inclusion and integration interventions to support vulnerable populations, including potential migrants, returnees, and their communities, and address push factors for migration. Priorities will be identified in a participatory manner across central and local levels of government and will involve citizens and nongovernmental stakeholders to generate shared

ownership and platforms for joint engagement and implementation.

Pillar 3. Preparing and Implementing High-impact, Social Inclusion, and Integration Interventions

Pillar 1 will test targeted reintegration support interventions, and pillar 2 will identify high-impact, integrated social inclusion interventions that help address the key vulnerabilities of returnees and the vulnerable population, as well as push factors for migration. Pillar 3 aims at preparing and implementing select integrated interventions, the specific choice and number of which will depend on a government's interest and ownership and on financing opportunities. In addition to helping prioritize solutions, this will also serve to ensure broader commitment and the exploration of a variety of financing sources for rolling out these integrated approaches.

Appendix A. Mappings, Studies, and Methodology

Following is a list of World Bank studies completed under the Supporting the Effective Reintegration of Roma Returnees in the Western Balkans project

Western Balkans Mappings

Document	Description	Area
Institutional mapping	Assessment of the availability, readiness, costs, and governance challenges of targeted and nontargeted services relevant to the reintegration of returnees	Western Balkans (24 reports)
Stakeholder mapping	Description of governmental and nongovernmental initiatives related to the reintegration of returnees	
Vulnerabilities mapping	Description of returnees' vulnerabilities and how they are tied to or exacerbated by the positioning of the individual along axes of (in)equality: sex, ethnicity, age, level of formal education, and place of current residence	
Synthesis	Synthesis of the above three mappings for the Western Balkans	
Legislative mapping	Analysis of all legislative frameworks that directly and indirectly apply to rights and entitlements of returnees	North Macedonia (1 report)

European Union Member State Mappings

Document	Description	Area
Return process mapping	Exploration of the repatriation process as it relates to returnees being sent back to their homeland	All MS4 countries (4 reports)
Synthesis	Synthesis of all return-process mappings	All MS4 countries (1 report)

Academic Articles

Vathi, Z. Forthcoming. Barriers to (Re)integration: The Roma Return to the Western Balkans. World Bank, Washington, DC.

Kuschminder, K., and M. Siegel. 2018. Effective Data Collection in Return Migration Management: The EU and the Western Balkans. World Bank: Washington, DC.

Methodology

The above mappings were produced using a combination of desk research, structured interviews with returnees and key stakeholders, and review of existing literature. Fieldwork was conducted in Roma communities for vulnerability mappings, including focus group sessions with returnees. Methodologies adopted for each category of mapping was broadly comparable to allow for cross-analysis. Full details of methodology, including sampling, are contained in the respective reports.

Appendix B.

EU–Western Balkans Returns Process Mapping

SUMMARY

The European Commission's (EC) Directorate General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) approached the World Bank to develop an evidence base and to deliver policy advice and technical assistance to support the effective reintegration of Roma returnees to the Western Balkans—Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia. This report focuses on the processes of return in four European Union (EU) member states that have in the past five years returned significant numbers of migrants to the Western Balkans: Austria, Belgium, Germany, and France (MS4).¹⁹

According to EU migration policy, the return process is guided by the objective of achieving a "sustainable return."

Sustainable return is understood as the absence of remigration and the returnee's positive impact on the development of their communities of origin. The EU perspective is that "factors such as nature of return chosen and the success of economic and social integration of migrants in host countries, are the main factors of successful reintegration at the predeparture stage, together with social

and psychological counselling in preparing the reintegration project" (EPRS 2017). The approach prioritized by the EC emphasizes voluntary return, but reserves the right to use punitive incentives and disincentives as a pathway to forced removal (EC 2017a).

Return assistance is an acknowledged success factor in achieving sustainable return (EPRS 2017). To contribute to sustainable return EU member states including the MS4 implement heterogeneous return programs. These return programs are generally aligned behind the policy instruments of the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (GAMM). Austria, Belgium, France, and Germany, directly or in cooperation with international NGOs, finance the removal and return of people to the Western Balkans from their territories. However, these programs differ considerably in the nature of assistance provided at the pre- and postdeparture stages, and the conditions of assistance. For example, cash and in-kind voluntary return assistance varies across states, as do levels of prereturn counseling.

At the predeparture stage, few member states have specific return programs that target people from the Western Balkans. From the available data it is known that returnees from the Western Balkans

¹⁹ Eurostat (as of May 2, 2018).

face challenging domestic economic and social environments (Vathi, forthcoming). This is especially true of Roma returnees, owing to their historic exclusion from mainstream societies, particularly impacting on Roma women, children and persons with disabilities who face intersectional vulnerabilities. All four-member states researched provide return-focused information counseling to all Western Balkan migrants in the respective asylum systems, often from a very early point in the application process. That said, none target people from the Western Balkans for return counseling or return assistance above or beyond any other migrants. There is no clear data on differences between counseling delivered to people from the Western Balkans who are in the respective asylum systems of MS4 and those who are irregular migrants and come to the attention of authorities, are detained and/or who request return. Cash and in-kind voluntary return assistance vary across states. Of the four states Germany provides the widest array of supports to people returning to the Western Balkans via the authorities of the German Federal States (for voluntary and forced return) and via international cooperation mainly in Kosovo.

At the postdeparture stage, reintegration is managed through Western Balkan governments, local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and the local chapters of donor and international organizations. Readmission agreements provide the main coordination frameworks between EU member states and the Western Balkans.

Accordingly, administrative-level coordination efforts between member states and Western Balkan governments tend to be limited to matters of return and border security rather than reintegration. Across the MS4, levels of interdepartmental cooperation with the Western Balkans and exchanges between EU governments and service providers in some parts of the region vary. As the synthesis report further details, some returnees have their capacity to reembed themselves in Western Balkan societies curtailed by the process of return, whether through the experience of difficult removals or whether through the failure of sending countries and the Western Balkans to best manage the returns process to present the greatest opportunity for successful reintegration.

Fundamentally, there remains an absence of evidence to draw conclusions on the effectiveness of different national-level measures used by the MS4 and member states in general. This lack of evaluative data is evident both through the absence of quantitative data measuring impact of reintegration assistance on remigration to EU member states by people from the Western Balkans.²⁰ It is also evident in the lack of data measuring the social and economic impact of reintegration assistance on the lives of returnees, including in line with the criteria set out in the EU's own scoping of success factors in social and economic reintegration of returnees.

20. Kuschminder 2018 (forthcoming).

Appendix C.

Snapshots of the Western

ALBANIA

Legal and Policy Framework

Although Albania lacks legislation specifically designed around people returned under reintegration agreements, the Law on the Emigration of Albanian Citizens for Employment Purposes provides for a variety of services for the reintegration of returnees.²¹ Further legal measures adopted pursuant to this law lay out procedures for registering returnees,²² while legislation adopted in the areas of education, employment, and social services defines returnees as a particularly vulnerable group.²³

Albania's main policy document for the sustainable integration of returnees, the Strategy on Reintegration of Returned

Albanian Citizens, which expired in 2015 (Government of Albania 2010). Current policy documents that explicitly address returnee concerns include the National Strategy for Development and Integration (Council of Ministers 2016), which seeks to enhance the sustainability of return migration; the National Strategy for Employment and Skills and its Action Plan (Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth 2014), which contains measures for addressing the difficulties faced by returnees in finding a job; the Strategy on Development of Pre-University Education (Ministry of Education and Sport 2014), with its provisions for free textbooks and psychosocial services for returnee pupils; and the National Youth Action Plan (Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth 2015), which foresees the recognition of vocational training completed abroad, certification of skills and work experience acquired abroad, and referral services.

The Roma receive attention as a vulnerable group in the National Strategy for Employment and Skills and its action plan, the National Health Strategy (Ministry of Health 2017), and the Social Housing Strategy (Ministry of Urban Development 2016), as well as in the National Action Plan for the Integration of Roma and Egyptians (Government of Albania 2015). None of these

21. Law No. 9668/2006 on the emigration of Albanian citizens for employment purposes, amended by Law No. 3089/2011 on amendments to Law No. 9668/2006.

22. Ibid.

23. Law No. 7952/1995 "On the pre-university education system" amended by Law No.8387/1998, Law No. 9903/2008, Law No. 9985/2008 and Law No 10137/2009. Law No 9355/2005 "On social assistance and services." Law No. 7995/1995 "On Employment incentives" amended by Law No. 8444/1999, Law No. 8872/2002, Law No. 9570/2006, and Law No. 10137/2009.

documents contain attention to the specific situation of Roma returned under reintegration agreements.

Implementation

Per the Albanian reintegration strategy, migration counters were established in 36 local and regional employment offices across Albania to provide advisory services in accordance with needs identified in interviews conducted at the first visit. While migration counters are effective in facilitating returnees' access to needed services, available information suggests that they serve only a small percentage of migrants returned under readmission agreements, largely attributable to the voluntary nature of registration. The Albanian State Police's Border and Migration Department collects data on the age, gender, type of return (forced or voluntary), and sometimes district of residence of returnees, but not their ethnicity.

Remaining Gaps

Notwithstanding the work of the migration counters, people returned to Albania face poor employment prospects, a lack of needed documents for nostrification of education completed abroad, limited access to health insurance, poor housing conditions, and difficulty accessing social protection schemes. Complaints about the services offered by employment offices are particularly frequent among Romani and Egyptian returnees.

Although the Albanian reintegration strategy includes a list of 20 indicators (mostly quantitative) for monitoring the reintegration

of returnees and provides for semiannual reporting by the technical secretariat based on information sent by line ministries, both monitoring and reporting on the reintegration of returnees in Albania ceased with the expiration of the reintegration strategy at the end of 2015.

Recommendations

PARTNERS AND SERVICES

- Improve coordination between the Border and Migration Department of the Albanian State Police and the migration counters with an eye to increase the percentage of returnees making use of the counters;
- Reinforce the human and financial resources of the migration counters to increase capacity for outreach and to provide services to a larger number of returnees; and
- Raise awareness among potential migrants and returnees about services available in Albania through the dissemination of accessible and accurate printed information as well as personal consultations.

LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

- Develop a new reintegration strategy that accounts for return-related developments in Albania since 2010, establishing a dedicated coordinating body to oversee the implementation of the strategy; and
- Facilitate the recognition of education completed abroad by exploring international cooperation for obtaining diplomas

and transcripts, waiving nostrification fees in cases of need, and establishing a procedure for assessing the knowledge of returnee children.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Legal and Policy Framework

There is legal framework governing the reintegration of returnees in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but the object of some ostensibly relevant laws are not people returned under readmission agreements, but instead recognized refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina and citizens displaced within it returning to former places of residence (Službeni glasnik BiH 2003; Službene novine Federacije BiH 2005; Službeni glasnik Republike Srpske 2012). However, the Law on Ministries and Other Bodies of Administration defines the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees as the state-level institution responsible for the reception and care of people returned under readmission agreements (Službeni glasnik BiH 2013). The Ministry of Security's Sector for Immigration is responsible for keeping records on these returnees (Službeni glasnik BiH 2011). A protocol regulates institutional cooperation in the efficient implementation of readmission agreements.²⁴

Beyond legal provisions, the main valid policy document targeting returnees in Bosnia and Herzegovina is the Strategy for the Reception and Integration of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Nationals Who Return under

Readmission Agreements and Action Plan for the Period 2015–18 (Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees 2015). The strategy and integrated action plan focus on creating the institutional framework needed to reintegrate people returned under readmission agreements; there are also a few provisions regarding specific services to returnees.

Policies adopted in the areas of housing, health care, employment, and education (but not social protection), give some attention to the Roma population but not to people returned under reintegration agreements.

Implementation

Few targeted services for returnees to Bosnia and Herzegovina are available at the state or local level, and entity-level institutions have not been involved in the design and delivery of services under its reintegration strategy. Local readmission teams have formed and received training, and 11 localities developed local action plans, but evidence of their implementation is lacking. Monitoring and evaluation of return processes is limited to the data collected and published by the Ministry of Security on people returned to Bosnia and Herzegovina under readmission agreements, with no indicators for assessing returnees' access to services.

Remaining Gaps

While the reintegration strategy is well designed, the low-level of its implementation leaves gaps in interinstitutional coordination and a lack of data on the returnees' situation. There is no evidence that the state-level coordination council or the state-, entity-, and

24. See Protokol o saradnji u efikasnoj realizaciji Sporazuma o readmisiji lica koja borave bez dozvola u drugim zemljama 01-50- 90/10, May 17, 2010.

Brčko district-level coordinating boards have been formed. As a result, three years after the adoption of the reintegration strategy, coordination around the reintegration of returnees remains ad hoc. While, reportedly, the unified database envisaged in the reintegration strategy has been developed, evidence of its functioning is lacking. An annual assessment of the needs of returnees has not been conducted, as stipulated in the strategy, and progress regarding the implementation of local action plans has yet to be seen.

Recommendations

PARTNERS AND SERVICES

- Establish state-, entity-, and district-level coordinating bodies to institutionalize implementation and monitoring of the reintegration strategy;
- Strengthen local readmission teams by expanding their membership, authorizing them to carry out specific tasks and providing them with office space and an assistant;
- Monitor returnee needs and access to services, providing centers for social work with the human and technical resources needed to carry out annual assessments of the needs of returnees; and
- Raise awareness among potential migrants and returnees about services available in Bosnia and Herzegovina through dissemination of accessible and accurate printed information as well as personal consultations.

LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

- Simplify access to identification (ID) cards by requiring centers for social work to allow people to register who are unable to provide proof of residence and an address by using the center's or another address determined by the municipality;
- Expand access to birth registration by exploring international cooperation for obtaining copies of birth certificates for children born abroad and by developing and implementing procedures for recognition of alternative evidence of birth; and
- Facilitate the recognition of education completed abroad by exploring international cooperation for obtaining diplomas and transcripts, waiving nostrification fees in cases of need, and establishing a procedure for assessing the knowledge of returnee children.

KOSOVO

Legal and Policy Framework

Readmission procedures in Kosovo are regulated by the Law on Readmission and by bilateral readmission agreements between Kosovo and returning countries (Official Gazette of the Republic of Kosovo 2010). Criteria for support to returnees for their reintegration and various schemes from which returnees may benefit are defined in the Regulation on Reintegration of Repatriated Persons; the functioning of the Center for the Accommodation of Repatriated Persons is governed by its own regulations (Republic of Kosovo 2017a; Ministry of Internal Affairs 2016). Administrative instructions issued

by the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (2015; 2016) provides the legal framework of reintegration measures for returnee students into Kosovo's educational system, with planned measures including but not limited to supplementary classes.

The main policy document targeting returnees in Kosovo is the National Strategy for Sustainable Reintegration of Repatriated Persons (Ministry of Internal Affairs 2017), which covers the period 2018–22. The implementation action plan for the strategy, valid 2018–20, includes activities, cost estimates, and both output and outcome indicators corresponding to each of the strategy's five objectives. Other policy documents outline measures targeting returnees, including the Strategy for Communities and Return (Ministry of Communities and Return 2013), the Strategy on Diaspora and Migration (Ministry of Diaspora 2014), the Strategy for Inclusion of Roma and Ashkali Communities in Kosovo Society (Republic of Kosovo 2017b), and the State Strategy on Migration and Action Plan (Republic of Kosovo 2013). Some municipalities have adopted local action plans for the reintegration of returnees.

Implementation

Under the oversight of the Department for Reintegration of Repatriated Persons within the Ministry of Internal Affairs, people returned to Kosovo under readmission agreements generally receive immediate assistance at the point of entry, emergency assistance upon arrival in the previous place of residence, and longer-term assistance for sustainable reintegration. In the first category,

people returned to Prishtina International Airport who report that they lack housing and/or finances are eligible for accommodation in the Center for the Accommodation of Repatriated Persons for up to seven days, transportation to their previous place of residence, food, and in some cases health care. Electronic registration of returnees also takes place at the airport, as does referral to services and institutions for meeting the needs of returnees at their previous place of residence.

Emergency assistance provided for up to 12 months upon arrival at the previous place of residence may include but is not necessarily limited to food and hygiene packages; housing, through rent arrangements; medical treatment and medications not covered by health insurance; and winter packages, including warm clothes for children, blankets, and candles. Among the forms of support provided to returnees over the longer term are assistance in securing necessary documents; furnishing, reconstructing, or renovation of housing; registration of children in schools and targeted supplementary classes; and services related to employment or self-employment.

Remaining Gaps

Service provision for the reintegration of returnees in Kosovo compares favorably with the rest of the Western Balkans. Nonetheless, in recent years, rising numbers of returns coupled with reductions in the level of funding for implementation of the reintegration strategy have sometimes affected service provision in such a way as to reduce the

effects of the strategy's implementation on the reintegration of returnees. In addition, not only have the numbers of returnees grown, but their needs have also changed over time.

Recommendations

PARTNERS AND SERVICES

- Provide levels of funding for the integration of the reintegration strategy commensurate with the number and needs of the people returned, and increase the capacity of public health institutions to accommodate the increased demand resulting from the rising number of returnees with health problems;
- Improve coordination among government institutions, donors, international organizations, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in the delivery of services to returnees at the central and local level; and
- Increase the availability of psychosocial services for returnees with an emphasis on Romani, Ashkali, and Egyptian children.

LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

- Consider modifying the institutional model for the reintegration of returnees to reinforce the role of local-level institutions, adjusting the distribution of responsibilities as well as resources accordingly.

NORTH MACEDONIA

Legal and Policy Framework

Government measures targeting returnees are enumerated in only three documents in North Macedonia: the Program for Assistance and Support for Reintegration of Returnees

in North Macedonia in Accordance with Readmission Agreements, the Law on Primary Education, and the National Action Plan for Education 2016–20, which corresponds to the Strategy for the Roma in Republic of Macedonia 2014–20 (Vlada na Republika Makedonija 2010; Služben vesnik na Republika Makedonija 2008; Ministerstvo za trud i socijalna politika 2016; see also Ministry of Labor and Social Policy 2014).

While some attention to the Roma is apparent in central-level policies adopted in the areas of social protection, housing, health care, employment, and education, attention to people returned under reintegration agreements is lacking. Consistent with the lack of sustained attention to returnees at the central level, references to returnees in policies adopted at local level are rare. No municipality has adopted a policy for the reintegration of returnees, and the Romani-majority municipality of Šuto Orizari in Skopje is the only locality in North Macedonia that has included measures for the reintegration of returnees in its local policies toward the Roma.

Implementation

The only targeted mechanism established to date for returnees in North Macedonia was the Coordinating Body on Returnees, which formed in 2011 and ceased to function by 2015. However, the failure to establish centers for reintegration, databases, and a reception center as envisaged in the reintegration strategy suggests that any activities undertaken by the Coordinating Body on Returnees have been ineffective. Additionally, the returnee reintegration measures called for

in the Law on Primary Education and in the National Action Plan for Education under the Strategy for the Roma in the Former Republic of Macedonia 2014–20 have not been developed.

Despite the lack of implementation of the targeted measures for returnees, some evidence exists of coordination among the ministries of health, interior, and labor and social policy, including the Ministry of Health sending a medical team to meet returnees at the airport as needed based on information provided by the ministries of interior and labor and social policy transmitting from the Ministry of Interior to local centers for social work.

Remaining Gaps

Although the reintegration program seems to provide a viable framework for the delivery of targeted services to returnees, the failure to implement the program means that as of mid-2018, there is neither a coordinating body, centers for reintegration, databases, nor a reception center. The absence of these mechanisms means that state-provided targeted assistance for returnees is unavailable beyond the medical examinations performed on returnees with documented health problems. Returnees must then seek help from NGOs or try to navigate a complex system of institutions and laws that do account for their specific needs.

While returnees receive more attention in documents related to education than in other areas, this recognition of returnees' needs has not brought sustained attention from relevant institutions. Further, despite the government's recognition that lack of employment

is the main reason that returnees left North Macedonia in the first place, an absence of attention to returnees in policy documents adopted about employment suggests that the reintegration program's calls for returnees to be provided with individual employment plans and access to active labor market measures have not been heeded.

Recommendations

PARTNERS AND SERVICES

- Establish a network of regional centers for integration operated by NGOs experienced in working with and for returnees;
- Establish a center for reintegration to house a central database and assist in the coordination of regional centers for integration;
- Revive and expand the coordinating body on returnees under the leadership of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy's Department for Migration, Integration of Refugees, and Humanitarian Assistance; and
- Establish an office for reintegration at Skopje Airport, staffed by representatives of the ministries of health; interior; and labor and social policy and/or the National Center for Reintegration.

LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

- Facilitate access to ID cards by introducing provisions that allow applicants to register an address at the local center for social work or another address determined by the municipality;
- Expand access to birth registration by exploring international cooperation for

obtaining copies of birth certificates for children born abroad and by developing and implementing procedures for recognition of alternative evidence of birth;

- Abolish documentation requirements for free legal aid to improve access to birth certificates and other forms of personal documentation;
- Facilitate recognition of education completed abroad by exploring international cooperation for obtaining diplomas and transcripts, waiving nostrification fees in cases of need, and establishing a procedure for assessing the knowledge of returnee children; and
- Make school records independent of citizenship status to allow children without citizenship to obtain official documentation of completed education.

MONTENEGRO

Legal and Policy Framework

The only documents in Montenegro that target returnees are the Reintegration Strategy for Persons Returned on the Basis of a Readmission Agreement for the Period 2016–20 as well as the action plans for its implementation (MUP 2016a, b; 2018). Services provided to returnees on arrival under the strategy include medical assistance, transportation to the intended place of residence, and temporary accommodations. The Ministry of Interior coordinates medical assistance and transportation; temporary accommodations are not available due to lack of municipal-level funding. The reintegration strategy and action plans do not

envisage any other direct services to returnees. Instead, these documents primarily focus on coordination among relevant institutions, including the establishment and operation of an interdepartmental working group to oversee the implementation of the strategy. There are no local-level policies for returnees in Montenegro.

While some attention to the Roma population is apparent in policies adopted in the areas of social protection, housing, health care, employment, and education, attention to people returned under reintegration agreements is lacking.

Implementation

Implementation of the reintegration strategy is at an early stage, as demonstrated by some of the measures called for in the action plan: regular meetings of the interdepartmental working group; appointment of contact people on returnees in central-level institutions and at the municipal level; establishment of local teams to support the reintegration of returnees; establishment of an electronic database on people returned under readmission agreements; and preparing and distributing informational materials for relevant institutions and returnees on the reintegration process (MUP 2018). There are neither monitoring and evaluation systems in place that include indicators to assess returnees' access to services nor precise data on the number of returnees to Montenegro.

Despite the low level of implementation of the reintegration strategy, the ministries of health; human and minority rights; interior; and labor and social welfare have delivered

and coordinated with one another on relevant services for returnees.

Remaining Gaps

Addressing the needs of returnees in Montenegro appears held back by factors related to both the design and implementation of the reintegration strategy. Regarding the former, the only direct services to returnees envisaged in the strategy and action plans are medical assistance on arrival and transportation to the intended place of residence; most measures focus on inter-institutional coordination. While available information suggests that these services have been delivered when requested, the absence of additional measures for returnees in the strategy means that state-provided targeted assistance only begins at the time of the returnee's arrival in Montenegro and ends no later than at the moment they arrive at their intended place of residence.

Due to the lack of implementation of the strategy, as well as its design flaws, it is not currently possible to conduct a systematic assessment or to address the needs of returnees. The institutions responsible for social protection, housing, health, employment, and education at the central and local levels lack adequate understanding of the readmission process, and they often lack the capacity to assist returnees in a way that accounts for their specific needs. Moreover, coordination between central and local levels is often insufficient. This is particularly evident as it relates to issues of migration, where the relevant institutions at central level lack local-level counterparts.

Recommendations

PARTNERS AND SERVICES

- Establish a network of regional centers for reintegration operated by NGOs and authorized by the Ministry of Interior to issue proof of returnee status that would government institutions would recognize;
- Establishing a center for reintegration to house a central database and assist in coordination involving regional centers for integration;
- Strengthen the interdepartmental working group, expanding its membership
- to include the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights, international organizations, and the NGOs that operate regional centers; and
- Establish an office for reintegration at Podgorica Airport, staffed by representatives of the ministries of human and minority rights; interior; and labor and social welfare, and/or the National Center for Reintegration.

LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

- Facilitate access to ID cards by introducing provisions that allow applicants to register an address at the local center for social work or at another address determined by the municipality; and
- Facilitate the recognition of education completed abroad by exploring international cooperation for obtaining diplomas and transcripts, waiving nostrification fees in cases of need, and establishing a procedure for assessing the knowledge of returnee children.

SERBIA

Legal and Policy Framework

The 2012 Law on Migration Management lays the legal groundwork for the reintegration of returnees, extending the competencies of the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration to cover the reintegration of returnees and obliging local authorities to establish migration councils for implementing migration policies at the local level (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia 2012). The principal document defining the institutional framework, objectives, and measures for the sustainable reintegration of returnees is the Strategy of Returnees' Reintegration Based on the Readmission Agreement, adopted in February 2009 (Republic of Serbia 2009b). The strategy identifies Roma as a population that accounts for a substantial percentage of returnees and acknowledges their exposure to specific risks in the return process. The main activities envisaged in the strategy and its action plans concern access to education, health care, personal ID documents, and social welfare, in addition to economic empowerment and improvement of housing conditions.

Returnees are also mentioned in the Migration Management Strategy (Republic of Serbia 2009a); the National Employment Strategy and its action plan for 2017 (Službeni glasnik Republike Srbije 2011; Ministry of Labor, Employment, Veteran, and Social Affairs and Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit 2016) and the Strategy of Prevention and Protection against Discrimination (Kancelarija za ljudska

i manjinska prava 2013). Additionally, the Strategy of Social Inclusion of Roma calls for educational support for children returned to Serbia under readmission agreements (Republic of Serbia 2016). At the local level, 103 municipalities have adopted action plans for the reintegration of returnees.

Implementation

The past decade has seen the removal of major barriers for returnees' access to their rights due to adjustments to the institutions, laws, and policies relating to the reintegration of returnees. Particularly noteworthy is the progress made in access to personal ID documents, allowing returnees to access education, health care, and social protection services.

Central-level recognition of the important role local commissioners for refugees and migration play in the reintegration of returnees is reflected in resource allocations, including the availability of funds for commissioners to hire short-term staff to handle the increased workload associated with public calls. In some municipalities, commissioners have used public calls to motivate returnees to register.

Remaining Gaps

Although some returnees to Serbia report positive experiences with (re-) enrolling their children in school, instances of returnees giving up on education due to negative experiences with school management are also reported, usually related to the recognition of education completed abroad. Dissatisfaction with health care services constitutes another

barrier to reintegration, as does delayed and inconsistent application of procedures by civil servants when processing requests for social assistance. Additionally, awareness and take-up of available housing support from the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration are poor, particularly among Romani returnees.

All local action plans for the reintegration of returnees contain a section on monitoring and evaluation, including process and performance indicators that local migration councils should report on a semiannual basis, but in most municipalities this process is qualitatively and quantitatively inadequate.

Recommendations

PARTNERS AND SERVICES

- Raise awareness among potential migrants and returnees about the services available in Serbia by disseminating accessible and accurate printed information and through personal consultations;
- Increase the availability of psychosocial services for returnees, with an emphasis on Romani children; and
- Expand employment opportunities for returnees by harnessing the knowledge and skills they acquired abroad, possibly through the establishment of social enterprises.

LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

- Develop a new reintegration strategy that accounts for developments relating to returns since 2008, including but not limited to the shift from predominantly long-term to predominantly short-term migrants; and
- Facilitate the recognition of education completed abroad by exploring international cooperation for obtaining diplomas and transcripts, waiving nostrification fees in cases of need, and ensuring uniform application of the procedure for assessing the knowledge of returnee children.

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