
**Return and Reintegration Assistance
External Evaluation**

Country Study Kosovo

Final Report

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Contracting Authority

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List of Abbreviations

AVRR	Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration Programme
FOM	Federal Office for Migration
GfbV	Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
RAE	Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian
RAS	Individual Return Assistance
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SECO	State Secretariat for Economic Affairs
UNMIK	United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo
URA	German Return Project
ZEMIS	Zentrales Migrationsinformationssystem

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The views expressed by the evaluator do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Federal Office for Migration or the International Office for Migration.

Fiona Wigger

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Country Study

The present report forms part of the evaluation of the Swiss Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration Programmes mandated by the Federal Office for Migration (FOM) in 2012. It is to contribute to reaching the evaluation's objectives and providing answers to the three principal evaluation questions (see box) by presenting data and experiences from Kosovo and by proposing recommendations for this specific context. At the same time, the report is a document in its own right, designed to be understood by readers without the necessity to consult additional documents, including the six other country studies (Georgia, Iraq, Guinea, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Turkey) and the overall and synthetic evaluation report.

Evaluation Objectives

- Determine the range and extent of outcomes of selected instruments of the Swiss return assistance for different target groups and countries of origin.
- Make an overall independent assessment of the outcomes achieved against the objectives envisaged.
- Identify key lessons and propose practical recommendations for the optimisation and further development and further development of Return Assistance, especially with regard to different target groups and different native countries.

Central Evaluation Questions

1. To what extent and how do country specific return assistance programmes and Individual Return Assistance ... promote voluntary return ... ? Country specific data not yet inserted?
2. To what extent and how do country specific return assistance programmes and individual Return Assistance ... contribute to the process of social and professional reintegration of returnees and thus sustainable reintegration ... ?
3. To what extent and how do country specific return assistance programmes and individual Return Assistance ... contribute to an improved cooperation of Swiss authorities and authorities of the country of origin?

1.2 Evaluation Methods

An analysis of the reports made available by FOM and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) on the Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration Programme (AVRR) since 2005 and of reports on other countries' AVRR programmes in general and on Kosovo specifically was the first step in the evaluation process. This desk study was followed by interviews with actors in Switzerland – representing FOM and IOM – involved in the realisation of assisted voluntary return and reintegration in Kosovo. Furthermore, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) was interviewed about their activities in structural aid and in the domain of migration in Kosovo. The evaluation visit in Kosovo was realised by Fiona Wigger together with her local colleague Hamide Latifi. Interviews with returnees from Switzerland, with the local IOM office, with authorities of the Government of Kosovo, as well as with Kosovars who have not migrated were the main data collecting method. Since the evaluation's terms of reference highlight the necessity to present the AVRR schemes from the perspective of the persons most directly concerned – the returnees and the potential returnees – the following report is mainly focused on the results of these interviews. The access to the returnees in Kosovo was mainly facilitated by IOM: a random and anonymous selection by the evaluator of 60 persons allowed the IOM Office in Pristina and the other IOM field offices to contact returnees and ask them for their written consent to be contacted by the evaluators. The contacts with persons who have not migrated, an additional element of the evaluation, were established without previous planning, by the evaluator during her visit to Kosovo: opportunities to talk to a heterogeneous kind of Kosovars, young and

middle-aged and some of them from minority groups, opened up in half-public spheres (shops, hotels) or with friends of returnees.

Local organisations involved in AVRR and representing both authorities and civil society were also consulted, i.e. the Department for Reintegration of Repatriated Persons in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Department of Labour and Employment in the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, the NGO Voice of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians, and the German Return Counselling Centre, URA-2.

2 Short Presentation of Swiss AVRR

2.1 Structure, Duration, Context and Logic of the Return Scheme

Since 1996, the FOM has actively supported voluntary returns to the Balkans. Return programmes played a major role, but individual return assistance (RAS), the topic of this evaluation, has been run in parallel since 2002 and gained in importance over the years. Between 1999 and 2000 – right after the war – the first return programme to Kosovo was implemented with the tremendous sum of 41,000 returnees. From 2001 to 2010 various programmes for minorities and vulnerable persons from Kosovo were run with a total of returns of around 400 persons.¹ These activities were evaluated several times and prolonged due to Switzerland's proximity to the Balkans, the numerous Diaspora groups in Switzerland, and the on-going immigration from Kosovo. Last but not least, the number of Kosovars in the asylum system remained high and solutions were needed.

The programmes contained various support measures like return counselling and individual incentives (cash, professional projects, trainings, material, housing, medical support) as well as structural aid, financed by FOM but executed by SDC.² All in all, the amount of money that could be spent for vulnerable cases reached the double (in exceptional cases even more) of the budget for individual return assistance.³ With the Federal Council's decision from 2009 that attributed Kosovo and Serbia a safe country status, FOM decided that minority groups asking for asylum are no longer a particular target group of a return programme, also in order to avoid possible pull factors. The AVRR country programme for Kosovo was terminated in 2010, only individual return assistance was granted from then on.

Nevertheless, until 2011 Kosovo always occupied a place among the top ten countries with asylum requests in Switzerland. In the past years, the number of Albanian speaking Kosovars requesting asylum was reduced while Roma and Ashkali still show an even raising tendency of applications for asylum – regardless of the high number of cases whose application is not treated in depth. Since 1.11.2008 belonging to a minority group

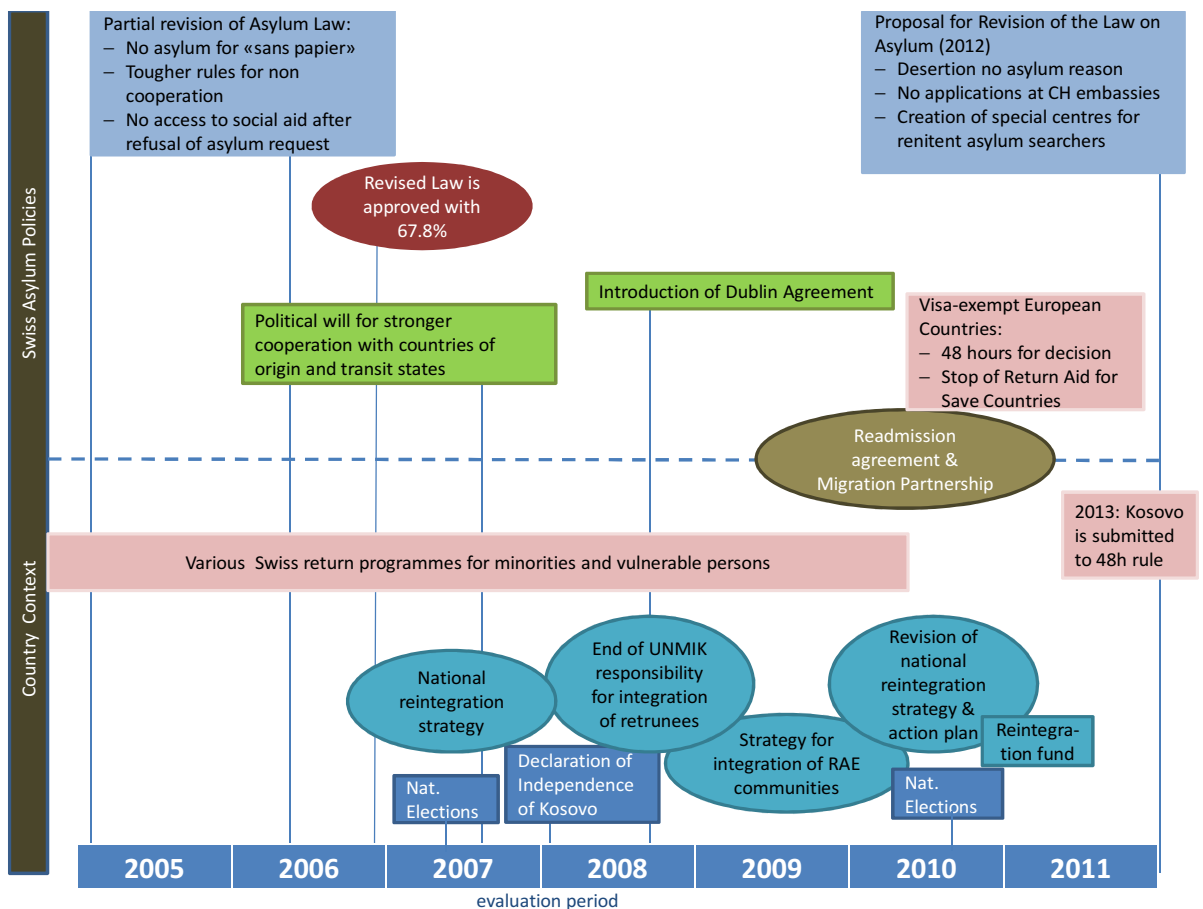
¹ From 2001-2003: 107, from 2003-2006: 205 (to various Balkan countries), 2005-2010: 184, numbers from FOM reports or calculated by IOM

² Between 2003 and 2006 FOM and SDC offered also so called "mini structural aid projects" in 4 cases in Kosovo that strengthened local infrastructure in the places where returnees settled (cf. BFM: Schlussbericht Strategie Balkan 2003-06, p. 20).

³ BFM: Auswertung und Antrag. Rückkehrhilfeprogramm Westbalkan 2007-2009, p.13.

has not been taken into consideration by decisions on asylum requests of persons from Kosovo.

In March 2013, the FOM submitted Kosovo to the 48-hour-rule with the result that Kosovars now face the same treatment as visa-exempt Balkan states, which means that obviously invalid asylum requests are treated very quickly at reception centres and people are sent back immediately after the first interview with a return assistance of 100 Swiss Francs. These measures are due to the very low recognition rate in recent years (0.4% in 2012) and the still very high number of asylum seekers from so-called safe Balkan countries. Still, for minorities and vulnerable cases the procedure often remains the same as before, as further clarifications are needed to decide on the case.



2.2 Frame Conditions of the Relations Switzerland – Kosovo

The relations between Switzerland and Kosovo are very close due to a long tradition of workers coming from the former Yugoslav Republic. Later, migration was marked by the high number of refugees from the Balkans arriving during the war and their massive return in the years immediately following – more than 30,000 Kosovars left Switzerland again, supported by IOM.

At present, the size of the Kosovar Diaspora in Switzerland is estimated at around 160,000 persons, representing almost 10% of the population of Kosovo. Remittances (not only from Switzerland) sent to relatives in Kosovo are essential for the subsistence

of 25% of Kosovar families⁴ and the family bonds between the two countries are very dense (also see paragraph 5.1).

In February 2010, Switzerland and Kosovo signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) about a Migration Partnership which formally strengthens the cooperation between the two countries. Main areas of cooperation are: Migration flows, visa requests, administrative-technical procedures, readmission agreements, support of voluntary return, prevention of irregular migration, integration etc.

The two parties meet twice a year for a Migration Dialogue, which focuses on common projects and the development of new ideas e.g. in migration and development. A central instrument guiding this dialogue is the Roadmap of the EU for visa liberalisation, which contains requirements to Kosovo and where also support from Switzerland is welcome.

SDC has been providing support to Kosovo since 1998. The initial focus on humanitarian aid has gradually been replaced by support to transition and development, actually with a budget of 22 million of Swiss Francs per year. Until 2012, the cooperation encompassed three domains: (1) Economy and Employment (by SDC and the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), (2) Rule of Law and Democracy (SDC), (3) Public infrastructures with a focus on water and sanitation (SECO and SDC). Special activities are carried out in the frame of the Swiss-Kosovo Migration Partnership, with the FOM and SDC supporting capacity building, migration management and prevention of irregular migration.⁵

Within Swiss Government administration, the Interdepartmental Working Group for Western Balkan composed of FOM, SDC and other stakeholders, discusses strategic questions. Generally, there is a common understanding about the role of Swiss cooperation in the domain of migration and return even though the focus of FOM and SDC is different. While FOM is interested in a well-working return procedure, SDC acts with a more development oriented perspective, e.g. sustainable national migration and integration structure.

On the Kosovar side, reintegration was in the responsibility of United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) until 2006. In 2010, the government adopted a revised strategy and action plan for the reintegration of repatriated persons and a fund was allocated to this purpose. It rose from EUR 0.5 million in 2010 to EUR 3.4 in 2011, respectively EUR 3.2 million in 2012 (these means have never been spent entirely so far). A special division on readmission and return was set up in the Ministry of Internal Affairs with an executive board deciding on the use of the fund. The reintegration fund finances emergency services for returnees, such as transport upon arrival, temporary accommodation, medical aid, food and sanitation packages and housing, as well as sustainable reintegration services, such as language classes for minors, vocational training, employment assistance and support for business start-ups. On a local level, Municipal Offices for Communities and Return are important actors for addressing identified problems in the return and reintegration process. Reintegration committees in almost all municipalities approve requests for emergency aid whereas requests for sustainable reintegration services are approved at the central level. Up to now, the aid is limited to repatriated persons who have left the country before July 2010 and it is mainly used for those who do not benefit of a voluntary return assistance from their country of return.

⁴ Remittances inflow/GDP ratio range from 11-15%, depending on the source. UNDP Kosovo Remittance Study, 2012, p.17-20

⁵ Cf. SDC Cooperation Strategy Kosovo 2009-2012

Two Reports from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) (Nov 2010; Oct 2012) highlight that there have been some positive developments in return policy since 2010, but its implementation by municipal institutions has been neither consistent nor effective. Even though municipal coordination mechanisms have been established to date, there is little evidence that this has led to tangible improvements in the implementation and co-ordination of activities on the ground.⁶

With regard to minorities, in 2009, the Government of Kosovo introduced a Strategy and an action plan for the Integration of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities. In 2012 OSCE publicized a report about the status of the implementation of the action plan concluding that hardly any progresses have been made and points out high deficits such as: missing political support, lack of funds, difficulties in communication and coordination between Ministries and Municipal level.⁷

2.3 Other Return Assistance Programmes in Kosovo

Most of the countries with large numbers of Kosovars offer voluntary return facilitated by IOM, even though some have quit the co-operation with IOM by now, like France and Austria. Some countries have special schemes where return counselling and financial help is also delivered by embassies (e.g. Sweden, Finland).

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Total
IOM operated assisted voluntary returns overall	1'485	1'383	1'274	1'068	1'675	2'204	1'789	10'878
IOM operated assisted voluntary returns from CH	102	106	113	62	91	140	111	725
%age of IOM-AVRR from Switzerland	7%	8%	9%	6%	5%	6%	6%	7%

Source: IOM Pristina. Comparative Statistics of AVR Returnees by Sending Countries. March 2013.

The highest number of voluntary returnees assisted by IOM is returning from Germany (22% of returnees between 2005 and 2011), followed by Austria and Hungary. Four German *Länder* (Baden-Wuerttemberg, Niedersachsen, North Rhine-Westphalia and Sachsen-Anhalt, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Thüringen) contribute to a proper return assistance structure which can be considered as the most sophisticated programme in Kosovo. URA-2 (Programme of various Bundesländer), "Die Brücke", is providing reintegration assistance in Kosovo open to both voluntary and forced returnees. Return and social counselling is offered to all returnees coming from Germany whereas other components are limited to returnees from the six *Länder*. Its assistance package includes psychological counselling, subsidies for rent, financial support to purchase food, medicine or furniture, as well as support for vocational training, business start-ups and employment subsidies. Often, the support and monitoring of the case lasts up to 12 month or more with a close follow-up. A fact that is worth consideration is that URA-2 social workers try to link returnees with Kosovar reintegration assistance schemes in order to get food packages, housing solutions etc. while URA-2 funds are used for complementary assistance.

⁶ <http://www.osce.org/kosovo/96805> and <http://www.osce.org/kosovo/73854>

⁷ <http://www.osce.org/kosovo/94856>

The following table displays reintegration assistance schemes of a selection of other countries, mainly dealing with IOM.

Country (examples)	Name / Type of Programme	Type of Reintegration Assistance	Number of returnees
France	Aides à la réinsertion économique (cooperation with IOM terminated since 2010)	IOM : According to the project, max. 4,000 €	2009 :35 2010 :11
Belgium	Programme de retour volontaire (AVR B Extra)	IOM: 2200 € for reintegration, 700€ for temporary accommodation, 1500€ for job placement, 700€ for medical assistance, 250€ pre-departure paid cash	2005 : 101 2006 : 63 2007 : 63 2008 : 72 2009 : 79 2010 : 237 2011 : 471
Austria	Unterstützung freiwillige Rückkehr aus Österreich via IOM (until mid-2012) Since 2012: International Centre for Migration Policy Development ICMPD with ReKoKO III	IOM: 3,000 € for reintegration	2005 : 69 2006 : 408 2007 : 515 2008 : 388 2009 : 628 2010 : 444 2011 : 309
Germany	– URA-2 (Programme of certain Bundesländer) – REAG/GARP: Return via IOM	<u>URA 2</u> : Subsidies for rent, furniture, training, job-placement, business start-ups, etc. Soforthilfe: up to 1,000 € Business projects etc.: up to 3000 € IOM: 400-700 € for reintegration 200€ pre-departure paid cash	<u>Only with IOM</u> : 2005 : 758 2006 : 418 2007 : 263 2008 : 197 2009 : 272 2010 : 315 2011 : 120
Norway	AVRR Norway	IOM: 20,000 NOK (= 2,700 €) for reintegration in kind and in cash	2005 : 41 2006 : 33 2007 : 62 2008 : 106 2009 : 175 2010 : 197 2011 : 67

Voluntary returnees from European countries are counted by the hundreds in Kosovo – a sign that other countries have also set up return schemes that make voluntary return an alternative to forced return. Assistance from several other countries is comparable to Swiss support. Even though financially speaking Swiss support is not outstanding, in the eyes of IOM the model practiced by Switzerland with a thorough preparation and the money delivered in various steps in the course of the project is the most professional one. Nevertheless, URA-2 offers a closer follow-up for returnees and their projects, an approach Switzerland could be interested in - in case the on-going evaluation of URA proves its high sustainability.

3 Dynamic of Returns

Voluntary return of migrants is one aspect of migratory movements. It is a small part, but it is a very interesting one, because thanks to the assistance offered for returning and for reintegration, it is more structured than usual forms of migration of Kosovars. And, very importantly, it allows a safe journey back to their country of origin.

As an alternative to voluntary return and forced return there are only two other, risky possibilities: either to hide from the authorities executing forced return and go on living the difficult reality as a *Sans Papier* or to travel illegally to another country, possibly trying to ask for asylum or find employment without a working permit. Especially the first option is unwanted by Swiss authorities and among the reasons why financial, social and other investments in migration are claimed to be very important.

The pressure for migration or the desire to get a chance to improve one's living conditions is very high in Kosovo. As almost all Kosovars have relatives in Switzerland, Germany or in other Western European countries, the idea to go abroad looking for a job is very common. As only a few countries like Albania or Macedonia allow Kosovars to enter without a visa, the frustration about the "prisonlike" status of Kosovo is big and ways to overcome the borders are looked for – and found.

3.1 Data Overview

The following table gives an overview of in- and outflows of persons from Kosovo, registered in the ZEMIS asylum statistics.

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Total
Total stock								
Total number of new asylum seekers ¹⁾	856	664	556	508	783	628	670	4,665
Eligible persons: Total number of persons in the asylum process in Switzerland	6,979	6,281	5,302	4,716	4,223	3,376	2,999	n.a.
Number of persons with approved asylum	30	31	10	7	17	22	10	127
Number of persons with provisionally admittance	147	149	138	70	76	33	41	654
Departures								
Total number of voluntary returnees with return assistance ²⁾	(142)	(129)	(125)	(87)	129	207	146	965
Return with Individual Return Assistance	(130)	(106)	(95)	(57)	47	69	122	626
Participants of Return Programme	(12)	(23)	(30)	(30)	42	89	2	228
Return Assistance from EVZ	no data available ³⁾				40	49	22	111
Forced Return	138	126	107	139	312	357	297	1'476
Dublin returns	-	-	-	-	6	80	49	135
Third country returns	-	1	-	4	13	6	2	26
Uncontrolled departure	7	7	15	42	119	60	87	337
Entries into asylum process	2	14	3	19	15	33	40	126
Other exits	-	-	-	24	35	16	4	79
Proportions								
Ratio number of new asylum seeker to voluntary return	6.0	5.1	4.4	5.8	6.1	3.0	4.6	4.8
AVRR participants as proportion of eligible persons	2.0%	2.1%	2.4%	1.8%	3.1%	6.1%	4.9%	n.a.
Ratio voluntary returns / forced returns	1.03	1.02	1.17	0.63	0.41	0.58	0.49	0.65

Source: ZEMIS, Asylum statistics FOM. Contrary to the publicly available asylum statistics of every year, the ZEMIS data set mentions Kosovo already before its independence.

1) New entries, resumed presence, births

2) 2005 -2008: 1/2 of returnees to Serbia and Kosovo as approximate estimation according to the only comparable numbers of 2009 (45% Kosovo/ 55% Serbia), not possible afterwards because of the visa liberalization Serbia; source: Database IndiRück FOM and 228 participants registered within county-specific programme for the Western Balkans.

3) 2005-2008 included in line "Return with Individual Return Assistance"

3.2 Discussion of Data

Within the period of observation, the numbers of voluntary returnees show various inexplicable ups and downs. All in all, it can be stated that the effectiveness of Swiss AVRR efforts has increased over time only with regard to the share of “eligible persons”: there is a loose trend (with the exception of 2011) of an increase of the total number of voluntary returns. Looking at the share of voluntary returns to forced returns the results are opposite: In the last years, since 2008, the number of repatriated persons has increased without that the voluntary returns show the same increase in this period. As a consequence, the proportion between voluntary returns and forced returns dropped from 1:1 in the years before 2007 to 1:2 over the last years.

The increasing number of forced returns is also a sign that the Migration Partnership and the safe country status are effectively used for bringing back Kosovars by force. In this regard, the rising number of voluntary returns must be seen in correlation with the forced returns. Still, the amount of voluntary returnees is surprisingly small for Kosovo, a country with which Switzerland has a *Rückübernahmeabkommen* (repatriation agreement) and repatriations are feasible without major obstacles.

Despite the relatively low chances for a positive response to an asylum request or a provisionally admittance in the recent years, the number of new asylum requests remains stable on a high level. It is also noteworthy that the total number of Kosovars in the asylum process is diminishing, but mostly not due to voluntary return but so-called *Härtefallregelungen / cas de rigueur*. After at least five years in Switzerland, these provisionally admitted persons are allowed to stay definitively if personal integration efforts (on an economic and social level) can be proven.

A considerable number of returnees are part of minority groups; especially Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian (RAE) communities and also Serbian. Since the end of the return programmes, which were designed especially for minorities, they are also part of individual returnees. As IOM does not register ethnic affiliation, no precise analysis is possible in this regard.

3.3 Assessment

Among the several thousand Kosovars living in Switzerland with a permit N for asylum seekers or with a provisory admittance status (F permit) the number of voluntary returns is very small.

Since the end of the war of 1999, a considerable number of people continue living in Switzerland with a provisory status. In addition, since 2005 between around 500 and 900 Kosovars ask for asylum every year. The number of voluntary returns is very small compared to the number of people eligible for return and reintegration assistance.

Still, the offer of assisted voluntary return – among other factors – clearly promotes return to Kosovo and eases the decision for a return.

Even if the numbers of effective returns are low, the offer of return assistance helps potential returnees to take the decision to leave Switzerland. After all, the financial incentive is only one element in the returnee’s decision making process, but it improves the conditions under which the return to Kosovo takes place.

The assisted return to Kosovo (regarding the number of returnees) shows good results within the overall performance of Swiss return assistance.

Compared to a country like Sri Lanka, that also has a significant number of eligible persons for return assistance the number of voluntary returnees is much higher (3% vs. 23% for Kosovo).⁸ Still, comparing the figures with new asylum requests by Kosovars, the number of voluntary returns is rather limited – the ratio is around 5:1.

The threat of an expulsion by force makes persons opt for voluntary return but the majority do not choose AVRR.

Forced return remains the exit with the highest number of people going back to Kosovo. This questions the effectiveness of the threat of forced expulsion. It appears that persons who don't see a way to go back and who prefer to remain in Switzerland (or in Europe) will not accept the AVRR offer.

There is a permanent need for information about assisted return and reintegration.


The constant effort made by authorities to promote voluntary return is visible. All interviewed returnees acknowledge that they felt well informed about the offer for assisted return and reintegration – through official channels or through migrants' networks. They mostly trusted in the promised Swiss assistance as they had experienced themselves - or also through other Kosovars living in Switzerland - that promises are kept and that the system is working very effectively.

⁸ Total numbers of participants in relation to persons registered 2005-2011. Cf. Comparative data of main report "Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration", 2013. Total numbers of participants in relation to persons registered 2005-2011.


4 Individual Returnees


Among the randomized selection of 60 returnees only 16 were available and ready to talk to the evaluators. Two additional families could be addressed with the help of the municipal reintegration officer in Fushe Kosova. On the following pages are presented portrayals of a selection of 10 interviewed returnees from Switzerland out of a total of 18 visited cases.


A. &V. V., Pristina region	(no picture)
Parents and daughter (30, 30, 3)	
No occupation	
Returned in 2010	
<p>Migration Trajectories</p> <p>Before the emigration, the couple were studying (machinery and physics) but both abandoned University due to lack of funds and prospective. They decided to go to Switzerland when the wife was pregnant. The wife had previously studied German in a course in Kosovo. With 2000 Euro they had borrowed they managed to arrive at the Reception Centre in Vallorbe and were later transferred to a centre in St. Croix. After a difficult pregnancy and when the daughter was 7 month old they had to face the return (after a 14 month stay) because their appeal against the decision was refused. They had hoped that with their baby born in Switzerland they could get a regular status.</p> <p>Motivation for assisted Return</p> <p>Their return was not voluntary but there was no alternative, they say. The aid they opted for covered the renovation of the bathroom in the house of relatives and a small garage, with the remaining fund the debt was paid back. Apart from this, a medical assistance (medicine for the wife) was delivered. They felt well consulted during the whole process; however, they complained that the municipal authorities didn't care for their reintegration.</p> <p>Reintegration</p> <p>With the garage hardly any income can be generated. The 15 family members live on the earnings of two adults (brothers of the husband) working on regular jobs. A. has applied for 50 jobs so far but without success. V. speaks fluent German and has good French skills too and she might manage to work in a hotel. She says that she cannot leave her daughter alone and she wants to wait for her husband to get a job. She has been having health problems since her pregnancy.</p> <p>Plans</p> <p>The housing situation is difficult, but they mostly suffer from their hopeless situation with no job prospectives. V. is obviously suffering even though she seems to be a vital person. If the option was there, they would return to Switzerland immediately, they don't see any opportunity for the future in Kosovo for them.</p>	


B. M., Skenderaj	
Married after return (27)	
Construction entrepreneur	
Returned in 2009	
<p>Migration Trajectories</p> <p>In 2005, B. joined his brother in Switzerland seeking asylum in Chiasso. After a few weeks he found informal work in construction and managed to develop many skills in this domain, thanks to very friendly bosses and work colleagues. He pronounces several times that he was greedy to learn for his future and that he felt very well accepted. During his stay he shared a flat with his brother in Lugano and made his living. He also managed to send money home.</p> <p>Motivation for assisted Return</p> <p>After several years without seeing his family he missed his country a lot and he decided to go back voluntarily. The return project was developed together with his brother back in Kosovo and consisted in enlarging the construction firm of the latter. B. says that the country needed his faculties and that there was an opportunity to make a living. Someone whom he knew put him in connection with a return consultant, a woman whom he appreciated a lot.</p> <p>Reintegration</p> <p>With the provided machines – some were bought in Switzerland by IOM – the business grew quickly and now they are 3 brothers running the business and employing additional 7 workers. Qualified work in construction and gardening faces a high demand. The business has been legalized in the meantime which allows them to have a stronger position towards customers who don't pay. He got married and has a daughter. In the meantime, he (together with his family) could buy two flats in Pristina and build a house in the village where all 11 family members actually live together.</p> <p>B. is very proud of his success story and cares for the development of his country by assisting friends and neighbours to ease the need after the war, as he says. The family is well integrated and managed to become a welcomed employer in the village.</p> <p>Plans</p> <p>Plans exist about expanding the business and they could employ at least 5 more people: the brothers are “at a crucial point to decide whether they want to face expansion”. Nevertheless, the future business development depends also from the access to more specialised machines they can't provide in Kosovo. For the moment they are not allowed to go and buy them in other countries due to visa restrictions. Despite this, he is very confident about his future.</p>	


F. A., Skenderaj	(no picture)
Married (40)	
Elementary school teacher	
Returned in 2008	
<p>Migration Trajectories</p> <p>F.'s health situation made her come to Switzerland. During her stay – first in Basel reception centre, later in Emmenbrücke – she received medical treatment and a surgery. She has a sister in Switzerland with refugee status but without employment. F.'s husband stayed in Kosovo. He had spent some time in Germany as a refugee during the war.</p> <p>Motivation for assisted Return</p> <p>After eight month she decided to leave, she wanted to be with her husband back in Kosovo. Her sister helped her with the procedure and finally the financial assistance was invested in equipment for the apartment (stove, fridge, oven and furniture) and she could pay her rent for the first six months. She was provided with medicine for a period of one year.</p> <p>Reintegration</p> <p>When she returned, she managed to work as a teacher again but cumulated many sick leaves. In 2009 she bought a construction plot with a loan and they moved into a cheap one-room apartment without bathroom or running water. After having wished to become parents for a long time, F. got finally pregnant with triplets and faced a difficult pregnancy with hospitalization. The babies are three month old now and it is since their birth that she greatly regrets having come back to Kosovo voluntarily. No help is provided by the municipality for the reintegration and it shines through that as a teacher she does not want to make her case public and ask for more support. During her six month maternity leave she has a pension of 150 Euros/month. This amount is half of her previous salary and is mostly used for paying for the loan and the rent. The husband has only few temporary employments and earns very little whereas the need for milk powder, diapers, etc. is very high and makes them desperate about their economic situation.</p> <p>Plans</p> <p>Under these rather desperate conditions, they see no hope as they have no relatives who can assist them financially or by taking care of the babies. It is not realistic that the women can return to work soon. They are forced to think about selling their land as the probability to construct a house is waning. In particular, F. is reflecting about remigration without knowing where to go.</p>	


R. D. Mitrovica	
Single (27)	
Student	
Returned in 2009	
<p>Migration Trajectories</p> <p>When he was 23 years old, a blood revenge conflict made R. leave Kosovo to get some distance. Switzerland seemed to him to be the country of human rights and he chose to get there. In Geneva he could participate in a painting training organized by Hospice Général of Geneva. Occasionally he worked illegally in construction or in a kitchen.</p> <p>Motivation for assisted Return</p> <p>After almost 2 years he was sick of having asylum seeker status (what he calls an illegal status) and missed his family, so he decided to apply for return assistance. According to him, the counselling was kind and correct. He brought up the idea to buy two cows. Some of his family own land and could take care of the cows. Within one week everything was arranged.</p> <p>Reintegration</p> <p>Back in Mitrovica, he went to a private high school and is now studying at a technical school for engineering. His family was happy to have him back and the conflict seemed to be solved. Once a week he gets some milk from the cows. On an occasional basis he works as a waiter in a restaurant. Once he went back to Geneva to visit friends for one week.</p> <p>Plans</p> <p>Even with a diploma from the technical school he has little hope for a professional perspective. Everybody around him is without occupation. There is little economic dynamic in Mitrovica region. Most of the young people have relatives in other European countries and would like to leave – if only it was legalized. He complains about nepotism, the need for relations to get access to jobs. Additionally, the absence of a legal framework allowing that criminals can escape unpunished is a big issue that makes him want to leave again.</p>	

Z. M. (region not published)	
Single (44)	
Ethnic Serb	
Administrative Director of the Municipality	
Returned in 2009	
<p>Migration Trajectories</p> <p>From 1995-1999, he worked in a factory but afterwards the freedom of movement was limited for Serbs and he has had no income since then. In 2008, when his parents suffered from bad health, he opted to go to Switzerland as this was the most common destination chosen by people from his region. The life in the Centre in Kreuzlingen was not too bad but the situation in an underground centre in Urdorf (ZH) was difficult to bear.</p> <p>Motivation for assisted Return</p> <p>After a while he asked for assistance to go back to Kosovo as this seemed still better than what he faced in Switzerland. So the officer helped him to develop a project proposal of agricultural machinery for working the land. Cantonal consultants and IOM advised him to think well about his decision to go back voluntarily, he felt taken seriously.</p> <p>Reintegration</p> <p>His brother who worked at the police helped him a lot and he could also build a greenhouse. Later he applied for the job as director of public administration at the municipality where he works since then but still without a fixed contract. He appreciates the young Mayor and the dynamic municipality.</p> <p>Plans</p> <p>The municipality he works for offered him the occasion to attend trainings in neighbour countries. He is settled and confident even though he feels a bit lonely without parents and a wife at his side. Several relatives live in Switzerland.</p>	

P. T., Gjilan region	
Married after return (28)	
Ethnic Serb	
Small farmer	
Returned in 2010	
<p>Migration Trajectories</p> <p>As the housing situation became difficult and he needed to make a living he went to Switzerland at the end of 2009, paying 2,000 Euro for the trip. From Kreuzlingen he was soon moved to Schaffhausen where he shared the room with a friend. After 6 months he faced a negative response to his asylum request and appealed twice but without success.</p> <p>Motivation for assisted Return</p> <p>When he knew that he had no chance to stay, he accepted the aid for voluntary return. He worked out a project for an Internet café but when he came back, he realised that some of these already existed. IOM agreed on changing the project plan and he could buy two cows instead.</p> <p>Reintegration</p> <p>Last year, due to a draught, the feeding of the cows was difficult and one fell sick and ended up at the slaughter house. He decided to sell the second cow as well, which caused a financial loss. Originally he had paid 2,100 Euros for them and at the end he was left with 450 Euros. He continues to work on the land of his grandfather of 1.2 ha planting wheat and corn. In the meantime he got married and became father of a one year old daughter. His wife can work as a teacher in Serbian language but only a few hours which pays almost nothing.</p> <p>Plans</p> <p>“I do not even dream to get a job”, he says, even though he is multi-skilled. He thinks that after 3 years he will be allowed to register again in Switzerland, this time he will try to enter legally with a Serbian passport and a visa. In the meantime, his sister got married in Switzerland.</p>	

D. N., Gjilan region	
Married after return (28)	
Ethnic Serb	
Farmer	
Returned in 2010	
<p>Migration Trajectories</p> <p>Between 2008 and 2010, D. stayed in Canton Schwyz. While his asylum request was pending, he managed to work in different professions in construction and farming. He met a Bosnian woman who helped him to find legal work and he could live on his own and paid taxes and insurance fees. He was proud of his independent life. His brother B. joined him to Switzerland two months later.</p> <p>Motivation for assisted Return</p> <p>When he knew that he had to leave Switzerland, he opted to go on his own with return assistance and got in touch with Caritas in Arth Goldau. As his family has a farm, he decided to buy a hanger for the tractor and a sowing machine. He received an aid of 5,000 Swiss Francs in total. His brother received the same amount and bought agricultural equipment as well.</p> <p>Reintegration</p> <p>At first, it was hard to face reality; he even went back to Switzerland for one month for a visit. Then he got married and became a father and the family's farm is running well. Today, together with his parents, they own 5 cows, 24 goats and 70 sheep and produce cheese.</p> <p>His brother doesn't live on the farm and is less integrated and successful with his business, as D. says.</p> <p>Plans</p> <p>In general, he and his family are well off. He likes farming work but to increase the production some more investments are needed. He would like to benefit from the freedom of movement which would allow him to go for a short time to Switzerland to earn money for further investments. Another way to raise funds is the access to agricultural support programmes of Kosovo – but it seems that his farm does not match the criteria.</p>	

B. K., Fushe Kosova	
Parents and 4 children (15, 13, 11, 3 years)	
Ashkali family	
Waste collection	
Returned in 2012	
<p>Migration Trajectories</p> <p>After 6 years in Lucerne, the family came back in April 2012. They should have left Switzerland already in 2009 but with the help of a lawyer their stay could be prolonged by 2.5 years. The children went to school in Switzerland and their youngest daughter was even born in Lucerne. The father worked formally in garment collection. In 2010 the family could buy a building plot in Fushe Kosova through an intermediate person.</p> <p>Motivation for assisted Return</p> <p>The return is not considered as a voluntary one but still they decided to make use of the offer of the Swiss Government to return with a financial support. They chose a motor cultivator with a hanger.</p> <p>Reintegration</p> <p>At the moment, they live in a house, rented by the Municipality. Soon, the family will be able to move in to a house the Municipality is constructing for them on their plot. They are officially allowed an area of 62m² for a family of six, which seems to be too little space in their eyes. Two of their children attend school; only the oldest daughter doesn't as she has left Switzerland when she was already in 8th grade. The classes are big with 45 children. The father works occasionally in garbage collection and recycling. They are also supported by other Ashkali families and receive food packages from the national reintegration programme for two more months.</p> <p>Plans</p> <p>The family is hoping for their house to be finished soon. They don't know much about their financial future but they rely on solidarity among Ashkalians.</p>	

A. & F. B., Peja region	
Parents and 3 children (10, 8, 7)	
Roma family	
No occupation	
Returned in 2011	
<p>Migration Trajectories</p> <p>F. was in Germany from 1992 to 2008. His wife went to Germany in 1999, where they met, married and started a family. In between, they lived in Kosovo for a short period. In 2010 they wanted to go to Switzerland with a facilitator but they were stopped in Hungary. There they spent 7 month in a Roma camp where they faced a very hostile and violent environment. Later, they managed to reach Switzerland and lived in Montana (VS). The children went to school for one year and the father who suffers from diabetes and eye problems received medical treatments and numerous operations.</p> <p>Motivation for assisted Return</p> <p>They insist on the fact that their return was not voluntary. If they hadn't accepted an assisted return to Kosovo, the police would have taken them back to Hungary. But the traumatic experience there made them choose the voluntary return option. F. decided to buy a tractor to work on his 4 acres of land, and a fridge. Later, IOM enabled him to buy also a cow.</p> <p>Reintegration</p> <p>When they arrived at the Pristina airport it was winter and the family was offered to stay in a social apartment at the price of 200 Euros a month. The family refused this offer and went into F.'s brother's house where up to now they can occupy two rooms, living together with a total of 15 persons on this small farm. Additionally, the father received medical treatment and one more operation. After a heart attack the father spent 3 weeks in hospital and to pay for the medicine they had to sell the cow. The 3 children go to school irregularly, mainly due to missing clothes and school bags, they say.</p> <p>They receive 70 Euros a month for their children from the state and it was agreed with the reintegration department that they will get a small 45 m2 house constructed on their ground but so far, the construction has not begun yet and F. uttered doubts about this project. The wife works sometimes on their land but she has to assist her husband who in the meantime is almost blind and can hardly walk. (Note: IOM has supported this family several times after their return as they were considered as a highly vulnerable case.)</p> <p>Plans</p> <p>The parents are very pessimistic about their future; their discourse is marked by hopelessness. A. fears the moment her husband will die and she will be left alone with the kids. Even though the kids are said to be good students the parents do not believe in a future for them. Instead, the security situation is not an issue of importance.</p>	

Z. & D. J., Prizren region	(no picture)
Parents (40, 36 y.) and 3 daughters (11, 7, 3 y.)	
Gorani Family	
Trader (garments)	
Returned in 2010	
<p>Migration Trajectories</p> <p>In 2009 Z. went to Switzerland with his family and only a month later his brother joined him. They fled from fear of resentments due to the brother's activity in the military, he says. They lived in an apartment in Rickenbach (ZH) where the conditions were good and the kids started with school and kindergarten. After their asylum request was rejected, the family borrowed money to pay a lawyer. Nevertheless, after the second refused appeal to their negative decision regarding a refugee status they had to move to a centre with much less comfort. The kids had to stop their classes and the family was told that within 27 days they had to leave the country.</p> <p>Motivation for assisted Return</p> <p>In this pressurised situation they decided to go back with return assistance but they would never call it "voluntary", even the word "deportation" is used by them when describing the circumstances of their return. Their return project consisted of an investment in a stock of clothes to be sold twice a week on markets in the region – an activity he and his brother had practiced already before their emigration.</p> <p>Reintegration</p> <p>The family came back to this mountainous region in Kosovo and a few months after the brother also returned from Switzerland; now all live again in their small house. In their Gorani village a huge number of former inhabitants have left, mostly to Austria, which makes the village look half deserted. The children follow school in Serbian language but the parents are not happy with the quality of the teaching. They feel isolated and are very disappointed about their failed emigration. With the earnings of their small business they almost can't subsist for all 12 family members, they say. They got no assistance from the municipality.</p> <p>Plans</p> <p>There is hardly any chance to improve their business as the two families cannot make any savings. Their wish is to have a shop or run a chicken farm, but due to missing funds these opportunities are not in reach.</p>	

5 Reintegration

The following analysis of reintegration is mainly based on the 17 interviewed voluntary returnees and one family returned by force who were visited by the evaluation team. All informants left Switzerland between 2008 and 2012. Even with a higher response rate of the original sample, the collected information would not be representative and would rather have to be considered as a snapshot of possible reintegration stories.

IOM highlights that the Swiss RAS is the best designed approach they work with. Returnees from Switzerland receive a thorough preparation in their Canton and IOM is well documented about their cases before they arrive back in Kosovo. Compared to other countries that offer federalist return schemes (Germany, Austria), in Switzerland, returnees get treated equally, independent from the Canton they are sent back from.

5.1 Frame Conditions for Reintegration

The declaration of independence of Kosovo in 2008 has been followed by a short time of optimism and the rise of numbers of voluntary returns after independence can probably be attributed to the Kosovars' wish to build up their country. Nevertheless, the number of asylum requests did not decline after the independence.

Undoubtedly, Kosovars are among the poorest Europeans with an unemployment rate of around 45% and the lowest annual per capita income of the region. While over the past few years Kosovo's economy has shown significant progress in transitioning to a market-based system and maintaining macroeconomic stability, it is still highly dependent on the international community and the Diaspora for financial and technical assistance. Remittances from the Diaspora - located mainly in Germany, Switzerland, and the Nordic countries - are estimated to account for about 14% of GDP, and donor-financed activities and aid for approximately 10%. This difficult environment encourages outward migration and a significant informal, unreported economy.⁹

Two main conditions are facilitating or hindering reintegration: Housing and social networks. The most important issue for returnees is to have a place to live in order to foster reintegration in their hometown or village. Reintegration can also be managed in a new place, but only with a stable housing situation. Secondly, returnees without a social network struggle a lot after their return. Especially if they want to start a business, contacts with potential clients and business partners are key for a successful entrepreneur. In cases where returnees have been abroad for a long time and/or if they go back to live in another part of the country, the condition for reintegration, socially and economically speaking, are critical. Kosovo has changed since the war and Kosovars who have spent all this time out of the country "don't recognise" their place anymore and compare their situation with the one they had in Switzerland.

5.2 Assessment of the Quality of the Reintegration

The visited returnees in Kosovo are a very heterogeneous population, comprised of young men in their early twenties as well as families with numerous children and a few

⁹ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kv.html>

old, vulnerable persons. They are Albanians or part of the Serb, Roma, Ashkali or Gorani minority. In addition, the time spent in Switzerland is very different and varies from five months to more than ten years. This heterogeneity is also reflected in their reintegration process.

In general, the appreciation of the counselling in Switzerland and of the follow-up by IOM after the arrival in Kosovo is described very positively by the returnees. Many of them still remember the names of their return counsellor and have also seen their IOM officer several times. They appreciate that they were given the opportunity and the time to reflect about their voluntary return, mostly without being put under pressure. “My counsellor told me to reflect well about my decision; she didn’t want me to decide in that moment”, as a returnee tells us. The information was transparent and the conditions of a return were clear and credible.

Still, most of the interviewed returnees don’t consider their return as having been a voluntary decision of their own. More than two thirds returned under the threat of being expelled by force and therefore opted for a more humane return assisted by IOM. In some cases the motivation for a return was given without a deadline to leave the country. That happened when they were homesick, thinking of their life in Kosovo as being better compared to their stay in an underground shelter, or they wanted to go back and build up their life in Kosovo with their knowledge they had gained in Switzerland.

Economic and Social Reintegration Patterns

In this perspective, for those who have chosen to return without the pressure of being expelled immediately, the reintegration is easier as they consider the return as their choice – even though some of them now regret having made this decision. Real “voluntary” returnees found their place in Kosovar society again; they have either a job or are self-employed. They work as entrepreneurs in construction, do farming on the families’ land or have started a business in hairdressing or in physiotherapy for instance. Return assistance was very helpful for their start-up business or for the enlargement of the parents’ farm. Most of them added savings of their own. In some cases, big difficulties are identified, but without being in direct relation with migration experiences but due to health problems or family issues. This happened for instance in the case of an old lady returning to a hostile family environment or of a mother of triplets suffering physically.

On the other hand, those who have a deep feeling of having been expelled against their will and despite their attempts to legalise their situation with a costly lawyer, struggle much more with their reintegration and almost all think daily of a remigration to a western country. They are engaged in very modest farming activities, in not really successful micro-businesses (garbage collection, wood cutting, mechanic, paviour) or in trading, others are looking for an employment. Additionally, most of them live in precarious housing conditions with big families of various generations on a small space which also proves to be a challenge, causing daily conflicts. In these cases, return assistance helped them not to come back with empty hands but still didn’t reconcile them with their feeling of expulsion. Several original projects were abandoned or investments (like cows or machines) converted into cash.

Cash for care was used only once; cash for shelter instead helped a few persons to rent an apartment or to renovate their home. Nevertheless, these investments had a limited sustainability as income generation was not secured forcing people to leave the flat or the housing situation remained precarious even after small renovations.

Individuals (mostly young men) usually have spent a rather short time in Switzerland during which some of them even managed to work. In general, their reintegration was rather easy because they joined their families and some could realise a small business. Some got married soon after their return and have a family now. Still, a family can also be a burden in the sense of financial needs and in some cases a remigration is considered again.

Returned families show different reintegration patterns than singles. They struggle much more on several levels. First, they are worried about their children's future. In Switzerland, some of the children started school which fostered integration abroad, and thus reinforced the parents' hope to be allowed to stay forever. When they find themselves back in Kosovo, despite the return assistance, they are often not better off than before. They had sold their land prior to their emigration, or they encumbered with debts which means that assistance is used for paying back money or to cover the living costs of often numerous family members. Children of minority families sometimes do not re-enter school for different reasons. Missing clothes or schoolbags for pupils, lack of motivation and missing perspectives of school leavers are reasons brought up in the discussions by the parents or by the children themselves. These families seem to have resigned but cope with their precarious situation. They poorly live on remittances or are supported by other members of their minority group, all working a little in garbage collection or farming.

Other families having spent less than two years in Switzerland face fewer difficulties after their return because they usually have a home in proximity of relatives. Ideally, they can continue the economic activities they had before and build on them with the return assistance. However, these families were in general also very unhappy about their situation. Their wish to offer a better future to their children makes them restless and they are desperately looking for a solution. They seem blocked within their thoughts of a potential remigration and are not able to imagine a future in Kosovo, which further adds to their reintegration difficulties.

About one third of the visited returnees can be considered as well integrated and is able to make a living while another third is still struggling to find its way and a remigration is thinkable. The last third are vulnerable cases facing problems of big poverty and of social isolation. A few of them get support from the Government's reintegration programme, e.g. in the form of a house promised to being built on their land¹⁰ or food packages. Some get a very small pension for families with children under the age of five. Most of them are thinking of a remigration as well but probably not all of them will ever have the means or are too vulnerable to travel.

Findings of other Evaluations

Compared to the evaluation mandated by IOM and executed by the Institute for Development Research (RIINVEST) in March 2009¹¹ about the effects of employment assistance services for returnees (returning within the programme) the findings of the present assessment are much less positive. RIINVEST interviewed 31 returnees and showed a very high number of successfully employed or self-employed beneficiaries being much

¹⁰ At the moment of the visit, in all cases where houses were promised construction works have not started yet.

¹¹ RIINVEST (2009): "Employment Assistance Service (EAS) for Returnees from Switzerland and their Receiving Communities in Kosovo" Programme. External evaluation.

better off than the rest of Kosovo's population. Furthermore, almost all the businesses were still running, most of them with several employees.

The findings of the present evaluation of AVRR between 2005 and 2011 are much more modest. This might result from the different kind of support which is analysed, RIINVEST evaluated participants of return programmes who benefitted of a whole package of support, financially speaking the double volume of individual return assistance. Additionally, IOM also thinks that the local conditions for reintegration were better in 2009 than they are now.

A recent OSCE Assessment (Oct. 2012) of the Voluntary Returns Process in Kosovo states that returnees in Kosovo are still confronted with serious obstacles to their sustainable reintegration, including limited access to public services, property rights and socio-economic opportunities and also the deteriorating security situation in return sites is raised.¹²

Minorities

The above findings by OSCE mostly coincide with the evaluator's observations but surprisingly, among the interviewed returnees security issues were almost not raised except in one case of a Serbian family. Even RAE families did not mention security problems. The problems they face are rather due to poverty leading to social exclusion than to systematic discrimination or violence due to their ethnical background. A recent report of GfbV¹³ that analyses the reintegration of forced returns of RAE families presents appalling results instead. None of the five families they accompanied during the years before and after their return is still in Kosovo. GfbV questions the conditions in Kosovo for a sustainable reintegration of RAE and accuses the Government of Kosovo for not assuming its responsibilities with regard to repatriated people, especially vulnerable cases and minorities. Also UNICEF raised the topic of children of RAE and their often very precarious living conditions and without access to education.¹⁴

The present evaluation of AVRR for which also returnees from minorities (Serbs, Gorani, Ashkali and Roma) were interviewed shows a more heterogeneous picture. Minorities do not necessarily face more problems for their reintegration than Albanians as the difficulties are mostly due to poverty and low education which can be found among every kind of returnees. Except that RAE often had spent a long time out of Kosovo and might have sold their property, their stories are comparable to the ones of other returnees. RAE organisations further point out that especially for Roma in Kosovo it is almost impossible to find regular employment or to develop a business. That is why almost all Roma are involved in small-scale, seasonal business.

When talking to reintegration officers responsible for integration on national or municipal level, critical votes came up about the chances of returned RAE and it became clear that according to the officers they don't enjoy the best reputation. The fact that some of them had sold their house built by the reintegration programme makes officers state that – despite the efforts made by the municipality – some members of RAE are not willing to settle down in Kosovo. Since 2012, municipalities have to deal with RAE cases them-

¹² OSCE (2012): An Assessment of the Voluntary Returns Process in Kosovo.

¹³ Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker, GfbV (2013): Migrationspartnerschaft Schweiz-Kosovo 2010-2012. Wiederausreise statt Reintegration? Die Situation der unter Zwang rückgeführten Roma, Ashkali und Ägypter.

¹⁴ UNICEF (2010). Integration Subject to Conditions. A report on the situation of Kosovan RAE children in Germany and after their repatriation to Kosovo.

selves. Slowly, procedures are being established, but the quality of the implementation of such procedures is still problematic.

RAE organisations acknowledge the Swiss Migration Attaché in Kosovo checking the local situation first before sending back vulnerable cases by force – often RAE. This is not a common practice of all European countries but it can avoid arrivals of people with no place to stay.

IOM

All stakeholders see in IOM a very experienced and well anchored organisation in Kosovo that qualifies for the reintegration of voluntary returns. Still, IOM has built up a well functioning structure covering all stages from receiving returnees at the airport, consulting and paying for their reintegration project and visiting them if needed. As a result the state of Kosovo does not usually have to deal with voluntary returnees from Switzerland, which is a relief for the still weak structure of Kosovo administration but at the same time bears the danger of overtaking national responsibilities. SDC and also FOM are supporting the Ministry of Internal Affairs in order to strengthen its role in the reintegration process and don't necessarily want IOM to overtake further tasks (e.g. within the SDC programme) if there is not a clear knowledge transfer to the Government.

National Structure

The Department for Integration of Repatriated Persons has almost no contact with voluntary Swiss returnees. When asking return officers from Municipalities they are not able to identify particularities in the Swiss return system, as they mostly deal with forced repatriations. Sometimes forced returnees get the same tools for setting up a business as voluntary returnees chose – just that they are paid by another fund. In several cases though, voluntary returnees from Switzerland are waiting for a promised house or receive food packages from the Government.

When aid is delivered by IOM, returnees benefit of a fast treatment and don't have to wait for aid being delivered as forced returnees often have to. Apart from their mostly positive evaluation of Swiss AVR, officials criticise the Swiss welfare system for "subsidising" asylum seekers without them having to work to make their living. At national and municipal level the crucial emotional side of the reintegration is mentioned: some returnees don't want to stay and face reality in Kosovo and continue dreaming of Swiss salaries. These people can almost not be integrated, they claim.

On the Swiss side, since 2010, the Federal Social Insurance Office stopped paying new pensions to Kosovo¹⁵ which caused severe tensions with the Federal Administrative Court considering this decision as illegitimate. A decision on this case is expected in 2013. For Kosovars working in Switzerland this refusal of their right for a pension when going back to live in their home country is unbearable.

¹⁵ <http://www.bsv.admin.ch/aktuell/medien/00120/index.html?lang=de&msg-id=31376>

5.3 Effects on and Perception of non-migrant Populations

The evaluation observes a huge predisposition to migrate to Switzerland or to other European countries, where most of them have relatives or friends, and also to more distant countries. “If you ask 100 young men in Mitrovica, 99 of them would immediately go to Switzerland”, a friend of a returnee said. Almost all think of going abroad but they face various difficulties. First, the illegal journey is costly (between 2,000-3,000 € per person, for families even more) and the ones who know returnees are also aware of the difficulties asylum seeker face.

Several returnees interviewed underline the fact that, knowing what they know now, they would not attempt to go to Switzerland anymore. Others consider their stay in Switzerland as an interesting experience they would not want to miss, but they would go back only legally with a visa. Students have easier chances to enter into other countries via student visas and interviews showed that studying abroad seems to be a very attractive opportunity.

Due to a lack of opportunities - especially if one has not the needed connections to the right people, as interviewees said - it is almost impossible to find a regular, decently paid job in Kosovo. Most of the young people live with their parents and are only working occasionally. But also middle-aged people, e.g. if they have small children, think of going abroad to offer them a better future – at any costs.

Pull Effects

People who are interested in migration at first do not consider their coming back to Kosovo. Under these circumstances, the return aid does not seem to attract particular attention from the environment. Support for reintegration is therefore not a reason for Kosovars to leave their country. The push effects resulting from the economic situation, in addition to stories of successful integration of Kosovars in Switzerland are much more important. In addition, a pull effect can be identified during summer holiday, when successful migrants show their big cars and occupy their nice second homes. A pull effect due to the Swiss return assistance can be neglected – also figures deny it: the demand for return assistance is not overwhelming.

In reality, there are not many examples of returnees who are economically better off than Kosovars who have not migrated. This is due also to the high price that had been paid for the trip to Switzerland. In many cases, returnees start again at zero. As many Kosovars benefit from remittances and relatives invest in small businesses of the ones who have stayed, the return aid is not very well visible to outsiders. The interviewed persons think that it is reasonable for Switzerland to offer something to returnees and to care for them, if they leave voluntarily.

The Government of Kosovo formally avoids a pull effect of its reintegration assistance programme as it excludes returnees having left the country after mid-2010, which was the moment when the reintegration strategy was implemented. And most recently, also Switzerland severely restricts access to the full return aid package (except for vulnerable persons) by introducing the 48 hours rule to Kosovo. Since April 2013 only 100 Swiss Francs are paid as return aid and asylum requests are decided within two days whenever possible.¹⁶

¹⁶ The consequences of the unheralded introduction of the 48hours rule to Kosovo could not be covered in this report as this measure was communicated only at the end of the evaluation.

5.4 Assessment

Swiss AVRR clearly facilitates social reintegration of returnees – but only if the return is considered as a really voluntary one.

Returnees feel cared for and do not come home with empty hands. The reintegration support eases the new beginning and allows a perspective. Returnees are respected coming back with something they gained from their stay abroad, an element which is useful for their self-esteem as well as for the acceptance in their social environment. Instead, who has a feeling of being expelled does not particularly appreciate voluntary return aid, considering it as a hypocritical act of Swiss Government.

In many cases, individual return and reintegration assistance from Switzerland allows returnees for having a perspective for starting their economic reintegration.

Already when designing the project, the reintegration process begins. Whether all revenue generating projects are successful or not, is not the main concern. What is important is the perspective that returnees gain from their setting-up of a business which can be considered as much as a social integration as an economic one. They are not idle, they have a plan, and they (may) have a role recognised by their social context.

The sustainability of AVRR's support in view of reintegration is limited.

The most obvious evidence for limited sustainability of reintegration support are the cases of re-migration of returnees, which seem to be numerous in Kosovo, especially among RAE communities and Serbs. Also, a considerable number of the returnees visited are not active in their initial reintegration project anymore. At the same time, the sustainability of support is a delicate issue: Swiss AVRR cannot be (held) responsible for the successful reintegration of returnees. And returnees are not persons who will be assisted over time. Rather, they become actors in the local economy – as entrepreneurs, as self-employed persons, as farmers, as employees, etc. Sustainability of reintegration is not, in any case not exclusively, to be measured against the initial reintegration project, but it is rather to be assessed by criteria such as (i) permanent residence in the country of origin (or in the region), (ii) possibility to establish and raise a family, (iii) social integration in general, (iv) status above or below the national poverty line, (v) absence of plans for leaving Kosovo again.

Housing projects can be as helpful for reintegration as a business project but only if investments concern returnee's property. Paying a rent with RAS is not sustainable if there is no income in view.

Not all returnees chose business projects, some opted for renovating their home or the rent was paid during the first months. In these cases, housing was evaluated by returnees as being preliminary to income generation, or the person already had a source of income in view. At the beginning of the reintegration process, having an apartment can be crucial. Unfortunately, all returnees whose rent had been paid for over a period of time had to move to a cheaper place after the end of the subsidies paid by RAS. Instead, renovating one's home can be a solid investment to improve the sometimes humble living conditions.

Business projects only foster reintegration if other needs are fulfilled (health, a place to live, schooling of children).

Unsolved questions of housing, education, or medical problems hinder the process of economic integration and often business projects are neglected during this time of instability of other elementary factors.

The successes of the Swiss AVRR efforts are due, in part, to the flexibility of their implementation.

IOM that has an overall view on the AVRR programmes of European (and other) countries identifies the Swiss support for reintegration as clearly a very successful one. This has to do mainly with (i) the tailored approach offering a choice to beneficiaries, (ii) the preparedness of returnees to integrate in their old/new context, (iii) the flexibility of the system and (iv) the volume of financial reintegration assistance, (v) in some vulnerable cases the additional support for special needs, e.g. medication, and (vi) the resources invested in the monitoring of the integration of returnees – with the necessity of at least two contacts.

Individual return assistance by Switzerland is comparable to return schemes of other countries, whereas former programmes were outstanding.

In the past years, the amount of money as well as monitoring schemes of different countries put into practice by IOM Kosovo are mostly comparable. Before, the return programmes (for minorities and vulnerable persons) were exceptionally remunerated and allowed a more sustainable reintegration of the target group, partly as there was also more structural aid. The combination of housing, training or job-placement with business projects meant a closer follow-up by IOM and is said to be a very sustainable approach (e.g. the still functioning RAE housing project originally implemented by HEKS or the evaluation of Employment Assistance Services).

IOM Kosovo is a very experienced and professional organisation and its infrastructure allows a close follow-up of returnees.

With its five offices all over Kosovo, IOM disposes of a unique situation allowing the staff to be very close to returnees. Thanks to this regional implementation IOM Kosovo is well informed about local conditions for return and reintegration. Fourteen years of experience (since 1999) with committed employees – several work for IOM since the beginning of the mission – make them a reliable and competent partner for IOM Berne and the FOM and beneficiaries proved to be very happy with IOM support.

Real “voluntary” return contributes to a successful reintegration.

Successful reintegration is also a question of readiness and willingness. Those whose return was completely against his or her will, have only weak chances for a sustainable reintegration and do not differ from forced returnees. Also the chances for a successful business project are smaller due to inner refusal of a permanent settlement.

The longer someone has been abroad, the harder is the reintegration.

Reintegration of returnees who had been away for many years is a big challenge. As they had not visited their hometown or relatives for years, they face completely changed realities, have lost contacts with friends and often feel very isolated and miss the social network they had in Switzerland.

The return and reintegration of minorities is complex and needs, especially when children are involved, special attention.

For the future of families, schooling of their children is crucial. Obviously, the reinsertion in the national school system does not work well for all returnees, due to questions of poverty and inner refusal. Here, a close monitoring and encouraging is needed and Kosovo has to take over the responsibility claimed e.g. in the migration partnership.

AVRR counselling offers in Switzerland contribute to the mental preparation of the return (stimulating the “preparedness”) and to the successful reintegration.

Through various contacts with the return counselling officer in the Cantons, a part of potential returnees start overcoming inner resistances against a return. They appreciate the freedom of choice and the lack of pressure. Whether a detailed business plan elaborated in Switzerland is really helpful or not, when it comes to putting it into practice, can be questioned, but the process as such is important for the preparation of reintegration.

6 Cooperation Switzerland – Kosovo

6.1 Assessment by the Kosovo Authorities

In general, voluntary returnees are not in the Kosovan Government's focus. As a whole, they represent a small number compared to forced returnees from different, mostly European countries. The Governmental structure is mainly oriented on the reintegration of forced returnees – not least because also the visa liberalization roadmap insists on efforts that have to be undertaken for this target group. With voluntary returnees from Switzerland officials hardly get in touch, because of the follow-up by IOM via RAS.

When it comes to assistance from other countries, Switzerland enjoys of a very good reputation, not at least also for being the biggest bilateral donor in Kosovo. Within this development cooperation, reintegration assistance by Switzerland – formalized in the common Migration Partnership – is also evaluated positively. Nevertheless, all officials emphasize that reintegration does not only depend on Swiss support but mostly on the socio-economic conditions in Kosovo and people's network. They don't see many differences between the reintegration process of voluntary or forced returnees as they all face the same difficulties and since the existence of the national reintegration fund (theoretically) all have access to a support after their return. The government is conscious that national structures are still under construction and they agree that the repatriated persons supported by Kosovo need more patience until they get support. Furthermore, the public budget for reintegration is considered as too limited (3.2 Mio Euro in 2012) to offer a full package to every returnee – at the same time the funds have not been disbursed in the recent years.¹⁷

6.2 Assessment by the Swiss Authorities

All in all, the Migration Partnership (see also 6.3) between Kosovo is cited as of being an exemplary model of cooperation in the field of migration. Still, FOM points out the difficulty to work with a nation "under construction", needing patience and guidance when it comes to the setup of new offices and to the planning of operations. The communication between the involved ministries is generally insufficient and the persons in charge are often inexperienced. It happened that the same requests were addressed to representatives of the EU as well as of Switzerland without informing the donors about the parallel procedure.

¹⁷ Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on progress by Kosovo in fulfilling the requirements of the visa liberalisation roadmap. European Commission, 8.2.2013

For the capacity building projects and structural aid mainly SDC is responsible. As of late, national structures for the implementation of tasks (campaigns, etc.) are considered as satisfactory and the progresses the young state has made are acknowledged.

With regard to Kosovo as being a safe country since March 2009, the return practice is not questioned - only the challenging topic of sending minorities (especially RAE) back was raised by some experts in Switzerland. Reintegration in Kosovo is considered difficult due to the big structural problems of the country (very high unemployment rate, still weak government) and especially for vulnerable cases the return is considered as demanding, needing intense preparation and attendance. Swiss authorities are conscious that children who have been brought up and were enrolled at Swiss schools will face a difficult situation after their return. Despite this, they recognize the fact that Kosovo has now a reintegration strategy as well as a strategy for integration of RAE communities and that the conditions for a return of most of Kosovars are given.

6.3 Basis of the Cooperation (agreements, etc.)

Within the process of the “Visa Liberalisation Roadmap” with the EU, there is a high political will for a national reintegration programme and a reduction of illegal migration. Especially since around mid-2012, visible efforts have been undertaken to build up functional reintegration structures. Since the independence of Kosovo, the implementation of the respective strategy was very slowly progressing. Today, also the anchorage on a municipal level can be considered as being on track. The challenges lie mostly in the centralized aid delivery procedure and funding, which does not strengthen the roles and the responsibilities of Municipalities enough.

With almost all countries Kosovo has re-admittance agreements and – except in a few cases where the identity or the situation of the returnee needs a more thorough investigation by the Migration Attaché – the procedures are smart. With the adoption of the MoU about a Migration Partnership with Switzerland in 2010, the cooperation with the new state of Kosovo is formally defined and has a larger scope than a simple re-admittance agreement. The focus is not only on national and municipal reintegration structures but also on information campaigns against illegal migration. After all, Switzerland continues supporting migration issues as they did already before the MoU which can be considered as the formalization of a long lasting cooperation between the two countries. Through the Cooperation Strategy of SDC (and FOM) in the domain of migration, Switzerland strengthens the capacities of authorities in migration management and aims at reducing migration pressure through social and economic structural aid. Furthermore, also the positive impact of migration on development is included in the cooperation strategy 2013-2016.

6.4 Assessment

The migration relationship between Kosovo and Switzerland looks back on several decades and can be considered as a successful example.

Also because Switzerland was among the first countries to formally recognise Kosovo, interactions between the two countries are positive and conducive; and the big Kosovar Diaspora establishes links between the two countries also on societal level. A lack of

cooperation and communication between the involved ministries on the Kosovar side sometimes hamper the advancement of the process.

Concerning the implementation of the Migration Partnership, the efforts on both sides are on track and authorities regularly exchange views, experiences and ideas.

Even though the procedure of setting up local structures for reintegration is slow and was criticized from various sides, there are now many municipalities with reintegration officers who care for returnees. Still, the responsibilities, also in terms of funds available on a local level, have to be further strengthened and Switzerland has to remind Kosovo of its duties within the Migration Partnership at any occasion (e.g. with respect to the integration of RAE).

Negotiations with EU regarding visa liberalisation are at the centre of Kosovo's Government's interest. Efforts and progress in the domain of reintegration are a condition for these negotiations – a condition that is also in the interest of Switzerland

Currently, the overall goal of Kosovo consists in the access to visa free travel to EU. The Visa Liberalisation Roadmap defines progress Kosovo has to present in order to continue negotiations with Brussels. Pressure coming from EU helps accelerating this process.

7 Conclusions

Before presenting conclusions regarding the three main topics of the evaluation, attention is drawn to the following.

For persons of almost every age, migration is a very common practice and Switzerland hosts one of the biggest Diasporas of Kosovars.

Not only economic difficulties of Kosovo, but also the dense relationship between the two countries makes Kosovars chose Switzerland as their migration destination, hoping for a better future.

7.1 Return

Return and reintegration counselling is provided by qualified, committed and trustworthy practitioners.

Returnees from Kosovo are likely to trust promises regarding return assistance. This is due to the well perceived counselling and in general the rather positive experiences during their asylum process – even if they were not granted asylum.

To be given the chance to decide freely about their reintegration project and without being put under pressure is highly appreciated by returnees.

Even though income generating projects are favoured by return counsellors as well as by IOM, the persons are free to choose the use of the funds, a decision which is often done in consultation with relatives or peers.

Financial incentives are not decisive for Kosovar asylum seekers' decision to return to their country of origin.

Most importantly the fact that there is no chance for a longer legal stay in Switzerland makes AVRR an interesting alternative to forced return. The offered amount is in so far attractive as it allows the returnees to cover their first needs after the return. Nevertheless, for people who are not willing or ready to leave the country, the offered money is usually not attractive. The motivation for return is very individual and can hardly be reduced to monetary incentives.

Roma families are generally more responsive to financial incentives than other asylum seekers from Kosovo.

Counsellors observe a tendency of large Roma families to react positively to the return offer - the higher the proposed sum is, the more positive the reaction. Therefore, the complementary aid for projects and housing can be increased up to 5,000 Swiss francs.

Return counselling services are announced through different communication channels.

Information is often received via various channels. Interpersonal communication with people of the same origin is decisive when it comes to the evaluation of the offer's credibility. But organisations providing information on voluntary return are obviously also to continue their communication targeting potential returnees.

7.2 Reintegration

The shorter the duration of migrants' stay in Switzerland, the higher the probability of successful reintegration.

Switzerland undertakes respective efforts – by organising the asylum process more efficiently, by allowing assisted return from the reception centres, recently even by a very rigorous decision made in the first days about the asylum requests of Kosovars. Such efforts can be helpful for the reintegration but accelerated procedures are obviously to grant asylum seekers' rights.

If the decision to leave Switzerland is positive in the sense of a truly "voluntary" return, reintegration is usually easier.

From the perspective of the receiving community in Kosovo, it matters little if a family has returned voluntarily or by force. Their needs are the same and include at the very least the provision of housing, schooling, access to basic health care and some income opportunities. Still, for returnees it is easier to cope with their reintegration if they see more in it than only an alternative to forced return.

There is an information deficit among returnees about their rights for assistance, for language training for children, housing support etc. from the Government of Kosovo.

Regarding the access to support by the Kosovo reintegration programme, the rules are not communicated clearly to beneficiaries, a fact which generates a lot of confusion.

There is a lack of coherence between the practices of different organisations in cooperation with the national reintegration programme.

Whereas the access of German returnees to national reintegration schemes is facilitated (via URA-2), voluntary returnees assisted by IOM are not actively encouraged to enrol in the national programme.

In financial terms, the Swiss reintegration assistance for returnees to Kosovo is comparable to a range of other countries. Rather than the amount of money it is the particularly well-reasoned design of the individual return assistance which makes a differ-

ence.

Firstly, the fact that returnees receive in-kind assistance, which needs several contacts with IOM, guarantees a close follow-up during the first months. Secondly, the various types of support to be chosen from make reintegration assistance from Switzerland one of the most sustainable support schemes.

The offered 3,000 Swiss Francs allow for building up a small business project with a potential to generate part of the living costs for a person.

In Kosovo, a country with comparably modest living costs, there is the chance to open up a small business with the offered aid. Nevertheless, businesses only run well if the owner has the needed skills and previous experience in the field. Maintaining a family with children though, needs constantly a considerable amount of money which often cannot be gained only by one source of income. Cash grants received on arrival were quickly used up for consumption.

Promising projects are the ones that build on a pre-existing business of a family member or when relatives were putting together their return aid. Otherwise, at least specific skills must be available at the beginning of a business project with good chances for sustainability.

Enlarging for example a farm or cumulating return aid for a bigger initial investment proved to be successful and sustainable. On the other hand, if returnees have skills (physiotherapist, construction worker) a business start-up has good chances to be profitable.

The flow of information between IOM Kosovo, IOM Berne and FOM regarding return projects is impressive and still some business ideas had to be completely changed once the returnee was back in Kosovo.

Before the return it proved to be difficult to decide on the use of the funds as local conditions were not well known by returnees. FOM controls meticulously the use of the return fund and even though the data exchange about return projects is formalized, it is time consuming for all involved stakeholders.

Investments in cows proved to be a vulnerable business project.

It was observed that all cows bought by four returnees with the return assistance were either dead or sold at the moment of the evaluation. The reasons are diverse but it seems that keeping of cows needs certain knowledge and skills and their breeding depends on a successful harvest. Besides, they can easily be converted in cash if the situation requires it, e.g. for medical treatments of the owner.

IOM is a highly trusted partner for Switzerland but also for returnees. Professionalism and a long experience strengthen the position of IOM in Kosovo return assistance.

The work of IOM is evaluated positively by all stakeholders. IOM has built up a very well-functioning structure for accompanying voluntary returnees. Now that Kosovo has put in place its own reintegration structure for repatriated persons a closer cooperation with the two schemes must be envisaged and the role of IOM needs to be reviewed on a medium term.

7.3 The Cooperation Switzerland – Kosovo

Overall, the relationship between Kosovo and Switzerland is marked by a long lasting cooperation, in humanitarian as well as structural support and more recently also in migration management.

Support for voluntary returnees by Switzerland is welcome as Kosovo understands its task rather to support forced returnees. That's why regarding voluntary returns, the interfaces with Kosovar institutions are limited.

Kosovo considers return aid paid by Western countries as useful for the reintegration, even as a duty of the sending nations. The young state faces numerous difficulties, not only in the reintegration of tens of thousands of (potential) returnees. Nevertheless, there is a risk that returnees from Switzerland are guided through a parallel system and hardly get in touch with Kosovar institutions at the beginning.

Compared to returnees from Germany, Swiss returnees are not assisted or encouraged when it comes to applying for additional support by the Kosovar reintegration programme.

Voluntary returnees are not *a priori* excluded from assistance through the national fund for the reintegration of repatriated persons. Officials' general opinion is that those who already receive assistance from another organisation shall not benefit twice. At least one organisation still tries to find a way for getting a support for its beneficiaries and also several Swiss returnees of the sample received support from Kosovo. This confusing situation risks the generation of an unequal treatment of returnees.

The Migration Partnership is evaluated positively by all stakeholders in both countries serving as a formal base for the cooperation in various fields.

The formalisation of the long lasting relationships in an official Migration Partnership was an important step for a sustainable cooperation. FOM officials highlight the willingness of Kosovo to overtake crucial functions in migration management, even though capacity development remains an important issue, where SDC/FOM delivers support. Nevertheless, since the end of 2012, notable progress has been made on the Kosovar side.

Through its cooperation strategy for Kosovo, Switzerland (FDFA, SDC, SECO, FOM) speaks with one voice and is able to work on an institutional level for the strengthening of migration management and the integration structure of the young state of Kosovo.

The Whole of Governance approach which is practised in Kosovo can be considered as highly successful and exemplary for other countries with SDC presence and a considerable number of voluntary returnees. Within this set-up, also the interdepartmental working group for the Western Balkans plays an important role in the coordination and strategy development for the returning to Kosovo.

8 Recommendations

8.1 Preconditions and their Shaping

⇒ The Migration Partnership with Kosovo is to be nourished and further developed.

The existing agreement between the two countries has a well thought basis but it will occasionally need further adaptations. Especially after events like the introduction of the 48-hour rule for Kosovo, which goes with a massive reduction of the target group of return assistance, the design and the effects on the Migration Partnership must be discussed.

⇒ The approach of Whole of Governance as practised in Kosovo between FOM, SDC, SECO and the Embassy is to be maintained.

With the rare setting of the presence of SDC with a structural aid programme in a country receiving returnees from Switzerland, an interlinked approach of various Swiss stakeholders is possible. This setting needs continuous attention and investments from all participants in order to make use of a maximum of synergies.

8.2 Incentives for Return

⇒ Continuous efforts for informing about the conditions of return and reintegration are needed, and they are to make use of the potential returnees' social networks and of the Diaspora in Switzerland.

The information system appears to be well in place and potential returnees are reached through different information channels (reception centres, cantonal administration, NGO). Current practice of IOM and FOM to inform potential returnees about return and reintegration also through returnees (video messages, etc.) can increase the trust in the promised measures. The role of social networks of potential returnees to Kosovo is also worthwhile to be considered. This can be realised, for instance, through Diaspora organisations, through key persons from the Kosovar community who are trained and paid for their services, etc.

Information about return is even more thoroughly to consist of the demonstration of lacking perspectives in Switzerland and of the perspectives opening in Kosovo thanks to the reintegration assistance.

⇒ If a couple or a family returns, the wife, ideally, is included in all decisions and in the reintegration planning.

Women play a key role in the reintegration process. Even in traditionally patriarch Kosovar society women's potential for economic activities are not to be underestimated. Return counsellors shall insist in including women's skills in the design of the return project, whenever it is possible. And even before that, the decision about return is to be supported by both spouses.

⇒ Business projects are better to be planned (in detail) after the return.

Economic conditions are difficult to be understood by returnees and by Swiss return counsellors. In order to avoid significant changes of the return project once the returnee is back in the country, business projects could be designed more realistically with a competent local counsellor. This helps also reducing the high intensity of information circulating between cantonal counsellors, IOM Berne and IOM Kosovo.

⇒ Business funds shall not be smaller than 3,000 Swiss Francs; eventual costs for housing solutions have to be added upon this amount.

Note: Since April 2013 this change has been widely adapted for vulnerable individual return cases. A stable housing situation is considered crucial for economic reintegration. Granting 3,000 Swiss Francs for a professional project in addition to housing support – if needed – will make reintegration more promising.

8.3 Realisation of Return

⇒ Obviously within the regulations in place and respecting all of the rights of asylum seekers, return is to be realised as quickly as possible.

The longer the stay in Switzerland and the uncertainties that go with it, the more complex the situations of the asylum seekers become. It is therefore important that return takes place as quickly as possible after the arrival in Switzerland, but without hazarding the diligent processing of the asylum request.

⇒ The introduction of the 48-hour rule for Kosovars (since March 2013) has to be carefully observed and monitored.

Vulnerable persons must be guaranteed the right for a thorough evaluation of their case and later, should their asylum request be answered negatively, a secure and dignified return. With access to AVRR these persons are given a chance for a stabilisation of their economic situation which can help avoiding remigration.

⇒ Current practice of the organisation of return is to be maintained.

The active involvement of returnees in the preparation of return (access to travel documents from their Embassy), the attempt to realise return quickly after the decision for return is taken, the reception of returnees at the airport of Pristina, the payment of the return assistance money upon arrival in Kosovo – are all good practices that are to be continued.

⇒ National return structures are to be involved in the organisation of return when possible and suitable.

Since the Office for Reintegration of Kosovo has a permanent presence at Pristina airport for welcoming and organising transport to peoples' homes or temporary shelter, the role of IOM in the reception has to be evaluated. The objective should be to involve national institutions whenever it is possible and adequate.

8.4 Implementation of Reintegration Assistance

⇒ Business trainings or vocational training have to be considered within AVRR for selected returnees.

Combining a business project with a small training can raise the success rate of a business. Even longer lasting vocational trainings can, in certain cases, be a sustainable solution for a professional integration and should be put on the list of AVRR options. Here, a good knowledge of local training offers by the counsellor is a precondition for promoting this option.

⇒ Switzerland – together with IOM – has to clarify the conditions for return and reintegration aid offered by the Kosovo Government and check eventual interfaces.

Swiss voluntary returnees must be assisted in order to be integrated in the national return scheme if they fulfil the criteria. The focus must be on complementary return aid instead of creating parallel structures for voluntary returnees. Switzerland has to ensure that voluntary return remains more attractive than forced return.

⇒ The contact of voluntary returnees with municipal return officers can be facilitated.

Some returnees might need to be assisted by IOM for contacting the respective municipal return officer and be equipped with the needed information regarding further support from the national reintegration programme or further assistance, like pensions.

⇒ Flexibility in accompanying vulnerable returnees with special needs is to be continued.

As it was practised in some cases in the past, IOM Kosovo shall be given the possibility to make a demand for an extra emergency aid for exceptionally difficult situations of returnees (e.g. housing, medical support).

8.5 Follow-up of Reintegration

⇒ The monitoring of reintegration is to be continued as of now.

As practised by IOM today, the monitoring fulfils its objective and a more intense monitoring is not likely to be more productive. A more intensive monitoring is needed for very vulnerable cases that require additional support (e.g. school enrolment, housing issues).

8.6 Other

⇒ Within the Migration Partnership Switzerland is given the possibility to regularly remind Kosovo of its responsibility in the integration of RAE. The monitoring of reintegration is to be continued as of now.

Even if formal concepts exist, the monitoring of progress in the improvement of structural conditions for the reintegration of RAE is crucial. The bi-annual exchanges within the Migration Partnership allow Switzerland to insist on this responsibility.

⇒ The lack of information regarding legal and illegal migration to countries having signed the Dublin agreement has to be constantly tackled in order to prevent irregular migration.

Despite the already existing initiatives and campaigns, there is a high need for realisation of awareness rising regarding migration. These efforts can also be done in participation together with other (European) and local actors.

⇒ Voluntary returnees from Switzerland have to be carefully informed about conditions and consequences of a re-migration.

Swiss return counsellors as well as IOM Kosovo have to communicate repeatedly about the effect a voluntary return has on the possibilities for a re-migration. This might help people facing their future realistically.

⇒ Integrated approach to the reintegration of the returnees is important

Interviews with returnees and other relevant stakeholders involved in the process of the reintegration of the returnees show that it is important to work through an integrated approach addressing emotional, religious, material / financial needs and also the need for social support / network. Material aspects are very important to the reintegration process but not sufficient for sustainable reintegration.

Persons interviewed in Switzerland and in Kosovo

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- Department of Labour and Employment, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare: Defrim Rifaj
- Embassy of Switzerland: Sylvain Astier, Migration Attaché
- FOM : Jarmila Mazel (Sektion Rückkehrgrundlagen und Rückkehrhilfe)
- FOM: Lorenz Glauser, Céline Haenni, (Länderteam Kosovo)
- FOM: Thomas Lory (Sektion Rückkehr und Grundlagen)
- FOM: Michael Morf (Stellv. Abteilungsleiter ad interim Zentrale Dienste und Rückkehr)
- FOM: Roland Flükiger (Fachreferent Westbalkan)
- IOM Pristina: Xheremet Kukaj, Habib Habibi
- IOM Berne: Claire Potaux, Florian Brändli
- Rückkehrberatung Kt. AG: Erica Garcia
- Conseils en vue du retour, Canton du VS : Christiane Terrettaz
- SDC, Desk Kosovo: Anne Moulin
- SDC, National Programme Officer Kosovo: Merita Stavileci
- SRK: Hugo Köppel, Leiter Abt. Asyl, Departement Migration
- URA-2, German Return Counselling Centre: Birgit Budde, Director
- Voice of Roma, Ashkahli and Egyptians: Isak Skenderi
- Reintegration officer Fushe Kosova: Hysen Sllamniku
- Reintegration officer Prishtina: Mustafe Neziri

Returnees:

- 18 returnees in different parts of Kosovo

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