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# ASSESSMENT OF POLICY, INSTITUTIONAL AND SERVICE GAPS RELATED TO SUSTAINABLE SOCIO-ECONOMIC REINTEGRATION OF RETURNEES IN KOSOVO<sup>1</sup>



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<sup>1</sup> References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of UN Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

# ASSESSMENT OF POLICY, INSTITUTIONAL AND SERVICE GAPS RELATED TO SUSTAINABLE SOCIO-ECONOMIC REINTEGRATION OF RETURNEES IN KOSOVO

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## ACRONYMS

<b>ACRP</b>	Accommodation Centre for Repatriated Persons
<b>ALMM</b>	Active Labor Market Measures
<b>BPRM</b>	Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration
<b>CRC</b>	Central Review Commission
<b>CSW</b>	Center for Social Work
<b>DCAM</b>	Department for Citizenship, Asylum and Migration
<b>DRRP</b>	Department for Reintegration of Repatriated Persons
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>KP</b>	Kosovo Police
<b>KPA</b>	Kosovo Property Agency
<b>KPCVA</b>	Kosovo Property Comparison and Verification Agency
<b>MAFRD</b>	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development
<b>MCOR</b>	Municipal Commission on Returns
<b>MCR</b>	Ministry for Communities and Return
<b>MCSC</b>	Municipal Community Safety Council
<b>MORC</b>	Municipality Office for Returnees and Communities
<b>MEE</b>	Ministry of Economy and Environment
<b>MES</b>	Ministry of Education, Science
<b>MF</b>	Ministry of Finance
<b>MH</b>	Ministry of Health
<b>MIA</b>	Ministry of Internal Affairs
<b>MLGA</b>	Ministry of Local Government Administration
<b>MLSW</b>	Ministry for Labor and Social Welfare
<b>MOCR</b>	Municipal Office for Communities and Return
<b>MOE</b>	Municipal Office for Employment
<b>MOH</b>	Ministry of Health
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>OPM</b>	Office of the Prime Minister
<b>RP</b>	Repatriated Person
<b>RRK</b>	Return and Reintegration in Kosovo
<b>SAA</b>	Stabilization and Association Agreement
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>UNMIK</b>	United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo
<b>VTC</b>	Vocational Training Centre
<b>WB</b>	Western Balkans

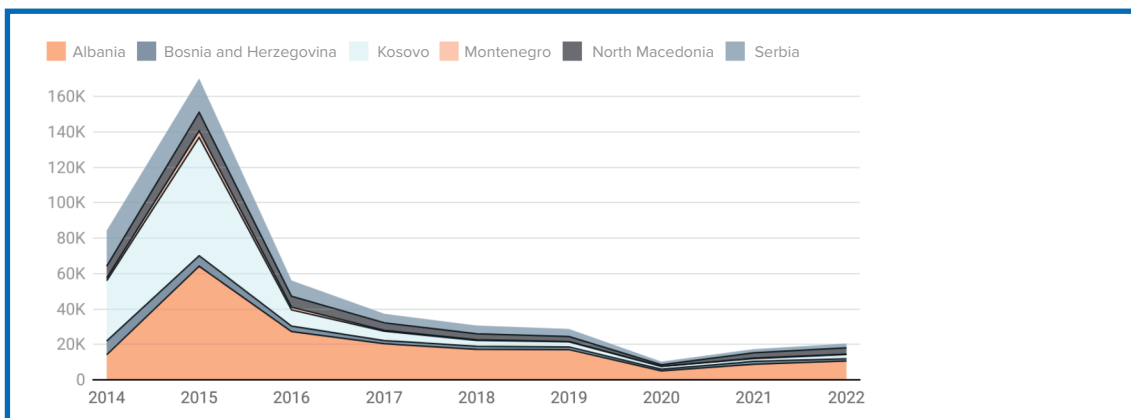


## 1.1 Rationale

Over the past several decades, the WB have experienced sizeable emigration from the region, with (significant) impact on development, including demographic trends, human capital, and availability of the workforce (ETF, 2022). Outmigration has led to the documented need for bringing-in labor force from other countries to the WB, and this labor market trend may grow, if the outmigration trends from the WB continues in the future (World Bank, 2023, Zbinden et al., 2016).

The share of emigrant stocks to the total population is relatively high and varies across WB, ranging from 49 percent in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 44 percent in Albania, 34 percent in North Macedonia and 30 percent in Kosovo to 21 percent in Montenegro and 15 percent in Serbia (UN DESA, 2020, ETF 2022). While migration is a highly debated topic in the WB, there is a need for a deeper understanding of its consequences, challenges and risks related to it and development outcomes, including comprehensive policies that can mitigate and address these risks and challenges.

Figure 1 : First-time asylum applications from the Western Balkans - 2014 to 2022

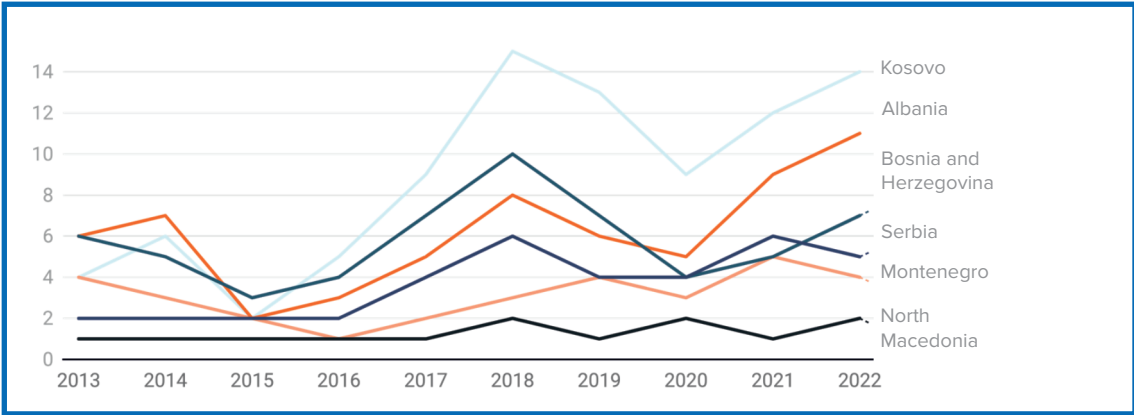


Source: Eurostat. Indicator: migr\_asyappctza

Migration trends in the WB shifted from late 2015 onwards, with regular migration increasing and irregular emigration decreasing. Prior to 2015, the European Union (EU) recorded an increasing number of asylum applications from the WB, which reached its peak level in 2015 since then, however, there has been a declining trend (see Figure 1). Factors contributing to the decrease in irregular emigration included changes in asylum policies in the EU Member States, primarily the shortening of asylum-seeking procedures, and the designation of WB countries as safe countries of origin by the EU Member States. New migration trends in the WB indicate an increase in regular forms of emigration, primarily for employment purposes, and to a lesser extent for family reunification and education.

**Despite the high number of asylum applications, the success rate of getting a positive decision for asylum requests is very low**, ranging from 2 to 14 percent of first-instance asylum applications (see Figure 2). Success rates increased over the past decade, mainly driven by increases from Kosovo and Albania, which saw respectively a 5 and 10 percentage point increase from 2013 to 2022.

**Figure 2 : First-instance decisions on asylum applications from the Western Balkans - 2014 to 2022**



Source: Eurostat. Indicator: migr\_asydcfst.

**There are significant push and pull factors at play that influence these trends.** Among the push factors is the relatively high youth unemployment rate (youth unemployment exceeding 30 percent in WB countries in 2021, with Kosovo having a rate of over 38 percent, as reported by ESAP2 (2023) and the World Bank (2023), though in recent years there have been positive changes in labor markets in terms of decline of unemployment rates). Additionally, low private-sector wages, inadequate public services, including poor healthcare and education, as well as perceptions of political instability, security concerns, and quality of life all contribute to these push factors.

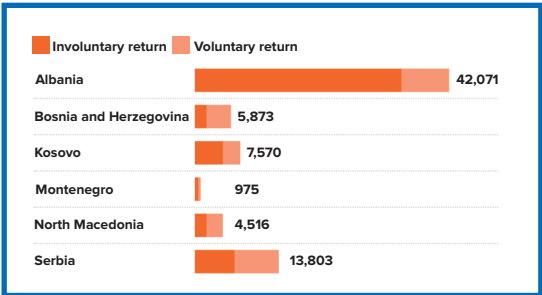


On the other hand, the demand for foreign workers in selected economic sectors attracts WB citizens to EU Member States. In addition, citizens of some WB countries do not need visas to enter EU countries and this is often used to travel and stay in EU countries, often also to work unregistered.

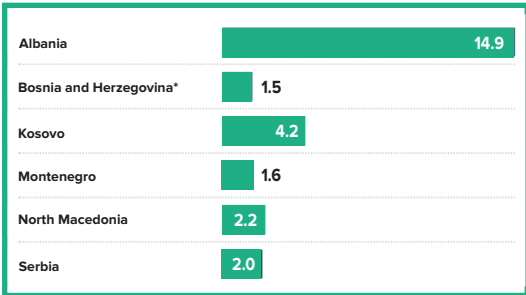
Between 2016 and 2021, approximately 7,500 individuals returned to Kosovo, which translates to 4.2 persons per 1,000 inhabitants, one of the highest rates in the region (see Figure 3). Understanding the profile of returning migrants, their journeys, aspirations, and interactions with various institutions in depth is fundamental to improve their integration in Kosovo.

**Figure 3 : Cumulative returns (2016-2021) and share of returnees among the total population (2021)**

**a) Number of involuntary and voluntary returns (2016-2021)**



**b) Cumulative returns (2016 to 2021 per 1,000 persons (2021)**



Note: \* Latest population estimates available for Bosnia and Herzegovina are from 2012.  
 Source: Eurostat, 2016-2021 (indicator: migr\_eirt\_vol) and Eurostat, 2021 (indicator: demo\_pjan).

**1.2 Methodology and data sources**

The methodology chosen for this report follows a "returnee-centered" approach. It places its primary emphasis on evaluating the requirements and obstacles encountered by individual returnees and their families in achieving enduring reintegration. This approach encompasses multiple facets encompassing economic, social, and psychological integration and support. This report has built on existing knowledge and research conducted on outmigration from and return migration to Kosovo: it used desk research, quantitative and qualitative data to shed light on returnees' journeys.



**Literature Review.** This study incorporated pertinent research findings from various sources, including the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme, the European Training Foundation, the International Organization for Migration, and other international organizations. Additionally, it drew insights from studies on labor migration, return migration, and the role of diaspora conducted by research institutes, and various ministries and agencies from Kosovo. The literature review also encompassed best practices from Kosovo.

**Quantitative Data.** To analyze migration patterns and trends from Kosovo to the EU, this report utilized multiple databases on migration databases. Key data sources included:

- ▶ Migration data collected by the Kosovo Statistics Agency (KSA)
- ▶ Migration data collected in collaboration with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Labor and Transfers, Ministry of Health and Municipalities
- ▶ Eurostat Migration and Migrant Population Database

**Qualitative data on returnees.** Between July and September 2023, qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted with 21 returnees in Kosovo.<sup>2</sup> These in-depth interviews were instrumental in capturing the first-hand experiences and perceptions of various types of returnees. They took place in three municipalities. All interviews were anonymized, and basic sample information is available in Annex 2.

**Expert Roundtables.** Between August and September 2023, qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Social Work Centers, Employment Offices, Mental Health Center and Vocational Training Centers. These interviews convened key migration policy stakeholders, including policymakers, local representatives from municipalities, reintegration experts and international organizations. The discussions provided insights into policy objectives, challenges, initiatives, and institutional capabilities in areas such as managing labor migration, addressing the consequences of emigration, facilitating return migration, and supporting return migrants. They also facilitated the identification of effective policy practices, which could encourage mutual learning within other countries in the region. This information formed a critical foundation for the policy recommendations.

In the context of the socio-economic reintegration of vulnerable returnees, this report focused on three dimensions of reintegration.

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<sup>2</sup>Given the existing information on the types of returnees coming back to Kosovo, the sample for the qualitative research has encompassed multiple types of returnees, and although it cannot be considered representative for quantitative analysis, it does provide rich qualitative insights relevant for the report.



- ▶ **Economic Empowerment and Reintegration.** This aspect is concerned with assisting returnees in achieving economic self-sufficiency upon their return. It encompasses, but is not limited to, facilitating access to and active participation in the formal labor market to secure decent employment, offering job placements, skills development, vocational and soft skills training, educational support, income-generating activities, business development support (including mentorship), and access to financial resources.
- ▶ **Social Empowerment and Reintegration.** This dimension focuses on ensuring access to quality public services, such as information related to returnee services and programs, education and training opportunities, social protection, healthcare services, personal documentation, housing, accommodation, legal services, and access to justice.
- ▶ **Psychosocial Support.** Depending on individual needs, this dimension involves making psychological support available to returnees.

### 1.3 Objective and outline of the report

**This report provides an examination of the reintegration of returnees in Kosovo.** The report provides valuable insights into the dynamics of migration, its impact on individuals and communities, and the potential of migration to contribute to Kosovo's development. Understanding the motivations, experiences and challenges of returnees offers policymakers and researchers a unique perspective on the country's economic, social, and political landscape. By examining the factors that drive return migration, the reintegration process, and the contributions returnees make to Kosovo studies on this population can inform more effective policies, foster sustainable development, and help address the broader implications of migration for Kosovo and the Western Balkans.

**Section 2** offers a detailed assessment of the current landscape of return and reintegration, encompassing migration trends, relevant legislation, strategies, and the institutional structures that play a crucial role in the reintegration process; key organizations involved in these efforts, including donors, are identified and analyzed. **Section 3** focuses on the needs and priorities of returnees as they reintegrate into their home countries, with particular attention to their experiences when interacting with institutions and NGOs, gender-specific and age/youth considerations, and drivers for remigration. **Section 4** provides a comprehensive analysis of the existing services and structures aimed at facilitating the sustainable socio-economic reintegration of returnees, examining offerings from government, NGOs, and donor programs.



**Section 5** delves into the coordination and cooperation mechanisms across different levels of governance, both within institutions and between institutions, including the role of donors in supporting reintegration efforts. **Section 6** identifies existing gaps and provides some recommendations to enhance the current system for returnees' socio-economic reintegration and service delivery. **Section 7** presents some examples derived from fieldwork, highlighting emerging good practices that can inform and enhance reintegration efforts.



## 2.1 Migration patterns

### 2.1.1 Historical trends

Throughout history, Kosovo's population has been recognized as a population of emigrants due to various political and economic factors and historical developments. Migration trends have evolved over time, shaped by factors such as conflict in the former Yugoslavia, human rights violations against Kosovo Albanians, discrimination, and extreme poverty. It has been estimated that by 2016, over 870,000 people from Kosovo were living abroad, close to 50% percent of the resident population in Kosovo (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2016).

The new wave of emigration starting in the 1960s, often referred to as "New Migration" has been influenced by various factors and can be categorized into three main stages of emigration:

- ▶ **Political Emigration (1969-1989).**
- ▶ **Political-Economic Emigration (1990-1999).**
- ▶ **Socio-Economic Emigration (after 2011).** This wave of emigration is driven primarily by socio-economic conditions. People migrated to seek job opportunities, better economic prospects, and an improved standard of living.

**A notable migration flow was observed in 2014/15**, when approximately 110,000 individuals are estimated to have illegally crossed the EU borders. The lack of visa-free movement regime in Kosovo, a major difference from other Western Balkans countries, has significantly influenced this type of migration. In 2015, Kosovo signed a Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) with the EU which was supposed to allow Kosovar citizens to move freely in the Schengen Area without visas, however the actual implementation of the visa-free regime has been postponed until January, 1st 2024. Following the signing of the SAA agreement in 2015, a migration wave from Kosovo to the EU took place, largely driven by Kosovo's high unemployment rate and hopes for better lives abroad. Given that visas for entering the EU were required, the predominant type of migration in this period was the illicit migration of predominantly male young population (21 percent of Kosovars are below the age of 15).

<sup>3</sup><https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.0014.TO?locations=XK>



## 2.1.2 Recent patterns

**Kosovo continues to experience a growing trend of emigration.** In terms of net migration, during 2012-2016, Kosovo experienced a net loss of 122,657 inhabitants, which equates to approximately 6.9 percent of Kosovo's population (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2016). In 2016, 22,012 persons emigrated from Kosovo, or 1.2 percent of the resident population.<sup>4</sup> These figures include all emigrants, irrespective of the reason for migration or their legal status.

**Germany plays a central role in absorbing emigration from Kosovo.** Germany has emerged as the primary destination for Kosovars, who are driven to migrate to Germany by factors such as high poverty rates, elevated unemployment, and poor healthcare. Shedding light on this phenomenon, the GAP Institute has published a report based on data from Germany's Federal Statistical Office spanning from 2010 to 2022. According to the report, the number of citizens originating from Kosovo in Germany nearly doubled between 2010 and 2022. In 2010, there were 291,000 citizens from Kosovo living in Germany, and just 12 years later, this figure has climbed to 542,000. This represents a remarkable 86 percent increase in just over a decade (Demaku, 2023).

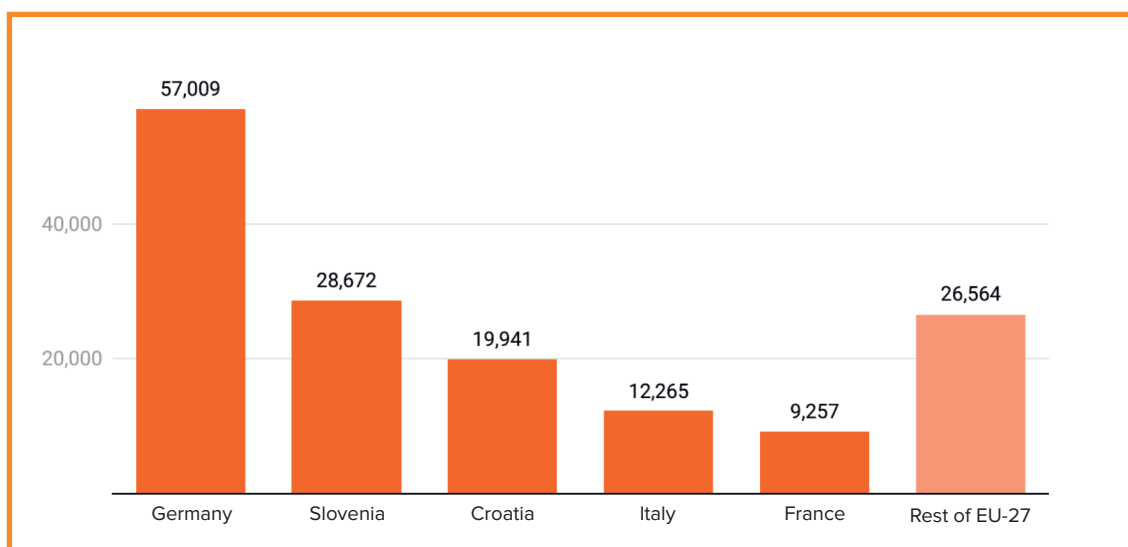
**Between 2018 and 2022, over 153,000 residence permits were issued to Kosovar citizens by the European Union (EU), most of which were granted by Germany (see Figure 4).** Germany issued about 40 percent of all residence permits granted by the EU to Kosovars, due to factors such as strong social safety nets and employment opportunities. In addition, Croatia and Slovenia attract Kosovars, mostly due to proximity, while Italy and France also boast substantial diaspora communities.

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<sup>4</sup>Assessment, Population of Kosovo 2016, page 9 table 2: Pristina, June 2017: <http://ask.rks-gov.net/media/3385/vleresimi-i-popullise-se-kosoves-2016.pdf>



**Figure 4 : Total number of first-time permits issued to citizens of Kosovo by EU countries (2018-2022)**

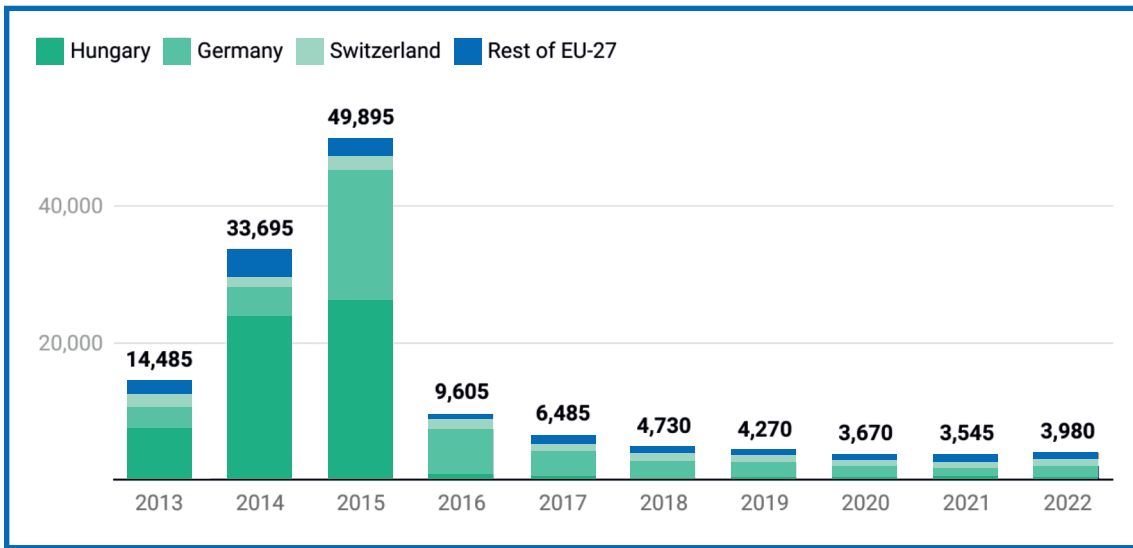


Source: Eurostat (indicator: migr\_resfirst).

**The main drivers of migration from Kosovo encompass both socio-economic and political factors.** High unemployment rates, low wages, elevated poverty levels, limited access to high-quality education and healthcare, corruption, and nepotism have collectively fueled emigration from Kosovo (National Democratic Institute, 2019). Political instability, security concerns, inadequate infrastructure, and subpar services have also contributed to dissatisfaction of Kosovo's population, particularly the youth, contributing to their growing inclination to migrate. Demaku (2023) finds that among Kosovar emigrants living in Germany, the main reasons for migration are work opportunities for men, and family reunification for women.

About 4,000 Kosovar citizens are reported to live illegally in the EU in 2022 (see Figure 5). Hungary and Germany boast the highest numbers, followed by Switzerland. These totals depict a sharp downward trend: in 2015, almost 50,000 illegal Kosovars were apprehended within the EU-27 boundaries (Eurostat, indicator: migr\_eipre).

**Figure 5 : Kosovar nationals found to be illegally present in EU countries**

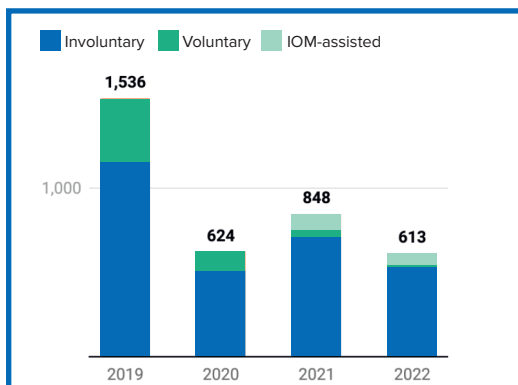


Source: Eurostat (indicator: migr\_eipre).

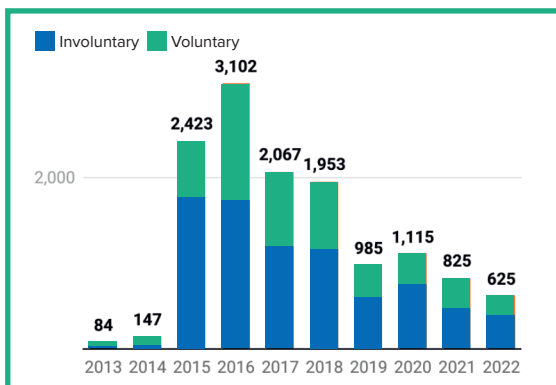
The number of asylum requests made by Kosovo citizens in both EU and Schengen-associated countries has fallen steadily, from the peak of 73,210 in 2015 to 2,315 in 2020 and 2,400 in 2021. The return rate of Kosovo citizens ordered to leave EU territory was 58 percent in 2018, 41 percent in 2019, 29 percent in 2020 and 39 percent in 2021 (EU Commission, 2022, Kosovo 2022 Report). The total number of Kosovar returnees has decreased over the past decade, and most recent estimates range from 3,550 to 3,621 for the period 2019-2022 (see Figure 6). According to Kosovo's Department for Citizenship, Asylum and Migration (DCAM), in 2022, a total of 613 returnees were readmitted, most of whom were resettled involuntarily. These estimates match closely the data reported by Eurostat.

**Figure 6 : Estimated number of returnees**

**a) Domestic estimates**



**b) Eurostat estimates**



Note: IOM-assisted repatriation data were only available as of 2021.  
 Source: left panel, DCAM; right panel, Eurostat (indicator: migr\_eirt\_vol).

## 2.2 Development impact of migration

**High outmigration of Kosovo citizens in recent years, especially of the working-age population, has begun to have visible economic and social consequences.** This is also measured by the number of vacancies in the employment agency, which has never happened before. Currently, there are 5,797 vacancies for regular jobs in the employment offices, and 4,087 vacancies in the Employment Agencies.<sup>6</sup> If Kosovo institutions do not take adequate measures, increasing trends related to the emigration of qualified labor force are expected to continue. The trend of emigration is expected to escalate in coming years, driven by high demand for labor in the EU and significantly higher wages EU countries offer (Rama, 2023), both contributing to strong pull factors.

**Diaspora plays a vital role in Kosovo's socio-economic development (Balkans' Policy Research Group, 2020).** Remittances, the second-largest income source, exhibit consistent growth. In 2020, despite the impact of COVID-19, remittances surged to EURO 980 million, a 15 percent y-o-y increase, proving their pivotal role in Kosovo's economic landscape. Germany and Switzerland, two countries with significant concentrations of the Kosovar diaspora, account for 42.3 percent of all remittances to Kosovo (Central Bank of the Republic of Kosovo, 2018/2019/2020/2021).

<sup>5</sup> <https://mpb.rks-gov.net/Uploads/Documents/Pdf/EN/2453/Rap.i%20shkurter%20vjetor%202022%20ANG.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> M. Klinaku, Employment Agency, Information System for Employment Management, Employment Agency 14.11.2023



## 2.3 Development impact of migration

**The Kosovo government has established the necessary legal and institutional mechanisms and strategic framework to manage the readmission process.** Characteristics and challenges associated with readmission activities in Kosovo have played a significant role in shaping the strategic framework of migration in Kosovo. Readmission, as a policy mechanism, holds considerable importance in the management of irregular migration.

### Box 1 : Strategic policy framework in Kosovo

The ***Strategy for Sustainable Reintegration of Repatriated Persons in Kosovo 2018–2022*** aims to provide sustainable socio-economic reintegration for repatriated persons through continuous improvement and the advancement of an effective and efficient service system focused on the needs of returnees. Managing the reintegration process is a dynamic process and requires continuous development of capacities. The Kosovo government has recognized this in its strategic documents. Therefore, the key objectives of the 2018 -2022 Strategy are enhanced focus on capacity building, implementation of a needs-based approach, including standards for addressing and providing services to specific vulnerable groups, as well as monitoring and evaluation of the reintegration process.

Of relevance is also the ***Strategy on Migration 2021-2025***, adopted in 2021, and the corresponding Action Plan 2021-2025. The Strategy reflects the priorities included in the government program 2021-2025 and takes into account obligations deriving from the SAA as well as recent European and global initiatives, such as the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum, and Global Compact on Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration.

**Kosovo has signed readmission agreements with 24 countries, including 20 EU Member States and members of the Schengen area. There is no readmission agreement with the EU as a whole.** Effective implementation of these agreements serves as a pivotal factor in preventing and combating irregular migration. For those countries with whom Kosovo has not yet signed bilateral agreements for readmission, implementation of readmission legislation is crucial in terms of cooperation between sending and receiving countries.

**Since 2014, Kosovo's institutions have made significant progress in addressing returnee needs.** Key elements of this progress include development of specific legal acts, improved regional cooperation through the "Inter-institutional Initiative for Displaced Persons from Kosovo" (commonly known as the Skopje Process) facilitated by the OSCE and UNHCR, and implementation of the "Return and Reintegration in Kosovo."



While substantial progress has been made, certain obstacles remain in various areas that affect sustainable returnee reintegration.

**While primary legislation governing the return process is in place, the legislation has not been fully and effectively enforced.** Notable legislative improvements occurred when the Government of Kosovo adopted the Regulation on the Return of Displaced Persons and Durable Solutions in January, 2018 (OSCE, 2019). This regulation represents a significant step in the government's commitment to the reintegration process and consolidated procedures among various institutional mechanisms involved in the return process. It placed the Ministry of Communities and Returns (MCR)<sup>7</sup> at the helm of the coordination process. This regulation replaced previous mechanisms and established a legally binding framework for the return process, marking a significant development related to return legislation in the past two decades.<sup>8</sup> Five years after its adoption, full implementation of this regulation still requires concerted efforts, as the performance of relevant municipal mechanisms has remained limited, often tied to donor-funded projects. Improved coordination among various mechanisms is also essential.

**Another strategic framework is the Kosovo Property Rights Strategy, adopted in October 2016.** This Strategy includes policies to protect the property rights of displaced persons, including returnees. However, notwithstanding the strategic framework, returnees still face challenges related to the protection of their property and housing rights. Challenges arise from inadequate responses to illegal reoccupation, deficiencies in implementing decisions on property claims, and not providing compensation to returnees whose property has been destroyed or damaged due to conflict. Finding sustainable solutions for landless returnees is also a pressing issue. While the overall security situation in Kosovo remains largely stable, recurring incidents, even if not ethnically motivated, continue to impact security and how the security situation is perceived, thus influencing the return process (Ministry of Justice, 2016). Incidents, such as thefts, attacks, arson, gun-related incidents, and damage to religious heritage sites continue to be recorded. Additionally, protests and petitions from host communities against returnees also contribute to returnee challenges, and risks faced by returnees and need to be addressed. To address these concerns, the Ministry for Communities and Return, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and the Ministry of Local Government Administration approved guidelines on January 18, 2018, providing directions to local-level mechanisms to respond to incidents affecting communities. Department for the Reintegration of Repatriated Persons (DRRP).

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<sup>7</sup> This Ministry does not have a mandate for returns from EU countries, thus its activities are not elaborated in this report which focuses on returns from the EU.

<sup>8</sup> Before this Regulation was adopted, the returns process was guided by the Revised Manual on Sustainable Return, adopted in July 2006.



### 3. NEEDS AND PRIORITIES OF RETURNEES

This section presents the findings of in-depth interviews with returnees in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The purpose of these interviews was to examine the vulnerability of returnees across three reintegration dimensions: economic, social, and psychological. The interviews sought to understand the level of awareness among returnees regarding their rights and obligations, as well as the services and opportunities provided. In addition, the interviews aimed to assess returnee's level of satisfaction with the reintegration process, their success in effective reintegration upon return and to understand possible drivers for remigration. Given their vulnerabilities prior to migration from Bosnia and Herzegovina, special attention was paid to Roma returnees (World Bank, 2019 and 2021).

The qualitative fieldwork involved:

- ▶ **Interviews with institutions and organizations.** Qualitative methods were initially used, including focus groups and individual meetings with representatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Social Work Centers, Employment Offices, and Vocational Training Centers. Before each meeting with the respective representatives, each group was contacted individually, and the purpose of the visit was explained.
- ▶ **Surveys with returnees.** Interviews were conducted with individuals who had returned to their country of origin (Kosovo), regardless of whether their return was voluntary, assisted, or involuntarily.

## Box 2 : Methodology

**In-depth semi-structured interviews with 21 returnees were conducted in 3 municipalities: Pristina, Obiliq and Fushe Kosovo/Kosovo Polje.** Returnees were identified primarily through a snowballing method and networks and contacts facilitated by service providers, striving to create a diverse sample that best reflects the diversity of returnees in Kosovo.

The interviews included voluntary returnees as well as individuals repatriated by foreign authorities; former asylum seekers and readmitted individuals who had lost their legal status abroad. The sample consisted of 14 men and 7 women interviewed, with predominantly low education backgrounds (over 40% of interviewed returnees are illiterate and 38% have only completed primary school).

Regarding ethnicity, 43% of interviewed returnees declared themselves as Albanians, 14% as Serbs, 14% as Ashkali, and 29% as Roma.

Regarding age, the majority of returnees were prime working age (36-45 years old), with the following age representation: 5% belong to the 18-25 age group; 9% to the 26-35 age group; 76% to the 36-45 age group, and 10% were over 45 years.

Given the existing information on the types of returnees coming back to Kosovo, the sample for the qualitative research has encompassed multiple types of returnees, and although it cannot be considered representative for quantitative analysis, it does provide rich qualitative insights relevant for the report.

### 3.1 Needs and priorities upon return

**Returnee families left Kosovo in hope for a better life elsewhere in Europe and upon return are facing even greater vulnerabilities.** Many returnee families had spent several decades in different European countries. However, upon return, their needs only increased, often due to receiving incorrect information that they would find ample support in Kosovo and would no longer experience poverty. Returnees comprise individuals representing various age groups and gender, capable of working, who by in large choose to rely on the social assistance system upon return. Close to 2/3 of interviewed returnees live on social assistance, and only one was self-employed, while only 3 were employed through the Office for Communities and Return.

**Returnees in Kosovo can be grouped into three distinct groups with varying degrees of sustainable reintegration upon return.** Those who returned involuntarily, those who returned voluntarily, and families in a state of perpetual movement, often residing in neighboring countries, mainly belonging to the Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities.



The second group, those who returned voluntarily, tend to integrate more easily into society as they come with business ideas and some financial resources, while the first and third groups face more significant economic challenges. Individuals who returned involuntarily expressed disappointment, as they had expected better living conditions, including housing, material support, employment, and, notably, better healthcare. Many state that they emigrated abroad due to serious health issues. Finally, returnees from the Roma and Ashkali communities continue to live in shared accommodations, facing economic hardships and various social challenges within their families and communities.

**Most returnees (excluding those who returned voluntarily) report that they have received some support from government institutions.** Many interviewed returnees initially utilized short-term placement centers for their temporary accommodation and subsequently moved in with relatives or rented accommodation.



*"The house where I lived before I left Kosovo is very damaged, in such a condition that it is uninhabitable, with weeping walls and high humidity, without doors and windows, because they were damaged or stolen by irresponsible people" – 43-year-old father in Roma community*

**Kosovo has received support from various donors and allocated financial resources for sustainable housing solutions.** Returnees are eligible for temporary shelter assistance (in the Accommodation Center for Repatriated Persons) and assistance to cover their housing rent needs for up to 12 months, subject to meeting criteria. Many returnees choose to return to the original family residence where they lived before migrating, sharing housing with multiple families. However, upon return the family social contracts may have changed, and while living in shared living arrangements before leaving Kosovo was common and well-accepted, host families might no longer be open to receiving returnees in the shared property.



*"I have returned with the hope that I will again stay in the same house with my brother, where my parents used to live, who are no longer alive, but my brother's family no longer accepted us in that property, under the pretense that he made investments, and my children are now grown up, and I have never sent financial means with support, which is very true, since I lived with social assistance in Sweden" - Head of returnee-family with 3 children*

**Many returnees, particularly in the Roma community, face challenges related to children's documentation.** There were also cases where adults lacked personal identification documents. The system later addressed these issues through assistance for registration, additional education, and various training programs. Specifically, assistance was provided to returnees in registering and obtaining civil status documentation to ensure their sustainable return and reintegration. Also, focus groups were established to encourage participation in government programs implemented at the local level.



*"The municipality is asking us to send the children to school, but the schools are asking us for birth certificates, which we cannot provide" – Returnee from Pristina*

### 3.2 Returnees' experiences in interacting with institutions and NGOs

**Repatriates primarily arrive by plane,** with fewer returnees entering through land border crossings, except those returning from Serbia and Montenegro, who are mainly of Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian nationality. At the airport, the Ministry of Internal Affairs manages a reception office for repatriated individuals where information is provided, and local representatives, mostly officials from the Centers for Social Work, participate in initial meetings.

**Reluctance and disinterest of returnees for reintegration programs and services.** Voluntarily repatriated individuals are interested in participating in reintegration programs and projects, actively taking part in active labor market measures, developing business plans, and attending capacity-building trainings. In contrast, involuntarily returned individuals are generally not very interested in the benefits and reintegration programs offered. The third category of returnees, individuals that have been repatriated from neighboring countries, tend to exhibit cyclical migration patterns and typically benefit from reintegration services and assistance each time they return. Even though these returnees had previously benefited from reintegration programs and services and have left Kosovo, thus their eligibility for participation in reintegration programs is unclear. The Kosovo government is keen to provide these individuals conditions for permanent residence and to reintegrate them fully into Kosovo society.

**Often funds allocated by the government and donors for reintegration are unspent because the primary goal of all three categories is permanent emigration to the country from which they were repatriated.** Challenges in understanding and accessing services. Many returnees report that they had received incorrect information in the country of their origin, where according to returnees they were told that service providers would visit them upon return, making them less interested in seeking available services upon return.



The situation upon return is similar to returnees' experiences in European countries where typically returnees were expecting and relying more on social assistance than they were interested in finding work and integrating into society. Despite encountering challenges immediately upon return, some returnees<sup>9</sup> hesitate and do not take prompt action because the deadline for filing documents to qualify for social assistance is relatively long, 12 months from the date of return. This phenomenon is more pronounced in the Roma community. Notwithstanding various types of services provided by the government, NGOs, international organization, many returnees still find the entire reintegration process confusing and tend to avoid fully engaging in it, this finding has been documented in our interviews.



*"Very often we are accused of not preparing the documents for regular application for social assistance, but they do not understand that the lack of certificates, stable housing, even lack of the equipment for the measurement of the kilowatt-hours of electricity spent each month is a problem" - Returnee from Roma community in Fushe Kosovë/Kosovo Polje*

**Dissatisfaction with procedures.** 5 years ago, the return programs were such that returnee families automatically qualified for various measures and benefits within reintegration programs. However, policies have changed over time, and returnee families no longer automatically receive benefits. Returnees now must follow specific steps, including taking part in self-employment programs and developing business plans to receive assistance, also their application and business plan must go through evaluation and monitoring commissions. Municipal offices are assisting returnees in completing required documents, especially those with limited education. This change in procedures in terms of eligibility for assistance was introduced at the central level and is being implemented at the local level, to prevent possible irregularities.



*"We have been told that as soon as we return we will receive an amount of financial resources, up to 3,000 euros, and start a mini business, but they are only offering us work tools" – Male-returnee from Fushë Kosova/Kosovo Polje, Ashkali community*

**Financial support is extremely low.** Repatriated families receive financial assistance amounting to 70 euros for one family member head of household and 20 euros for each additional family member for a period of 12 months, averaging around 130 to 150 euros per month for a family. Given rising prices, it is impossible for returnee families to make ends meet with these resources. Many returnees are thus actively pursuing informal employment because formal work may disqualify them from receiving social assistance.



*"With this amount of income, we can't make ends meet. All medicines have to be bought by ourselves, because we don't even have health insurance. In my family alone, we need about 100 euros a month to buy medicine, because I have a sick child. I recently found out about the possibility of applying for an opportunity for material support for children. Very difficult situation" – Returnee mother who has 3 young children with health problems.*

**Employability of returnees is low, while jobs offered are usually low-paid with difficult work conditions.** Local employment offices contact returnees upon their return, offering returnees training opportunities at the Professional Training Centers, and providing transportation and food, all to facilitate returnee participation in training programs and enhance their employability. All returnees are also encouraged to take part in active labor market measures, such as paid work practice. The types of jobs offered to returnees by local employment offices mainly include factory work in private businesses, cleaning, maintenance, and various physical labor, which are often not readily accepted by returnees. In many cases returnees worked for only a day or a week before leaving the workplace without notice. These returnees appear to be content with the social assistance provided by the Center for Social Work, even though they highlight that this financial assistance is modest. The Center for Social Work supports families with social assistance for the first 12 months without any criteria, and in many cases, this support is continued for years because parents refuse employment due to the difficult conditions and the poor state of their dependent children.



*"Most of the jobs that have been offered to me have been jobs in factories where plastics are melted, or loading and unloading jobs, such work conditions do not allow me to work because my health is poor" – Returnee, belonging to Ashkali community*

**Role of Service Providers and NGOs.** Several organizations are involved in providing services to repatriated individuals, though some have ceased operations due to lack of funds. Notably, the IOM office, GIZ office through DIMAK, and UNHCR continue to provide substantial support, not only to returnees but also to institutions. These organizations offer support to returnees from the moment of returnee's arrival at the airport, disseminate information, help returnees with paperwork, capacitate returnees with skills and even provide additional assistance to families for food and clothing. Service providers maintain continuous coordination with both central and local levels to ensure transparency and prevent potential abuses related to access to benefits.



**The need for psychosocial support.** The Mental Health Center provides services to returnees and their families. Other institutions, particularly Social Work Centers lack psychologists responsible for offering psychosocial services. In some cases, specialized NGOs have been contracted to provide these services. Frequent relocation of returnees negatively impacts the accessibility of these services, while maintaining access to services and contact with counselors by telephone can be difficult for some families facing economic and mental health challenges, as maintaining a phone represents an additional cost.

### 3.3 Gender lens: single mother-returnee journey

**Single parents face unique employment and childcare challenges.** To address these challenges, the employment offices strive to provide jobs with favorable conditions, such as jobs that do not require night shifts, strenuous work environments, and long commutes. In Pristina, a new program has been implemented that supports single mothers by granting them 500 euros monthly, including 250 euros for rent, 150 euros in food vouchers, and 100 euros per child. In addition, the process for enrolling children in kindergartens has been simplified, and there are additional benefits for accessing the social assistance scheme.

One of our returnee interviews involved a self-supporting mother with two children. It was difficult to identify the reason for her single status since we did not receive a clear answer whether her husband had passed away, if they were separated, or if her husband had remained in the country of origin. What was significant, though, was that the mother was solely responsible for caring for her children upon return with very limited means. In this particular case, the local NGO *"Association of Self-Supporting Parents"* promptly intervened and assumed continuous care for her and her family members.



*"As a self-supporting mother, the commitment and dedication of the NGO has made my life much easier. Thanks to them, today I have children, one in kindergarten and the other in school, and I never face an unbearable challenge" – 34-year-old returnee mother from Pristina.*

The Labor Law, the Law on the Social Assistance Scheme, and the Law on Pre-University Education have established benefits for self-supporting mothers. On the positive side, the criteria for receiving these benefits are straightforward, and often, not much documentation is required. These benefits and types of assistance are especially valuable for single mothers that do not receive alimony from their ex-husbands who may have stayed abroad.

### 3.4 Drivers for re-emigration

**Most returnees are unprepared both emotionally and materially for repatriation.** This is especially evident when considering the reasons (predominantly poverty and discrimination) that drove them to emigrate and their approach to repatriation. Many never anticipated returning, particularly those who left behind sick family members.

**For most returnees, life abroad was relatively stable.** While abroad, returnees relied on (generous) social assistance, which was sufficient to cover their basic needs, without making investments to improve their job skills or to pursue regular and stable employment opportunities.

**Upon return, returnee lives became much more challenging, given the low financial support provided back home and their low employability.** Returnee reintegration is hindered due to returnees lacking basic education, skills, impeding their employment and sustainable reintegration into society. Reintegration options offered by employment offices often do not match the professions, trades or skills returnees possess. Often returnees are offered training and job opportunities in sectors and professions that are completely different from their skills set or the work experience they have. Also, while there were multiple possibilities for training to gain new and improved skills in the vocational training centers, most returnees do not follow courses offered by employment offices. As a consequence, many rely on social assistance.<sup>10</sup>



*"The amount of funds from social assistance is the only source of existence for me and my family. But that amount is not enough to go out at the end of the month, that's why I often go out together with children on the street to collect things, and I sell the same. I'd rather work than steal" - Returnee from Roma community*

**The most significant difficulties returnees face upon return relate to reception from the host community, bureaucratic procedures to access reintegration support and services, and trainings not suitable to their level of skills, but also inadequate accommodation, given their large families and limited accommodation options.** For majority of returnees, these difficulties are not new since they have faced similar challenges before their migration.

**Discrimination and ghettoization are key factors contributing to the desire to re-emigrate, especially for vulnerable groups like the Roma.** Returnees from these communities often face ethnic-based discrimination, leading to being rejected when pursuing job opportunities and facing unfavorable treatment by potential employers. Discriminatory practices, combined with limited employment opportunities, contribute to their frustration and motivation to seek opportunities elsewhere.

<sup>10</sup>Social assistance transfers for a household are: 70 euros for the first member, 20 euros for the second member (where 20 euros are provided for a member under 18 years old, 10 euros for other members over 18 years old) Plus child allowances, 20 euro per child of age 0-2 years, 10 euros per child of age 3-16 years.





*"I asked to work in a market, in a cash register or a warehouse, but the only job that was offered to me was loading and unloading in a warehouse, because I was not allowed to work with customers" -Returnee from Roma community*

**Drivers of re-emigration among returnees are numerous and interconnected**, encompassing economic difficulties, lack of comprehensive health insurance, educational disparities, discrimination, limited awareness of economic initiatives, passivity, ineffective support services, bureaucratic challenges, perceptions of institutional unreliability, and family separation. Providing support and tailored opportunities to returnees is essential to promote their sustainable reintegration into Montenegrin society and prevent further emigration.



*"My family and I, as beneficiaries of the social assistance scheme, are exempt from the payment of health services. But the reason why I left Kosovo was precisely the operation of the child, which cannot be done in Kosovo. Now that I'm back and I didn't get this service even in Germany when I was there, I don't know how I'm going to get it." – Returnee from Pristina*

### 3.5 Returnee's journey through the system

Figure 6 below illustrates the typical journey of returnees within the reintegration system, emphasizing three main pillars of support: economic, social, and psychosocial, along with the entities involved. It identifies areas where services and rights may be lacking from the returnees' perspective and links these issues to potential consequences in the reintegration process.

**The first step involves the exchange of information between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora and the Ministry of Internal Affairs with the sending countries**, providing information on the number of repatriated persons and the municipalities to which the returnee families belong, this information is promptly shared with the relevant municipal PSCs.

**The second step entails contact with service providers at border points or airports**, where representatives of the Ministry of the Interior and the Center for Social Work receive returnees. During this initial interaction, returnees are expected to receive social and psychosocial support, including information brochures detailing their rights, obligations, available services, and instructions for their next steps. Unfortunately, this initial encounter often falls short of the intended objectives, causing returnees to feel unwelcomed and stigmatized, perceived as lawbreakers.

Consequently, many returnees emerge from this experience feeling disoriented about their rights, available avenues of help, and overwhelmed by the sheer volume of information presented, often accompanied by instances of conflicting information. These challenges frequently lead to loss of motivation and interest among returnees, resulting in their passivity related to seeking further information, fully exercising their rights, and accessing available services. Instead, many returnees rely on guidance from other community members, following their examples and experiences.

**The third step takes place at the Center for Social Work, where returnees receive social assistance, social services, and instructions for their next steps.** Majority of returnees have expressed concerns about limited welfare benefits, which they perceive as a major shortcoming. Many argue that these benefits do not cover basic expenses, thereby affecting their ability to successfully continue the reintegration process. Essentially, without adequate financial support and a sense of security, these returnees often consider re-immigration as their primary option. Returnees try to access and benefit from all available financial support simply to sustain themselves until they try to emigrate again. Close to half of interviewed returnees have migrated more than once, mostly Roma.

Returnee challenges extend beyond financial support. For example, individuals in need of housing encounter difficulties since institutions lack the capacity to provide these types of services. In addition, some returnees face barriers to accessing assistance due lack of identification documents and the absence of specific regulations or assistance tailored to address their unique situations, leaving them in an extremely vulnerable position. When it comes to social assistance, the educational system is also considered one of the essential factors for the reintegration of repatriated persons. However, this process does not pass without challenges, one of the key challenges is related to the recognition of diplomas, which can affect the process of registration in a school or faculty.

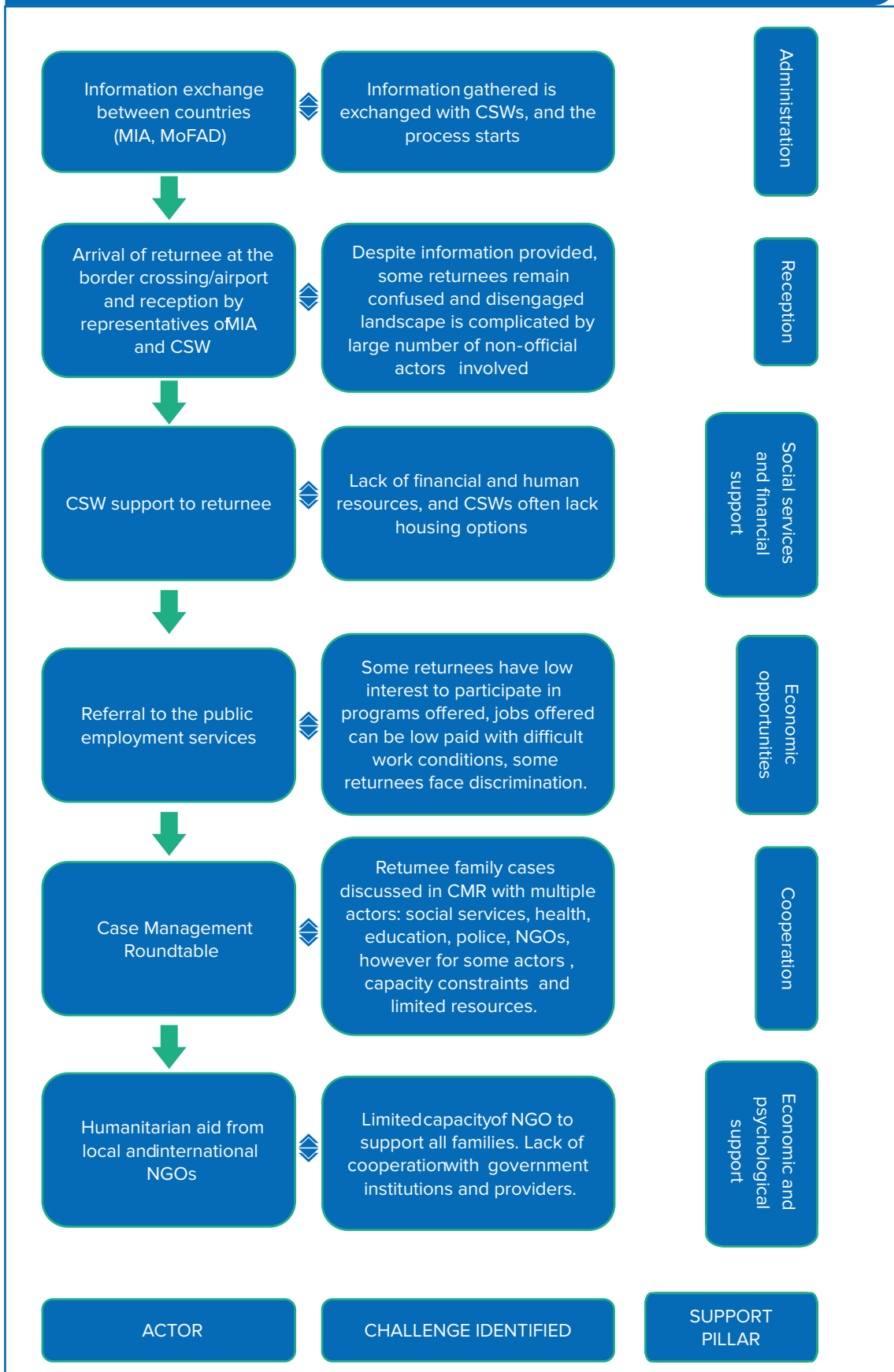
**The fourth step relates to services provided by the local employment offices and returnee engagement in various skill development programs and the Active Labor Market Measures (ALMMs) and entrepreneurship programs.** For returnees, it is crucial to become involved in these measures as soon as possible, given a large number of requests for participation in ALMM by general applicants and the limited capacities of vocational training centers. Often, returnees have to wait for several months until their turn comes since different courses have varying durations, lasting up to several months and are often oversubscribed.



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**The fifth step involves integrated case management,** where all actors at the local and central levels, civil society, municipal directorates, as well as field experts, convene to plan and provide services to returnees, ensuring a holistic approach to reintegration and supporting each other.

**Figure 7 : Returnees' pathway through the system – summary map**



Source: Authors' elaboration.

## 4.1 Reintegration processes

The process of reintegration of repatriated persons in Kosovo is supported by an organized reintegration system that offers both immediate reception and assistance upon arrival as well as measures for sustainable reintegration.

### 4.1.1 Assistance upon arrival

This support includes emergency benefits and measures provided immediately upon arrival. Services provided to repatriated individuals encompass organized reception and immediate assistance upon arrival, provision of information regarding their rights, temporary accommodation at the Accommodation Centre, and emergency benefits. Reception of repatriated persons is organized by officials stationed at the Reception Office at Pristina Airport and at all border crossing points. The Mol officials provide information to repatriated individuals regarding available benefits, assess emergency needs, and arrange transportation services when required. The Center for Temporary Housing, managed by the DRPR, offers temporary accommodation for repatriated persons for up to seven days and provides essential services, including food and necessary medical treatment. Once repatriated individuals reach their respective municipalities of origin, their needs are assessed and addressed to facilitate sustainable reintegration.

### 4.1.2 Measures for Sustainable Reintegration

#### ▶▶ Access to ID documents and public services

The measures for sustainable reintegration involve assisting repatriated persons in accessing public services. Registration and issuance of identification documents for repatriated persons are essential prerequisites for enabling returnees to access a range of benefits from reintegration measures. Possession of civil documents plays a pivotal role in allowing individuals to exercise their social, economic, and political rights. Challenges related to the lack of necessary documentation for civil registration are being tackled through cooperation and information exchange with the sending countries.

#### ▶▶ Health care

The provision of healthcare services to repatriated persons is carried out through the public healthcare system at various levels, including primary, secondary, and tertiary care.

Those with special needs among repatriated persons can receive assistance to cover the costs of medicines that may not be included in the essential medicine list (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2017). Health care remains a significant concern in the reintegration process, especially given lack of information about returnees with severe or vulnerable health conditions. The responsibility for providing healthcare services falls upon Family Medicine Centers at the municipal level, even when repatriated individuals lack the necessary documentation due to their civil status.

Addressing the return of individuals with mental health issues, substance use disorders, or special needs presents an additional challenge, given the limited capacity of specialized medical facilities. The societal stigma associated with these individuals further complicates their situation. In the years to come, concerted efforts need to be made to raise awareness about the needs of this group. Organizations and civil society groups collaborate to provide specific psycho-social treatment services for those in need.

### ► Housing

Municipalities are responsible for the provision of social housing solutions in line with the Law on Local Self-Government and the Law on Housing Financing Specific Programs (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2017). A significant portion of repatriates lack housing upon return and require immediate/temporary housing and rental housing provisions,<sup>11</sup> often necessitating financial assistance from the reintegration budget to cover expenses like rent, reconstruction, renovation, or furnishing of residential units. The challenge lies in ensuring their long-term housing stability due to capacity constraints at the local level. The Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning (MESP) assists municipalities in formulating housing policies and allocating budgets to support housing programs, including social housing initiatives, based on identified needs and priorities.

### ► Education

**The Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MEST) works in conjunction with the Municipal Education Departments (MDEs) to facilitate the inclusion of repatriated children within the education system.** This is especially vital for those children who have spent extended periods abroad or are born and educated in sending countries, often lacking proficiency in the official languages of Kosovo. Access to social, and medical assistance, and other public services is a challenge for those who cannot communicate in any official language and may lack certificates/diplomas to validate their level of education. To address challenges related to compulsory education, the Municipal Education Departments plans to certify trainers which will further train teaching staff in schools dealing with returning students.

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<sup>11</sup>In 2013, 969 people benefited rental accommodation, in 2014 benefited 842 people, in 2015 benefited 639 people and in 2016 benefited 737 people. In 2013, 56 people benefited from reconstruction/renovation, in 2014 benefited 24 people, in 2015 benefited 5 people and in 2016 benefited 11 people. In 2013, 23 people benefited home furnishing, in 2014 benefited 17 people, in 2015 benefited 17 people and in 2016 benefited 24 people.

MDE also plans to organize language courses and catch-up classes for repatriated students based on individual plans prepared by education specialists. Additionally, teams will be formed to address the issue of school abandonment, which disproportionately affects the Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2017). In addition to education, cultural and recreational activities will be organized to promote the cultural integration and socialization of children with their peers, fostering a positive influence on their successful reintegration.

#### ► **Employment and entrepreneurship, including agriculture**

**The integration of repatriated individuals into the labor market is achieved through public employment services (PES) programs and active labor market measures.** Vocational training is provided to those in need of professional preparation for entry into the labor market, including on-the-job training opportunities. Employment through wage subsidies is aimed at creating job prospects for registered repatriated individuals who are unemployed. Self-employment and entrepreneurship promotion represent essential measures to support family-based enterprises. A dedicated budget is allocated for sustainable economic reintegration through wage subsidies and business establishment financing for repatriated persons (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2017).

**Agricultural grants are essential to provide employment opportunities and income generation for residents in rural areas.** These schemes will be extended to support the sustainable reintegration of returnees living in rural areas. The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Rural Development (MAFRD), in collaboration with the Ministry of Innovation and Development of Rural and Regional Areas (MIA-DRRP),<sup>12</sup> will be working on establishing the necessary procedures to facilitate access to agricultural grants for repatriated individuals in rural regions. MAFRD and DRRP will also enable provision of agricultural mini-grants at the municipal level through the Municipal Agricultural Directorates.

#### ► **Social services and benefits**

Social services encompass direct provision of social care, counseling, and, in certain cases, material assistance to returnees facing social needs. It is the responsibility of CSWs in each municipality to provide these social services. To ensure access to social services, vulnerable groups including returnees are recognized as those requiring specialized treatment and support when compared to the general population.

## **4.2 Reintegration structures**

The following sections describe key stakeholders in the reintegration structure in Kosovo at the central level and local level.

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<sup>12</sup>Kosovo Government. (2017). National Strategy for Sustainable Reintegration of Repatriated Persons in Kosovo, 2018-2022



## 4.2.1 Central-level structures

### 4.2.1 A Department for Reintegration of Repatriated Persons and Integration of Foreigners (DRPP)

**The Department for Reintegration of Repatriated Persons and Integration of foreigners (DRPP), within the Ministry of Interior oversees the reintegration process for repatriated individuals.** The DRRP was established by the 2013 Regulation, expanding the Office of Reintegration into a full department within the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA). The DRRP holds several responsibilities carried out by the department staff, staff at the Pristina International Airport, and regional coordinators, including:

- ▶ Proposing, drafting, and ensuring implementation of reintegration policies and strategic documents.
- ▶ Advising, supporting, and coordinating the work of various institutions involved in the reintegration process.
- ▶ Reviewing and deciding on the requests of repatriated persons within the central-level institutions' responsibility and monitoring implementation at central and local levels.
- ▶ Organizing the reception of repatriated persons, providing information on potential benefits, conducting the initial needs assessment, and arranging transportation to the municipality of origin.
- ▶ Creating and maintaining mechanisms for collecting, reporting, and exchanging information between central and local level institutions.
- ▶ Training and capacity building of municipal authorities.
- ▶ Carrying out the duties of the Secretariat for the Municipal Commissions for Reintegration (MCRs) and the Complaints Commission.
- ▶ Managing temporary boarding shelters and seven-day emergency accommodations.

Repatriated individuals receive support through the Reintegration schemes in accordance with the GRK Regulation No. 22/2020 and the Reintegration Program. Beneficiaries of the reintegration schemes encompass all repatriated persons who hold citizenship of the Republic of Kosovo and have submitted requests for benefits under the Reintegration schemes. These individuals must meet specific criteria as defined by the existing legislation.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs has allocated a budget of EURO 1.38 million for reintegration measures in 2023. The assistance and support provided to repatriated individuals under the Reintegration schemes is structured as follows:



## Assistance upon arrival

- ▶ Reception, registration in the system, and immediate information provision to repatriated individuals upon their arrival at the airport or other border crossing points.
- ▶ Provision of medical assistance upon arrival, if necessary. In cases where the Department has received information from the returning countries regarding a repatriated person in need of medical assistance, coordination with the Ministry of Health ensures the presence of a medical team at the border crossing points.
- ▶ Arrangement of transportation to the municipality of origin, as required.
- ▶ Provision of short-term accommodation at the Accommodation Center for Repatriated Persons.

## Emergency aid and support for up to 12 months after return

- ▶ Assistance in securing rented accommodation. Repatriated individuals can benefit from rented accommodation for up to 12 months, if they meet specific criteria, including facing an unresolved accommodation upon arrival, having limited housing options, and facing financial constraints. After 12 months, municipalities assume responsibility for housing.
- ▶ Provision of social assistance.
- ▶ Reimbursement of expenses for non-essential drugs.
- ▶ Winter aid packages.

## Aid and support for sustainable reintegration

- ▶ Facilitating housing solutions through reconstruction, renovation, and the provision of household furniture packages.
- ▶ Integration of repatriated individuals into the labor market through services of the public employment services (PES), which includes participation in active labor market measures, professional training, on-the-job training, employment subsidies, self-employment, and enterprise promotion.
- ▶ Ensuring inclusion of repatriated children in the educational system.
- ▶ Organizing language courses and other related support activities.

**Table 1: Assistance immediately after arrival and emergency repatriation assistance for the period 2018-2022**

	Transport (to the Municipality of origin)	Temporary accommodation (7 days) and prepared food (served)	Social assistance food and hygiene packages	Accommodation for rent up to 12 months		Winter aid package (firewood)	Health care package
2018	804	69	76	124	365	86	42
2019	553	72	694	117	596	45	104
2020	162	35	573	119	317	65	110
2021	313	73	634	135	369	71	150
2022	111	22	236	156	369	59	43

**Table 2: Aid for sustainable reintegration, 2018-2022**

	Assisted children in schools after repatriation	Professional training	Business financing (self-employment)	Organization of language courses	On-the-job training	Jobs	consulting services	Furnishing houses	Home renovation	Home reconstruction
2018	539	380	400	254	87	264	611	31	19	0
2019	496	787	365	204	289	312	1347	207	9	3
2020	422	62	433	115	846	268	373	112	0	1
2021	335	156	637	181	1683	200	1747	66	7	32
2022	143	44	726	216	310	292	817	41	3	2

As highlighted in Tables 1 and 2, a wide range of assistance packages has been provided to returnees including short-term housing, food packages, hygiene packages, social schemes, furniture packages, home renovation or reconstruction, education for children, vocational training, employment assistance, and self-employment assistance. The application process for reintegration assistance involves coordination among relevant ministries. However, issues have arisen regarding the financing of business plans, which consume a significant portion of the budget. Most of the proposals seeking funding for business plans are related to agriculture and livestock, but many of them fail to yield significant results.

### **4.2.1 B The Central Reintegration Commission (CRC) and the Commission for Appeals (CA)**

The CRC consists of representatives from various ministries and is chaired by the DRRP representative. The CRC examines and decides on requests for financing returnee business plans, house reconstruction applications, and applications for assistance and support for vulnerable returnees. Under the 2015 Regulation, the CRC must communicate its decisions to the returnee applicant within 15 days of the day applications has been lodged.

The Complaints Committee consists of representatives from different government bodies and delegated lawyers with significant work experience. The CA decides on appeals against both the DRRP and the MCR decisions. The CA must examine the complaints timely and decide within 30 days of complaint filing and communicate its decision to the complainant.

### **4.2.2 Municipal-level Institutions**

Obligations of municipal-level institutions responsible for repatriated persons' reintegration are regulated by the same regulations and instructions as for central-level institutions. At the municipal level, three bodies are responsible for aiding repatriated persons: Municipal Offices for Communities and Return (MCO), Municipal Commissions for Reintegration (MCR), and Centers for Social Welfare (CSW).

In addition, Mental Health Centers (MHC) and local offices of PES carry out important activities at the local level.

#### **4.2.2 A Municipal Offices for Communities and Return (MCO)**

MOC serves as the primary point of contact for repatriated persons upon their return to the municipality of origin. MOC plays an informative, advisory, evaluative, and monitoring role in the reintegration process. Their responsibilities include providing information, guidance, and support to repatriated persons regarding reintegration opportunities and benefits. They also accept and record requests from repatriated persons, collaborate with regional coordinators and local stakeholders, refer repatriated persons to relevant local services, and maintain records in the E-Case Management System.

#### **4.2.2 B Municipal Commissions for Reintegration (MCR)**

MCR is the decision-making body at the local level composed of representatives from various municipal departments. MCRs decide on applications for emergency benefits, such as rental housing, social assistance, winter assistance packages, medical treatment, and furniture packages. MCR decisions must be made within seven days of application submission and communicated to the applicant within three days.



### **4.2.3 Centers for Social Work (CSW)**

CSWs play a crucial role in the reintegration process as municipal institutions responsible for social protection. CSWs are responsible for conducting full assessments of the needs of repatriated persons, especially those with special needs.

Centers for Social Work (CSW) face challenges due to high number of returnee-beneficiaries and high case-load, this is particularly present in Ashkali communities whose members migrate frequently. CSWs provide social services related to various returnee needs, and also they try to address family violence or school dropouts. Repatriated families often express concerns about social housing, limited means of living, their unmet expectations, children's education and hygiene. CSWs addresses these issues by offering temporary support, engaging with donors, and assisting the family with their health, education needs and registration processes.

Returnees who find employment through the employment office are no longer eligible for benefits in the social assistance scheme.

### **4.2.4 Mental Health Centers (MHC)**

There are currently six regional Mental Health Centers (MHCs) in Kosovo serving multiple municipalities. For example, Pristina's MHC serves six municipalities in the region. While the MHC provides services to all individuals, it has also seen cases of repatriated persons or families. Many of these cases involve anger and disappointment, as repatriates' expectations often go unfulfilled after their return. Ongoing support from mental health experts is crucial for repatriates during their reintegration. The MHC collaborates closely with CSWs, which refer cases to the MHC and hold multidisciplinary roundtables. These roundtables provide valuable information about cases, allowing for comprehensive treatment of returnees.

### **4.2.5 Public Employment Services (PES)**

The local employment offices, part of the Kosovo Employment Agency, actively engage with repatriated individuals through employment programs and labor market measures to help returnees secure employment. Close cooperation between PES with organizations such as UNDP, UNICEF, GIZ, Swiss cooperation, and IOM is present.

The local employment offices prepare returnees for the job market, by offering professional training through employment advisors and professional training centers. Challenges however arise when returnees fail to complete training courses, even though the employment office provides transportation and covers expenses.

**The reintegration process is a complex system that takes place at many levels and involves many actors.** The need for effective coordination between the parties is significant, not only at the central level between relevant ministries, but also at the local level and with non-governmental organizations and international donor organizations.

### **5.1 Vertical and horizontal cooperation, including cross-sectoral**

Inter-sectorial cooperation at the ministerial level and collaboration between the central and local levels is crucial for the effective functioning of the reintegration system and holistic approach.

Regulation No. 01/2018 on the Return of Displaced Persons and Durable Solutions highlights the significance of communication and collaboration among various stakeholders involved in the reintegration of returnees. These stakeholders encompass the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, Centre for Social Work, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Employment Agency, local governments, NGOs, and others (MIA, 2018). Despite efforts to enhance inter-institutional cooperation at the national and local levels, challenges related to cooperation persist in the reintegration process.

#### **5.1.1 Central level**

**There is a certain degree of cooperation and coordination among ministries, non-governmental organizations, international donors, and organizations at the central level. Nevertheless, further advancement of cooperation and coordination mechanisms among all parties is necessary.**

The central level has established its structures within the Ministry of Internal Affairs and specifically the DRPP, where the existing staff is responsible for managing the repatriation process and coordinating activities with municipal and regional structures. As part of this cooperation, the Ministry of Internal Affairs/DRPP conducts numerous informative training sessions on legislative changes, procedures, and action standards for local-level staff. The coordination of the reintegration process between the central and local levels, as well as in the field related to verification of cases is carried out by regional coordinators-staff of the DPPR in collaboration with the relevant municipalities. The DRPP coordinates the reintegration process between the central and local levels in multiple ways, specifically by:

- ▶ Coordinating, monitoring, and supporting the process of reintegration and social, economic, and cultural integration of repatriated persons at the local level.
- ▶ Preparing instructions, standard forms of relevant documentation, and supporting information for municipal authorities. The DRPP also advises and supports municipal staff involved in the reintegration and integration process.
- ▶ Ensuring registration of cases and archiving of files in the E-System for Case Management (SMR). The DRPP also collects information and data from municipalities and uploads this information to the central-database.

The DRRP acknowledges the role of non-state implementing partners and civil society and is committed to collaborating with civil society organizations. To ensure that projects and programs conducted by NGOs and international organizations align with reintegration needs and adhere to government policies and institutional commitments, the system for coordinating and overseeing reintegration projects needs to be enhanced. Furthermore, collaboration with non-state partners includes engagement with the IOM, which plays a significant role in reintegrating voluntary returnees. In Kosovo, IOM closely collaborates with governmental, intergovernmental, and non-governmental partners.

### 5.1.2 Local level

Reintegration support is organized as part of municipal and local services and there is a degree of coordination and cooperation. Delivery of these services involves close cooperation and coordination among local authorities and providers responsible for social welfare, health, employment, education, housing, and other relevant service providers, following the competencies outlined in the Law on Local Self-Government. Regulation 02/2010 mandated the creation of local coordinating mechanisms for return and community issues (CMMCs) in all municipalities to facilitate the implementation of reintegration policies.

**The Case Management Round (CMR) Table is a multidisciplinary platform** where representatives from public institutions, NGOs, and other stakeholders coordinate efforts for families or individuals. The case manager, typically a social services officer from the Center for Social Work (CSW), receives reports from the round table regarding the fulfillment of obligations and needs of the family. CMR aims to share information in real-time with all partners to find the best solutions for each case and family.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup><https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDocumentDetail.aspx?ActID=20844>

### 5.1.3 Databases and data exchange

The DRPP is the custodian of the database on the reintegration and is responsible for the registration of returnee cases and archiving of files in the e-System for Case Management (SMR). The DRPP also exchanges data between the central and local levels in multiple ways, specifically the DRPP also collects information and data on returnees from municipalities and uploads this information in the central database.

The Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, through the Employment Agency and its local employment offices, the Center for Social Work, return offices, and local, collects, processes, and exchanges data through an electronic system. This database is centrally located but also accessible at the local level.

## 6. GAPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite tangible progress made by Kosovo's institutions in developing policies and establishing institutional mechanisms, the implementation of the Strategy for the Reintegration of Repatriated Persons (Reintegration Strategy) continues to face challenges.

**Main challenges in implementing the Reintegration Strategy are insufficient flow of information and cooperation between central and local level institutions.**

Furthermore, there is a need to embrace a stronger field perspective in design and implementation of reintegration activities, specifically need for a deeper understanding of the needs of repatriated persons, as well as adequate allocation of funds within municipal budgets to address these needs.

While Kosovo has had a dedicated fund for the reintegration of repatriated persons as a separate budget line since 2010, utilization of allocated funds has been significantly low. This indicates that despite provision of financial resources, there has been limited progress in utilizing fully allocated budgets.



**Some positive developments include intensified efforts of central institutions in providing guidance to local officials** on strategy implementation and how to apply for assistance worth EURO 3.4 million from the centrally-established repatriation fund. Additionally, municipal offices for communities and returns have been established to serve as a strong coordinating body at the local level.

**Some legislative progress has been achieved in the realm of returns, including the issuance of Regulation No. 01/2018 in January 2018, which pertains to the Return of Displaced Persons and Sustainable Solutions.** Although this regulation represents a significant step toward streamlining procedures and enhancing coordination among various entities involved in the return process, it centralizes decision-making authority regarding emergency assistance.

**Our research reveals that municipalities are inconsistently fulfilling their obligations.** Many municipal mechanisms exhibit inadequate and irregular functioning, with the provision of return assistance heavily reliant on donor support. Property-related issues remain a substantial obstacle to progress in return efforts. Illegal property reoccupations and challenges in allocating land for housing assistance programs have curtailed displaced persons' exercise of property rights.

**Despite government efforts and legislative progress, most improvements were driven by international institutions.** Tangible results have largely been initiated by the international community.

**Security incidents and opposition to return from host communities continue to impact returnees.** Although most incidents involve minor offenses, they negatively affect the sense of safety among returnees, particularly when cases go unsolved, and culprits remain unidentified. Guidelines for local-level responses to incidents affecting communities, approved in January 2018, are expected to enhance institutional responses that have often been ineffective or absent.

To address these challenges effectively, the following key measures are recommended:

- ▶ **Provide comprehensive training for municipal officials** to empower them to make decisions at the municipal level, particularly related to assistance to repatriated individuals. Focus on training the Municipal Commission for Reintegration, with an emphasis on organizing additional language courses, facilitating access to education, identifying opportunities for professional training, and improving access to the labor market.
- ▶ **Streamline decision-making processes** and eliminate bureaucratic obstacles by allocating budgets directly to municipalities. As a consequence, regional coordinators may no longer be necessary.
- ▶ **Enhance the sustainability of assistance packages** for re-admissions. This involves tightening criteria for financing business plans and reallocating saved resources to support training and skills development for returnees.
- ▶ **Publish all bilateral repatriation** agreements and establish an electronic database containing data about these agreements, regularly updated.
- ▶ **Promote a consultative and well-structured decision-making process** for altering existing regulations, with due respect to the decision-making cycle, to avoid ad-hoc decisions.

# 7. EMERGING PRACTICES

## 7.1 Self-employment program, wage subsidy and on-the-job training-partnership approach.

This example highlights a partnership between the Kosovo government and its institutions (Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, the Kosovo Employment Agency), the UNDP and the bilateral donor-Finish government. This partnership collaboration was instrumental in ensuring significant impact and long-term sustainability.<sup>14</sup>The approach focused on returnees' skill development, employment opportunities, and immediate support to facilitate returnee socio-economic reintegration and was integral in addressing the complex challenges of repatriate integration in Kosovo (UNDP, 2020).

- ▶ The ultimate goal of the strategic partnership was to ensure sustainable reintegration of repatriated persons and minimize future illegal immigration. This was achieved by providing necessary skills, offering employment opportunities, and implementing strategic documents for more efficient reintegration and better employment outcomes.
- ▶ This strategic partnership aimed to tackle lack of skills among repatriated persons due to low levels of formal education. By increasing returnee skills and supporting returnee entrepreneurship, this partnership sought to enhance employability, provide employment opportunities and facilitate the sustainable integration of repatriated persons into Kosovo's society (UNDP, 2020).
- ▶ The approach encompassed three main measures. The Self-Employment Programme, Wage Subsidy, and On-the-Job-Training, are part of the Kosovo government's Active Labour Market Measures. These active measures were tailored to the needs of the beneficiaries-returnees, offering tools, equipment, and coaching to support self-employment, collaborating with the private sector for wage subsidies of up to 12 months, and providing on-the-job training to enhance skills and experience for sustainable employment.

<sup>14</sup>This initiative was part of the broader objective to align with the EU integration agenda and visa liberalization process.



- The *Self-Employment Programme* provides returnees with the tools and resources they need to become self-employed and create their businesses, offering startup equipment packages, training, and mentorship to assist returnees in launching their businesses. The selection of the most promising business ideas is done through a competitive process. The program is carried out collaboratively by the Employment Offices (EO) and the Vocational Training Centers (VTC), with the support of the UNDP.
- The *Wage Subsidy (WS) Programme* addresses employment challenges by providing wage subsidies to employers who hire eligible beneficiaries (in this case-returnees). The purpose of the *Wage Subsidy Programme* is to support employment opportunities for unemployed persons-returnees by subsidizing their salary for 12 months. The *Wage Subsidy Programme* was announced to both businesses and beneficiaries-returnees and matchmaking is done by the Employment Officers/counsellors. The matching of the profile of returnee-jobseeker with the businesses' needs is of crucial importance.
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## 7.2 Key to success and lessons learned<sup>15</sup>

**Findings from an independent evaluation show that the three measures: *Self-Employment Programme, Wage Subsidy, and On-the-Job-Training* have been effective, including in the diversity of business sectors where returnee-business were established, matching of skills sets (for WS and OJT measures), and the selection procedure.** Repatriated persons benefiting from WS and OJT measures have increased their skills, experience and knowledge, and besides these indicators, commitment and motivation are crucial factors that directly impact sustainability.

**Adaptability, effective partnerships and skill building.** The three measures (*Self-Employment Programme, Wage Subsidy, and On-the-Job-Training*) to integrate repatriates highlight the importance of tailored program design, adaptability, effective partnerships, and a strong focus on inclusivity and skill development for the successful integration of repatriates.

<sup>15</sup>These are drawing from the independent evaluation commissioned by UNDP: '[SUSTAINABLE REINTEGRATION OF REPATRIATED PERSONS INTO LABOUR MARKET THROUGH UNDP's ACTIVE LABOUR MARKET MEASURES DURING 2019-2020](#)'



**Contextual Relevance and Clear Objectives.** The programs were designed to meet the specific socio-economic needs of returnees in Kosovo and tailored to the specific context.

**Mentoring and training are crucial for Start-up Survival.** The first year is critical for the survival of start-ups, therefore training, mentoring and coaching are of crucial importance. Returnees may lack experience in managing a business, they may lack a clear understanding regarding their competition and business environment, including laws and regulations in Kosovo. Therefore, to ensure long-term sustainability and impact, the self-employment program for repatriated persons included interventions that offered training before repatriated persons were awarded grants and mentoring and coaching services for one year after the returnee-entrepreneur had received the grant.

**Counseling and mentoring are important for the transition from subsidized employment into regular employment.** Different from the *Self-Employment* measure (where returnees received extensive training, mentoring and coaching during the business development phase), in the *Wage Subsidy* and *OJT* measure there were no formal counseling services during the WS period to facilitate the transition from the subsidy scheme into sustainable employment for returnees. To enhance the impact and sustainability of the *On-the-Job Training (OJT)* and *Wage Subsidy (WS)* measures, the necessity to provide counseling and mentoring was recognized. Counseling and mentoring would reinforce and accelerate the transition from WS measure into sustainable and regular employment to ensure impact and long-term sustainability. While *Wage Subsidy* and *On-the-Job-Training* schemes have been influential, however, sustainability depends on the knowledge and experience gained by the repatriated persons and the duration of the programme.

**Efficiency and Sustainability.** The benefits of the three measures significantly exceeded their costs, the favorable cost-benefit ratio suggested high efficiency. The benefits were diverse and impactful, ranging from a high rate of business survival and average revenues in the *Self-Employment Programme*, to long-term employment and skill development in the *Wage Subsidy* and *On-the-Job Training* schemes.



**Focus on Gender Equality.** Special attention was paid to gender equality at all stages. Efforts were made to include as many women as possible, particularly in the *Wage Subsidy* and *On-the-Job-Training* schemes, given the lower proportion of women among the returnees.

**Adaptability and Continuity Amidst Challenges.** Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the implementation and monitoring process continued. This adaptability and commitment under adverse conditions were significant contributors to success.

### 7.3 Three successful individual stories

One of the beneficiaries of the Self-Employment Programme is Bashkim Jaholli,<sup>16</sup> who left his hometown of Podujevo in 2017, embarking on a journey to France with hopes of starting a new life. Less than a year later, he found himself repatriated to Kosovo. Since then, his sole focus has been securing a stable future for his family of four. Although finding suitable employment proved to be a daunting task, Bashkim decided to establish his own small business. Bashkim received support through the Self-Employment Programme and now operates a car wash.



*"When you work eight hours a day with fewer than thirty 30-minute breaks, every commitment pays off,"*



*"My sole focus has been securing a stable future for my family of four. Among the many challenges I faced during repatriation, I decided to establish my own small business."*

Shqipe Delija, who recently opened a tailor shop in the Đakovica city center, crafting traditional and contemporary clothing is also one of the beneficiaries of the Self-Employment Programme. Shqipe's journey back to Kosovo in 2017, following a brief stay in Germany with her husband, daughter, and two grandchildren, hasn't been without its difficulties.



*"We had hoped for a more prosperous life abroad, but it turned out that we couldn't withstand the challenges and had to return to Kosovo," she explains. "Because I had prior experience with the situation in Kosovo and had low expectations, readjusting to what was once familiar was even more challenging than starting from scratch."*

<sup>16</sup><https://undpkosovo.exposure.co/plenty-of-work-to-do-and-a-corner-to-rest>

A few months later, in 2018, Shqipe applied for a start-up grant in tailoring and became a SEP beneficiary. Equipped with professional tools provided by the program and her tireless work ethic, she became a reliable source of financial income for her family and managed to cover her children's educational needs.

One of the beneficiaries of WSP, Liridon Januzi, decided to leave his hometown in 2014 in pursuit of better opportunities abroad, only to be repatriated to Kosovo after a short period. Return resulted in numerous challenges for Liridon, particularly regarding finding a new job to support his family. Through the Wage Subsidy Programme, Liridon has secured a job, and what's even more significant, it's in the field to which he has devoted many years.



*Two years later, along with my wife and two children, I returned from Germany. These past two years have presented numerous challenges for me, particularly regarding reintegration and finding a new job to support my family"*



*"Starting everything from scratch after our return to Kosovo, especially in terms of finding employment, was very difficult," he reflects.*

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## Annexes

### Annex 1: Key concepts

#### Box 3 : Definition of concepts used: migration and returnees

##### MIGRATION

**Regular Migration:** This refers to planned and lawful movement between countries. People who migrate regularly often have proper visas, permits, or other required documentation to enter their destination country.

**Irregular Migration:** Irregular migration, also known as undocumented or illegal migration, involves people moving to a destination country without the necessary legal documentation or authorization. This type of migration often poses challenges and risks for migrants and can lead to legal issues.

**Circular or Seasonal Migration:** Circular migration involves people moving back and forth between their home country and a destination country. Seasonal migration is a specific form of circular migration, where individuals temporarily move to another location for a particular season or job, such as agricultural workers moving for a harvest season.

**Return Migration:** Return migration refers to individuals moving back to their home country after living or working in another country. This can be a permanent return or a temporary one, depending on the circumstances.

##### RETURNEES

**Voluntary Returnees:** These individuals choose to return to their home country. It might be motivated by personal or economic reasons.

**Involuntary Returnees:** Involuntary returnees are individuals who are compelled to return to their home country due to deportation, forced removal, or other external factors. Their return is often against their will.

**Self-Organized Returnees:** These returnees make their own arrangements and decisions regarding their return. They may secure their transportation and logistics independently.

**Assisted Returnees:** Assisted returnees receive support and assistance, often from international organizations or governments, to facilitate their return. This support can include travel arrangements, reintegration assistance, and more.

**Deported Returnees:** Deported returnees are individuals who are forcibly returned to their home country due to violations of immigration laws in the destination country.



## **INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS (IDPs)**

Persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border.

### **Box 4 : Select key dimensions of vulnerability related to migration**

Vulnerability in the context of migration encompasses various dimensions that affect different groups of people. These dimensions often intersect and compound each other, leading to increased challenges and hardships for individuals and communities.

#### **GENDER-BASED VULNERABILITY**

Women migrants often face unique challenges such as gender-based violence, discrimination, and exploitation. They might have limited access to education and employment opportunities. Female migrants are also vulnerable to human trafficking and sexual exploitation.

#### **AGE-RELATED VULNERABILITY**

Young migrants may lack experience and resources, making them more susceptible to exploitation and abuse. They often face challenges in accessing education and finding stable employment.

Older migrants may struggle with health issues and social isolation. They often have specific healthcare needs and may require support with daily activities.

#### **DISABILITY-RELATED VULNERABILITY**

Migrants with disabilities face accessibility barriers and discrimination, making it challenging to access services and employment opportunities. They may need specific accommodations and support.

#### **EDUCATION LEVEL-RELATED VULNERABILITY**

Low-educated migrants often find it difficult to secure well-paying jobs and may be limited in their ability to navigate complex immigration systems or advocate for their rights.

#### **ECONOMIC VULNERABILITY**

**Low-Income Migrants:** Migrants from impoverished backgrounds may lack financial resources and social safety nets, making them more vulnerable to exploitation and poverty. They often seek migration as a means to escape economic hardship.



## Annex 2: List of interviewees

**Table 3: List of interviewees (institutions)**

	Name of the institution	Position
1	Ministry of Interior	Head of the Department for Integration of Returnees by Readmission
2	Centre for Social Work Prishtina,	Director of the Centre for Social Work
3	Centre for Social Work Fushë Kosove/Kosovo Polje	Director of the Centre for Social Work
4	Employment Agency of Kosovo	Head of the Division for the development of active measures and analyzes in the labor market, Employment Agency of the Republic of Kosovo
5	Centre for Mental Health	Director of the Centre for Mental Health Psychologist
6	Office for Returnees and Communities	Head of the office



**Table 2: List of interviewed returnees**

No	Code	Municipality	Gender	Age	Date
1	Int_1	Pristine / Pristina	M	29	July, 2023
2	Int_2	Pristine / Pristina	F	39	July, 2023
3	Int_3	Pristine / Pristina	M	41	July, 2023
4	Int_4	Pristine / Pristina	M	22	July, 2023
5	Int_5	Pristine / Pristina	M	43	July, 2023
6	Int_6	Pristine / Pristina	M	42	July, 2023
7	Int_7	Pristine / Pristina	F	38	July, 2023
8	Int_8	Obiliq / Obilic	M	39	August, 2023
9	Int_9	Obiliq / Obilic	M	31	August, 2023
10	Int_10	Obiliq / Obilic	F	37	August, 2023
11	Int_11	Obiliq / Obilic	M	41	August, 2023
12	Int_12	Obiliq / Obilic	M	38	August, 2023
13	Int_13	Obiliq / Obilic	M	44	August, 2023
14	Int_14	Obiliq / Obilic	F	37	August, 2023
15	Int_15	Fushe Kosove/ Kosovo Polje	F	36	September, 2023
16	Int_16	Fushe Kosove/ Kosovo Polje	F	36	September, 2023
17	Int_17	Fushe Kosove/ Kosovo Polje	F	36	September, 2023
18	Int_18	Fushe Kosove/ Kosovo Polje	F	36	September, 2023
19	Int_19	Fushe Kosove/ Kosovo Polje	F	36	September, 2023
20	Int_20	Fushe Kosove/ Kosovo Polje	F	36	September, 2023
21	Int_21	Fushe Kosove/ Kosovo Polje	F	36	September, 2023

### Annex 3: Characteristics of sample

#### Age:

- 5% of respondents fall in the 18-25 age group.
- 9% are aged between 26 and 35.
- The majority, 76%, belong to the 36-45 age group.
- 10% are over 45 years old.

#### Gender:

- 68% are male.
- 32% are female.

#### Nationality:

- 43% are of Albanian nationality.
- 14% are Serb nationality.
- 14% are from the Ashkali community.
- 29% belong to the Roma community.

#### Education level of the respondents:

- 43% of respondents are illiterate.
- 38% have completed only primary school.
- 19% have completed secondary school.

#### Since most respondents are married:

- 10% have 1-2 children.
- 76% have 3-4 children.
- 14% have more than 4 children.

#### Regarding economic well-being:

- None of the respondents reported living in affluent economic conditions.
- Only 19% stated they live in moderate economic conditions.
- The majority, 81%, reported living in poor economic conditions.

#### Regarding employment status:

- 5% are self-employed.
- 57% rely on social assistance.
- 24% are involved in various business plans.
- 14% are employed through the Office for Communities and Return.

#### In terms of recidivism:

- 33% of respondents have a history of recidivism.
- 67% do not have a history of recidivism.

Concerning the form of repatriation:

- 29% returned voluntarily.
- 71% returned forcibly, against their will.

In response to whether the repatriates had a choice in their return destination:

- 80% affirmed they had a choice.
- 20% declared they had no alternative and were compelled in their choice.

When repatriated:

- 72% of returnees had family networks, friends, or a support system.
- 28% had no such support, as in some cases, their families also migrated and are still residing in other countries.



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