



Country: Serbia
Initiation Plan

Project Title: Support the Reintegration of Roma Returnees

Expected CP Outcome(s): By 2020, there is an effective enabling environment that promotes sustainable economic development, focused on an inclusive labour market and decent job creation

Initiation Plan Start Date: 01 June 2016

Initiation Plan End Date: 31 December 2016

Implementing Partner: UNDP

Brief Description

The 2015 migration crisis has posed severe challenges for the European Union and has an impact on all asylum-related policies. Despite the fact that only 1 percent of requests submitted so far in Germany and other EU countries was considered admissible, Serbian citizens continue to apply for the asylum. The increase of unfounded asylum applications lodged by Serbian nationals threatens to jeopardize the visa free regime granted to Serbia in 2009.

80% of registered returnees under the readmission agreement are Roma and local self-governments have limited capacities to deal with their inclusion.

UNDP will work on enabling employment opportunities for Roma returnees, combined with support in education and housing. UNDP will also try to improve coordination mechanisms at the local level and contribute to awareness raising of returnees on how to improve their livelihoods.

Programme Period:	2016-2020
Atlas Award ID:	_____
PAC Meeting Date	_____

Total resources required	61,100 USD
Total allocated resources:	61,100 USD
• Regular	61,100 USD
• Other:	
○ Donor	_____
○ Donor	_____
○ Donor	_____
○ Government	_____
Unfunded budget:	_____
In-kind Contributions	_____

Agreed by UNDP: _____

I. PURPOSE

The rapid acceleration in the number of forcibly displaced people worldwide is fiercely affecting the European Union, as a growing number of migrants are reaching its borders seeking protection. While the EU is facing this challenge, a debate has been going on concerning the differences between refugees, asylum seekers and economic migrants.

In 2015 only, more than 40 percent of the asylum applicants registered in Germany, the most affected EU member state, originated from a conflict-free, Balkans region. Around 23.000 of those requests were from Serbian citizens - on aggregate, the 7th largest number after Syria, Afghanistan, Kosovo*, Iraq, Albania and Pakistan. Despite the fact that only 1 percent of requests submitted so far in Germany and other EU countries (particularly Sweden) was considered admissible, Serbian citizens continue to apply for the asylum. The increase of unfounded asylum applications lodged by Serbian nationals in EU and Schengen countries, threatens to jeopardize the visa free regime granted to Serbia in 2009¹.

The exact number of rejected Serbian asylum seekers who are forced to return is unknown and it is difficult to separate them from the returnees on a voluntary basis. Citizens whose asylum requests were rejected are allowed to return to Serbia voluntarily, in which case they are not registered/recorded as returnees based on readmission agreements². In addition, the readmission procedure does not disclose any details about the returnee. The requesting state is not informing Serbian authorities on the reasons for returning its citizens (the reasons may include criminal act, rejection of asylum application, invalid visas etc.).

The only fairly reliable official data about the rejected asylum seekers from Serbia is the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration database. It uses the information from the questionnaires that returnees are filling out in the Readmission Office, opened in 2006 and located at the Belgrade's airport. The collected information contains the departing EU country, ethnic background, gender, marital status, status in the departing EU country, place of residence in Serbia, housing situation, educational and professional background, health status and the type of assistance required from Serbian authorities (i.e. medical treatment, provision of documents, legal assistance, support in job search, housing etc.). 17,000 returnees have been registered since 2006. As the information is collected at the Belgrade's airport only, the returnees coming by other transportation means remain largely unregistered.

The Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted the Strategy for Reintegration of Returnees under the Readmission Agreement in 2009. The Strategy defines the institutional framework, measures, and duty bearers responsible for a sustainable integration of returnees. The Commissariat for Refugees and Migration had been made responsible for the primary reception of returnees. An Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy for the period 2009 - 2010 was adopted, but the results of its implementation are unknown. The same stands for the 2011-2012 Action Plan³.

* The name does not imply Kosovo's status and is in accordance with Resolution 1244 and the opinion of the International Court of Justice regarding Kosovo's declaration of independence

1 As part of the European Agenda on Migration, the European Commission proposed on 9 September 2015 to establish a common list of safe countries of origin, initially comprising Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo*, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey. On one hand, this would enable fast-tracking of asylum applications from citizens of these countries, which are considered 'safe' according to the criteria set out in the Asylum Procedures Directive and in full compliance with the principle of non-refoulement. On the other, the Republic of Serbia could expect the increased number of returnees. According to German government estimates, up to 200,000 Serbian citizens are expected to be returned from the EU in the near future.

2 In 2007, the Republic of Serbia signed the "[Agreement on readmission of persons residing without authorization](#)" with the European Union. This Agreement was ratified by the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia and entered into force on 1 January 2008. This Agreement regulates the field of return and acceptance of persons returning to Serbia, in accordance with the Readmission Agreement.

3 In 2008, a Council for Integration of Returnees was founded, headed by the Deputy Prime Minister and consisting of the representatives of various line ministries. The Council appointed the implementation team, as an expert and coordinating body to ensure the achievement of the strategic objectives set in the Strategy for Reintegration of Returnees, under the leadership of the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration.

80% of 2,800 returnees registered in 2015 are Roma. The Strategy for Reintegration of Returnees recognizes Roma as a “group at particular risk in the return process”, and the Strategy for Improving Roma Status points out that returnees under the Readmission Agreement are a particularly vulnerable group within the Roma community and should receive special attention. In addition, both documents clearly indicate that the position of Roma returnees cannot be taken into consideration without taking into account the position of the entire Roma population in Serbia.

Local self-governments still have limited capacities to deal with readmission problem. Reasons include the lack of institutions, mechanisms and funds, combined with poor coordination and the lack of expertise. Existing national frameworks do not offer practical solutions, often leaving returnees without proper assistance for the reintegration in the society.

Roma leave the country mainly because of the poverty, lack of shelter, inadequate health and social services, high unemployment rates, discriminatory practices, combined with low education levels and lack of personal documentation. The returnees, especially those who have spent many years in the Western European countries and are accustomed to the certain quality of life and enjoyment of basic human rights, are unable to adapt quickly and integrate effectively into Serbian society. The children often do not even speak Serbian language thus increasing the likelihood of the secondary migration.

II. EXPECTED OUTPUT

UNDP will work on enabling employment opportunities for Roma returnees, combined with support in education and housing. In addition, UNDP will try to improve coordination mechanisms at the local level and contribute to awareness raising of returnees on how to improve their livelihoods.

The initial phase of the intervention will cover municipalities with higher number of registered returnees. If the interventions proves to be effective and sustainable, a scaling up prospects will be examined.

Initiation Plan will contribute to one output: **Roma returnees have better access to employment, education and housing.**

This will be done by implementing activities in three pilot municipalities, as follows:

1. Economic empowerment in Niš

UNDP, the City of Niš, Clean Earth Capital (USA Company), Centar YUROM and HELP will jointly support employability of Roma in the construction sector.

The activity will encompass the launch of the incubator center, a training facility primarily for the construction skills. Clean Earth Capital will provide a land for the building. HELP will provide the training equipment, while the City of Niš will provide 20% of the funds for the implementation of activities (equipment and licences). SKRUG will have a role in facilitating the partnerships at the local level and advisory role in setting up the incubator. UNDP will be signing partnership agreements with the actors involved and be responsible for quality assurance.

Besides providing training for unemployed Roma men and women, incubator center will also serve as the Info Center for the returnees on where and how to obtain necessary documentation and legal assistance.

2. Housing solutions in Odžaci

UNDP and the municipality of Odžaci will jointly settle the houses for Roma returnees. Respective returnees will refurbish their houses themselves, thus increasing individual construction skills.

As a part of the implementation of the Local Action Plan, municipality of Odžaci will allocate up to 6,000,000 RSD for improving Roma housing. The municipality has already developed a project to move Roma families from settlements in Bogojevo to abandoned houses in rural areas. UNDP will support the refurbishment of houses.

3. Education of returnees in Subotica

UNDP, City of Subotica and Roma Education Center will provide necessary documents to enable the enrolment of Roma children into education system.

City of Subotica and the Roma Education Center from Subotica have established a system of support for returnees through which the documents required for the enrolment of children into the education system are provided: personal documents, health records and alike. Roma Education Center has also trained professionals to provide mentoring support to Roma children in overcoming language barriers. UNDP will support the existing system with the aim to ensure its operation. There are prospects that the system will represent the best practice in improving educational attainment of Roma returnees, and as such could be suitable for replication.

In parallel to the aforementioned activities, UNDP will consult relevant stakeholders, striving to develop sustainable solutions for the returnees and prepare full-fledged project document for external funding.

III. MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

The Project Board is responsible for making management decisions for a project by consensus, including recommendation for approval of project plans and revisions, when guidance is required by the Project Manager. In order to ensure UNDP's ultimate accountability, Project Board decisions should be made in accordance with corporate UNDP standards that shall ensure best value to money, fairness, integrity transparency and effective international competition.

The project board will:

- Provide overall leadership, guidance and direction in successful delivery of output and their contribution to outcomes under the programme;
- Be responsible for making strategic decisions by consensus, including the approval of project substantive revisions (i.e. changes in the project document);
- Approve annual work plan, annual reviews, and other reports as needed;
- Meet at least once a year (either in person or virtually) to review project implementation, management risks, and other relevant issues;
- Address any relevant project issues as raised by the Project Manager;
- Provide guidance on new project risks and agree on possible countermeasures and management actions to address specific risks.

The Project Board will consist UNDP designated representative and representatives of the project's beneficiaries (Roma NGOs and municipal representatives). The Group's key roles will be as follows:

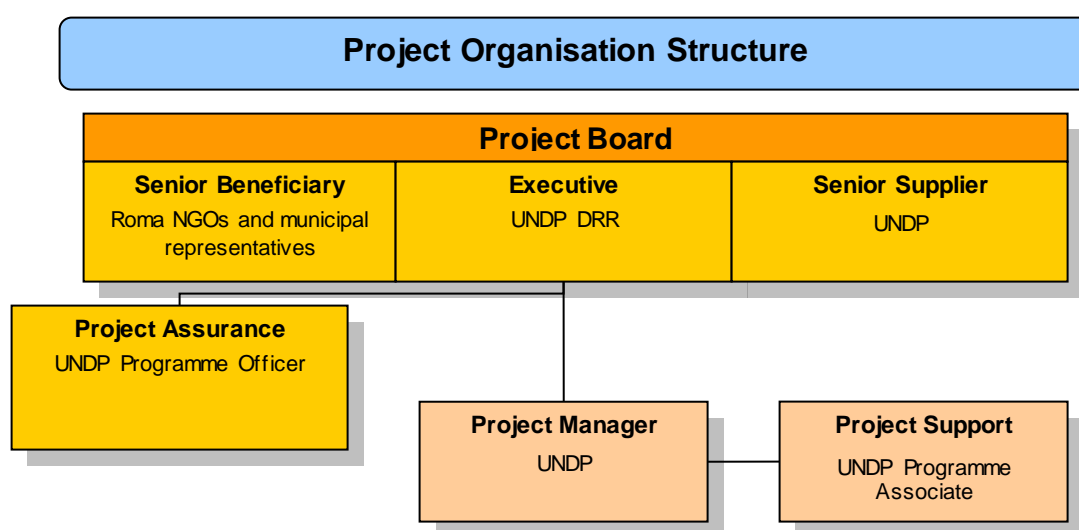
- (a) Executive representing the project ownership to chair the group. The role will be performed by the UNDP designated representative, who shall be the decisive power if the opinions of senior supplier and senior beneficiary do not reach compromise.
- (b) Senior Supplier to provide guidance regarding the technical feasibility of the project. This role will be held by UNDP designated representative that can be same as the Executive; and

- (c) Senior Beneficiary to ensure the realization of project benefits from the perspective of project beneficiaries. It will be held by representative of beneficiaries of the project.

Project Manager will be responsible for the day-to-day management of the project and decision-making within the agreed tolerances of time, cost and quality.

Project Assurance supports the Project Board by carrying out objective and independent project oversight and monitoring functions. This role ensures appropriate project management milestones are managed and completed. *The Project Assurance* role is delegated by the Project Board to UNDP Programme Officer.

Project Support role provides project administration, management and technical support to the Project Manager as required. It is necessary to keep Project Support and Project Assurance roles separated in order to maintain the independence of Project Assurance. *Project Support* role will be performed by the Programme Associate.



The project will rely on vertical and horizontal partnerships. Vertical partnerships will involve local self-governments and local offices for migration, whereas horizontal partnerships will involve SKRUG (Standing Conference of Roma Association of Citizens) and BFPE (Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence).

IV. MONITORING

In accordance with UNDP's [Programme and Operations Policies and Procedures](#), the project will be monitored following the corporate standards and requirements.

Within the annual cycle

- Annual Review Report. An Annual Review Report shall be prepared by the Project Manager and shared with the Project Board.
- Annual Project Review. Based on the above report, an annual project review shall be conducted during the fourth quarter of the year or soon after, to assess the performance of the project and appraise the Annual Work Plan (AWP) for the following year, if needed. The review is done by the Project Board and may involve other stakeholders as required. It shall focus on the extent to which progress is being made towards output.
- The Project Manager will ensure that the project data is captured in corporate platforms and systems (e.g. Atlas, Corporate Planning System, Results-Oriented Annual Report etc.).

