

## Budapest Process

Thematic Working Group Meeting on Return and Reintegration

Date: 31 May 2023

Location: Istanbul, Türkiye

### Report

**1. Budapest Process representatives from all participating and observer states** were invited to attend the Thematic Working Group Meeting on Return and Reintegration. The **meeting gathered 56 participants from 28 countries and 8 organisations** – Albania, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, India, Iraq, Italy, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Pakistan, Romania, Sweden, Switzerland, Türkiye, Ukraine, United Kingdom as well as the European Commission, European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX), International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), International Organization for Migration (IOM), Migration Policy Institute (MPI), and the Regional Support Office of the Bali Process as well as representatives of the Abu Dhabi Dialogue and Rabat Process.

**2. Meeting background and objectives:** The Budapest Process (BP) has held four meetings on return and reintegration since 2019. The meetings looked at lessons learned and recommendations to help facilitate a dignified return and a sustainable, inclusive, and rights-based reintegration for returning migrants. As a product of these discussions, the **BP Roadmap on Return and Reintegration** was developed. The Roadmap is a living document and lists various actions that could be implemented for enabling – effective returns management, post-arrival assistance and referral mechanisms and sustainable reintegration of returnees.

The main objectives of the meeting were: (1) to jointly assess concrete opportunities for cooperation through which the BP roadmap can be meaningfully implemented; (2) prioritise actions for implementation in line with the BP roadmap, via currently funded and future initiatives.

3. This meeting was the first under the newly established Thematic Working Group on Return and Reintegration **and was opened by its Co-Chairs: Bangladesh and Türkiye**. Subsequently, opening statements were delivered by Hungary (as BP co-chair), European Commission (represented by its Return Coordinator), and the Budapest Process Secretariat.

**4. The Budapest Process Secretariat delivered a presentation on the BP Roadmap on Return and Reintegration**, elaborating on its background, purpose and main points of action. Subsequently, representatives from the **Turkish Chair provided key updates** on Türkiye's National Assisted Voluntary Return Mechanism and visit to Pakistan to observe the reintegration of voluntary returnees.

**5. Presentations (in chronological order) were made by officials from Bangladesh, Iraq, Denmark, Pakistan, ICMPD, MPI, IOM, Regional Support Office of the Bali Process, Abu Dhabi Dialogue, Rabat Process while other participants made valuable verbal interventions**, enlightening their peers on various national and (inter-)regional projects and initiatives, new knowledge and research, ongoing

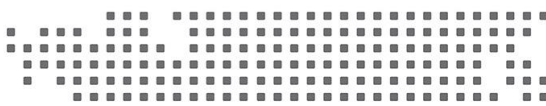
issues and emerging trends. As a result of the interventions and discussions over the course of the day, the following good practices, and opportunities for cooperation emerged:

### Good Practices

- **Policies to facilitate the economic and social reintegration** of returning migrants through relevant support mechanisms in order to avoid remigration;
- **Inclusion of returnees** in other mainstream developmental programmes such as social welfare schemes (e.g. conditional and un-conditional cash transfer schemes), including improving **access to finance** for personal and business loans;
- **In-kind reintegration assistance** in addition to cash assistance (e.g. capital goods such as livestock, commercial vehicles, business infrastructure, etc.)
- **Solid data collection and processing via return and reintegration case management systems** can improve support for returnees throughout the entire return and reintegration process and can help better address (vulnerable) returnees' needs
- Humanitarian assistance to vulnerable communities that are at risk of displacement or have high levels of poverty or other push factors should be followed by developmental focus after basic needs have been fulfilled (e.g. **promoting public-private investments, vocational training, disaster awareness training, resilience and adaptation training**, etc.);
- **Migrant Desks at airports** is considered a good practice as it allows for streamlining post-arrival support services and guiding returnees to the proper support services (a service catalogue provided to the returnees during the post arrival orientation session);
- **District-wise (i.e. community based) coordination committees** to provide support to returnees at the local level;
- Multi-stakeholder platforms (MSPs) that **bring together governmental and non-governmental organisations, private sector and employer's associations**. MSPs can help improve feedback to returnee referral and case management systems;
- **Toll-free hotlines for urgent help**, social media channels and messaging services that provide returnees and other types of migrants with quick ways to seek advice; Psychosocial support provided in the form of individual and group counselling for trauma and other issues, with consistent follow up;
- **Labour market research cells in medium and large cities** that provide research and strategic advice on expanding legal pathways (e.g. demand based labour export to destination countries);
- **Recognition of prior learning** is essential in reinforcing reintegration of the returnees, as some would have received useful skills when abroad, especially when returning to informal employment.

### Opportunities

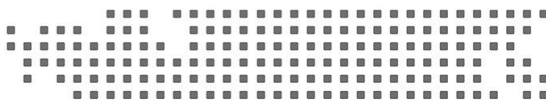
- **Government to Government cooperation is critical** to ensuring effective, humane and rights-based returns; feasible readmission agreements serve as the basis for such cooperation;



- **Migration dialogues remain excellent forums** to share best practices, discuss challenges and continue to explore means for more collaboration on common objectives and opportunities;
- **Private sector engagement for providing opportunities to returnees** needs to be further strengthened with greater incentives provided to the sector by the government;
- **Capacity building trainings for frontline airport reception officers**, reintegration related government officials and civil society reintegration partners is considered important to ensure that return and reintegration programmes achieve sustainable outcomes in the long run;
- **Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration programmes** need to focus more on long term socio-economic reintegration support;
- **National referral systems** need to be strengthened via continued expansion and inter-ministerial/institutional linkages (follow a Whole of Government & Society Approach);
- **Returnee databases and case management systems** need to be further enhanced, digitalised and made to be more comprehensive, both in terms of type of data collected and number of returnees registered;
- **Awareness raising efforts** need to be multiplied so that more people can be reached, especially vulnerable groups and urban/rural youth;
- **Improving psycho-social counselling** remains an important need – it should be comprehensive in scope, up to date, provided by qualified practitioners and extended to the family or close circle of the returnee; in addition, pre-departure counselling for migrants can be very helpful in ensuring better reintegration in case of return as awareness of options is improved;
- Providing financial literacy as well as actual **financial support to returnees for their recovery and improving socio-economic** stability is needed, especially to avoid vulnerabilities;
- It remains important to tap into **the ‘social capital’ that migrants bring with them** when returning to their home countries;
- **Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of return and reintegration related programmes** remains very important, as effective M&E systems can:
  - track progress and performance throughout the entire return and reintegration process;
  - track beneficiary experiences of the return and reintegration services, including their perceptions of ongoing or completed projects/programmes.

## 6. Way forward

- In regards to return and reintegration, **Budapest Process countries need to continue to focus on improving:** Legal and Policy Frameworks, Financial Support, Psychosocial Support, Social Services, Livelihood and Employment Opportunities, Awareness and Advocacy, Data Collection and Research;
- **The Budapest Process Roadmap on Return and Reintegration will continue to evolve based on changing circumstances**, needs, challenge and opportunities and will allow its stakeholders



to keep track of the most important issues that need to be addressed through dialogue, research and on-ground operational cooperation;

- The **Thematic Working Group on Return and Reintegration will meet again in 2024** and take stock of progress under the Roadmap and make efforts in the meantime to enhance operational cooperation.