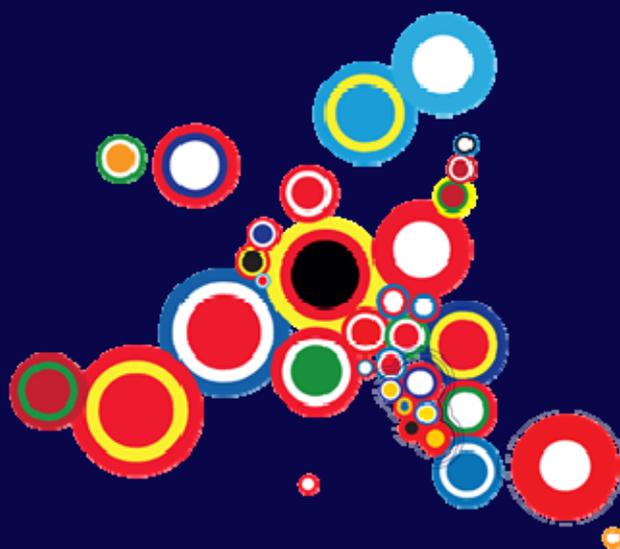




## INSTRUMENT FOR PRE-ACCESSION ASSISTANCE (IPA II) 2014-2020

### KOSOVO\*

#### Support to Communities' Rights in Kosovo



#### **Action summary**

This action will contribute to a stable multi-ethnic society in Kosovo by enabling sustainable livelihoods and the durable integration of displaced persons into Kosovo society, including Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), Displaced Persons in the Region (DPRs) and refugees as defined by the Strategy for Communities and Return (2014-2018).

Specifically, this action will aim to increase the capacity of public and non-governmental actors to facilitate the dignified and sustainable return and reintegration of up to 400 families displaced in the region to Kosovo, including Roma Ashkali and Egyptian families currently in informal settlements and camps in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro.

\*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence

| <b>Action Identification</b>   |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Action Programme Title</b>  | <b>Action Programme for Kosovo for the Year 2016 – Part I</b>  |
| <b>Action Title</b>  | Support to Communities' Rights in Kosovo (Return and Reintegration in Kosovo phase V)  |
| <b>Action ID</b>   | IPA 2016 /039 744 / 03/ Kosovo Fundamental Rights  |
| <b>Sector Information</b>  |  |
| <b>IPA II Sector</b>   | 2. Rule of Law and Fundamental Rights  |
| <b>DAC Sector</b>  | 15160  |
| <b>Budget</b>  |  |
| <b>Total cost</b>  | <b>10.75 million</b><br>(8.00 EU contribution + 2.75 Ministry of Communities and Return)   |
| <b>EU contribution</b>   | 8.00 million   |
| <b>Budget line(s)</b>  | 22.02.01.01  |
| <b>Management and Implementation</b>   |  |
| <b>Management mode</b>   | Indirect management  |
| <i>Indirect management:</i><br><b>Entrusted entity</b>                           | International Organisation for Migration (IOM)   |
| <b>Implementation responsibilities</b>   | International Organisation for Migration (IOM)   |
| <b>Location</b>  |  |
| <b>Zone benefiting from the action</b>   | Kosovo   |
| <b>Specific implementation area(s)</b>   | Five regions of Kosovo, main focus region the west, north and central parts of Kosovo.   |
| <b>Timeline</b>  |  |
| <b>Final date for concluding Financing Agreement(s) with IPA II beneficiary</b>  | At the latest by 31 December 2017  |
| <b>Final date for concluding delegation agreements under indirect management</b> | At the latest by 31 December 2017  |
| <b>Final date for concluding procurement and grant contracts</b>                 | 3 years following the date of conclusion of the Financing Agreement, with the exception of cases listed under Article 189(2) of the Financial Regulation |
| <b>Final date for operational implementation</b>                                 | 6 years following the conclusion of the Financing Agreement  |
| <b>Final date for implementing the Financing Agreement (date by which this</b>   | 12 years following the conclusion of the Financing Agreement   |

|   |                          |                              |                          |
|---|--------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>programme should be de-committed and closed)</b> |                          |                              |                          |
| <b>Policy objectives / Markers (DAC form)</b>       |                          |                              |                          |
| <b>General policy objective</b>                     | <b>Not targeted</b>      | <b>Significant objective</b> | <b>Main objective</b>    |
| Participation development/good governance           | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <b>x</b>                 |
| Aid to environment                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Gender equality (including Women In Development)    | x                        | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Trade Development                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Reproductive, Maternal, New born and child health   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>RIO Convention markers</b>                       | <b>Not targeted</b>      | <b>Significant objective</b> | <b>Main objective</b>    |
| Biological diversity                                | <b>x</b>                 | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Combat desertification                              | x                        | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Climate change mitigation                           | x                        | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Climate change adaptation                           | x                        | <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input type="checkbox"/> |

# 1. RATIONALE

## PROBLEM AND STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

Almost seventeen years after the 1999 conflict and twelve years after the 2004 riots, the voluntary return of displaced minority communities is not happening at the expected pace. According to UNHCR statistics\* there are nearly 97,000 displaced persons of Kosovo origin in Serbia, 11,000 in Montenegro, 800 in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and of these numbers, an estimated 10,000 people residing in the Balkan region have expressed their willingness to return to Kosovo. Furthermore, an estimated 17,000 people remain displaced within Kosovo and are still without a durable solution. A significant number of them are women, men, girls and boys from minority communities who fled imminent violence and took refuge in informal settlements and makeshift camps in municipalities in Northern Kosovo and in neighbouring countries such as Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro and continue to live in very difficult conditions. Conditions in these settlements and camps are deteriorating, with collapsing ceilings, leaking roofs, lack of insulation, inexistent drainage, and chimneys presenting serious fire hazards and houses with up to nine individuals living in one room. These poor and unsafe living conditions present serious risks and health hazards which must be addressed in order to ensure safe and dignified living conditions.

A majority of DPRs have been granted refugee status in the host countries and are in the process of integrating into their respective host societies. However, while the majority wishes to stay, those who have expressed a wish to return to Kosovo must be granted the right to and their return and reintegration process supported. The interest of displaced persons of Kosovo origin to voluntarily return has been continuously growing. This is further confirmed by an increasing number of applications for return and durable solution from DPRs, IDPs and refugees received by municipalities, predominantly those who traditionally have shown a strong commitment and active engagement regarding promotion and support of returns and reintegration process. Furthermore, previous phases of the EU-funded Return and Reintegration in Kosovo Programme (EU-RRK) (including RRK I under IPA 2007, RRK II under IPA 2008, RRK III under IPA 2010 and RRK IV under IPA 2012), the two phases of the EU–Mitrovicë/a Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Support Initiative (EU-MRSI-IPA 2007 and IPA 2013) and the Resettlement Support Programme for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Returnees from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro (IPA 2013), have all shown a continuously growing demand from minority communities willing to return and the readiness of the municipalities concerned to host them. In total, more than 1,000 minority community families were facilitated to return under the IPA I assistance.

Many displaced persons from minority communities (particularly from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities) wishing to return to Kosovo face serious challenges doing so as they lack official papers, housing solutions, and land and/or property rights. Women in particular have very limited access to property ownership. Therefore, inherent parts of the Action include support for registration, allocation of land and provision of housing solutions, which are all important prerequisites for sustainable returns and reintegration, as well as income generation support aiding economic self-sufficiency of women and men returnees. Despite the willingness to resolve the issue of displacement, the return and reintegration of displaced persons remains a challenge for Kosovo institutions. One of the main barriers is the funding gap to finance the returns of all families unable or unwilling to integrate in their area of displacement and in need of durable solutions in Kosovo. In addition, there is a considerable lack of technical and human capacities, lack of established coordination and cooperation mechanisms between authorities concerned to sufficiently and appropriately support and facilitate returns and reintegration of minority communities. This is also confirmed by the OSCE report† which calls, amongst others, for (i) better institutional cooperation both at the central and between central and local levels, (ii) implementation of the commitments made in the MCR Strategy for Communities and Return (2014-2018), (iii) better outreach to displaced persons both in and outside Kosovo; (iv) better

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\* September 2015

† "An assessment of the voluntary return process in Kosovo" OSCE Mission in Kosovo, November 2014

collection and management of the displaced persons data and (v) an increased involvement of the concerned central and local authorities in inter-ethnic dialogue and reconciliation activities between displaced and receiving communities.

Additionally, there is a strong need in increasing the capacity of central and municipal authorities' involvement in the process of promoting and supporting voluntary returns and reintegration of ethnic minorities of Kosovo origin (through all stages of the return process i.e. inter-ethnic dialogue activities, beneficiary selection, housing reconstruction, physical return and community development initiatives), particularly for the MCR and those municipalities which have already shown high dedication and commitment towards return and reintegration of minority communities. Moreover, activities in new municipalities that were not part of the previous RRK programme phases but have recently shown the potential to facilitate the return of the displaced minority communities needs to be expanded. Furthermore, building human and technical capacity and promoting involvement and ownership of Kosovo institutions to coordinate the implementation and monitoring of return-related activities is crucial for the success and sustainability of the Action. Since recently, Kosovo institutions have been involved in the Regional Initiative, including representatives of Governments of Serbia, Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, with the aim of finding durable solutions for the displaced persons from Kosovo. Kosovo institutions have shown a political willingness to resolve the issue of displacement and take responsible measures towards its displaced citizens but in reality face a lot of challenges in this process.

Therefore, the main justification for the continuation of this programme is that Government of Kosovo needs further support in the field of voluntary return not only from the technical, financial and implementation point of view but also from improving regional cooperation. The action will also link to EU initiatives at the regional level that facilitate the wider return and reintegration process in the Western Balkans.

The main institutional stakeholders involved in this Action are: (i) MCR, which has the overall mandate for communities and voluntary returns which is fully in line with Principle 5 of the SIGMA's strategic framework of Public Administration Reform (i.e. being one leading institution with the responsibility and capacity to manage the reform process as well as have clear accountability and reform implementation capacity); (ii) Ministry of Health which will provide directions for medical testing and treatment, as well as overall monitoring of health and the provision of medication, (iii) Ministry for Labour and Social Welfare (MLSW), which will provide employment and vocational services for women and men as well as social protection services, particularly for children; (iv) Ministry of Education, Science and Technology which will support for adequate access to education with particular emphasis to Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities; (v) Concerned Kosovo municipal authorities to and from which the returns will take place, in particular the Municipal Offices for Communities and Return (MoCR), Municipal Education and Health Departments which will provide access to social services; (vi) Respective government institutions in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro currently providing for displaced Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian women, men, girls and boys and support their return to Kosovo.

In addition, other international and Kosovo stakeholders will be involved in the process: (i) International Organization for Migration, which will be the implementing partner of this Action (ii) United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Offices in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro, who supervise and coordinate the social issues of resettlement as well as provide assistance and protection to Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian families in the respective countries of displacement, and facilitates right-based and informed decisions to return to Kosovo (iii) Community leaders and IDP's and DPR's associations (DPR associations are particularly present in Serbia and are an important partner in the process) who actively participate in the decision making processes; (vi) Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian women's organizations who provide special targeted support to meet the specific needs and interests of women and girls; and (vii) Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian women, men, girls and boys in the resettlement process, whom without their collaboration, resettlement could not take place.

## **OUTLINE OF IPA II ASSISTANCE**

The current challenges and needs outlined above will be addressed directly by the proposed Action through activities focusing on capacity building of relevant central and municipal authorities, direct facilitation of physical returns and reintegration support for returnees.

Firstly, through human and technical capacity building activities, including training, visits and support to facilitate pre- and post-return support, the capacity of central and municipal authorities to implement policies as well as coordinate, manage, and monitor voluntary return and reintegration projects will be enhanced. In particular, the emphasis will be put on the implementation of the MCR strategy (2014-2018) and capacity building of new municipalities to take full ownership of the return process.

Secondly, the proposed Action will enable and facilitate physical returns of displaced persons of Kosovo origin, based on free and well-informed decisions, through constructions and repairs of family dwellings, including provision of standardised Return Packages (consisting of food, non-food, and furniture), and through the support of local authorities to ensure returnees' access to basic infrastructure.

Lastly, in order to ensure sustainability of returns and reintegration, support will be given to women, men, boys and girls returnees in obtaining civil status documentation and access to public services, such as education and health care, as well as tailor-made socio-economic support and income generation activities, e.g. language classes and catch-up courses to help girls and boys reintegrate in the Kosovo school system, skill-development or business start-up trainings, or provision of tools and equipment for income generation. Special attention will be paid to ensure access to children, Roma, Ashkali, Egyptians, single women, and persons with disabilities who may face difficulties in accessing these services.

The direct beneficiaries of the proposed Action are the MCR and the municipal authorities whose capacity to implement return and reintegration projects will be strengthened. Furthermore, obviously direct beneficiaries of the Action are displaced persons defined by the MCR Strategy 2014-2015 as follows:

(i) Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) - Persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their places of permanent residence in Kosovo between January 1998 and the end of March 2004, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, the situation of general violence, violations of human rights, but remained within the territory of Kosovo.

(ii) Displaced persons in the region (DPR) (Serbia, Montenegro, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Croatia - Persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or leave their places of permanent residence in Kosovo between January 1998 and the end of March 2004, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, the situation of generalized violence, violations of human rights, and remain outside of Kosovo, namely in the region.

(iii) Refugees (R) from Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Croatia - Persons located outside the borders of their state, national or place of residence, who fear persecution as a result of the 1992-1995 conflict, because of their race, religion, nationality, membership to a particular social group, or a political opinion, and who do not wish to be protected by the state, or to return for fear of persecution, violence and threats from various entities and individuals.

The other two categories of the displaced persons, as defined by the MCR strategy (iv) Spontaneous Return and (v) Assisted Return are not a direct target group but will be addressed on the needs basis.

Indirect beneficiaries are the receiving community who will be involved and benefit from community development activities and an inter-ethnic environment.

## **RELEVANCE WITH THE IPA II STRATEGY PAPER AND OTHER KEY REFERENCES**

The **Indicative Strategy Paper for Kosovo-ISP (2014-2020)**, makes direct reference to “*The structures dealing with the protection, promotion and reporting on human rights which need to be streamlined, both at central and local level*”. Constitution, primary and secondary legislation provide advances mechanisms for protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. Since Kosovo is not a member of the UN, the Council of Europe and many other international Mechanisms have chosen to directly implement provisions of International instruments on Human Rights. The institutional framework to implement Kosovo legislation

has been established. Their mandate has been regulated by constitution, primary and secondary legislation. Capacities of different institutions still need to be developed and strengthened. Problems on coordination between institutions covering the human rights sector are continuously identified by different international and governmental assessments. The ISP underlines that Kosovo's human rights legislation is broadly in line with international standards, but implementation remains a challenge. Moreover, there is a lack of coordination between central and local level institutions as well as effective inter-ministerial co-ordination.

The Sub-section 2.3 of the ISP indicates that Kosovo's Human Rights legislation is broadly corresponding to international standards while underlining remaining challenges regarding its implementation, specifically pointing to weak and inconsistent implementation of the Government's Strategy for the Integration of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities (2009-2015). Furthermore the Government has yet to finalise the new Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian strategy which was expected to cover the period 2016-2020. These shortcomings and implementation inconsistencies will be addressed by the Action directly contributing to enhanced rights of ethnic minorities of Kosovo origin, supporting and realising informed and rights-based decisions to return to Kosovo. Furthermore, one of the key expected results is increased capacity of, and coordination between the relevant Kosovo institutions to lead, manage and monitor the return process, as well as to facilitate the physical returns of minority communities. Therefore, the Action reinforces those priorities set out in the Indicative Strategy Paper addressing the lack of coordination between central and local level institutions and effective inter-ministerial co-ordination, which is identified as one of the main factors linked to the remaining implementation challenges of fundamental rights of minorities.

The **EC Progress Report 2015** further states that *“Authorities at local and central level did not do enough to facilitate return and reintegration of **refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs)**. Illegal occupation of residential, agricultural and commercial property continues to affect the property rights of IDPs and hinders returns. Municipalities are still not taking the initiative to collect and maintain data on numbers and locations of IDPs and returnees. Greater commitment at local level is urgently needed. Figures from the reporting period show some of the lowest number of voluntary returns (around 800) since 2000. A lack of government commitment and funding, together with poor economic prospects, create an environment less conducive to returns”*. The report goes on noting that *“The Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities have the same access to healthcare services as other citizens and the Ministry of Community and Returns sets aside budget for housing. Members of these communities continue to face difficult living conditions, social exclusion and frequent discrimination, while child labor and early marriages continue to be prevalent. Access to labor market is difficult and informal employment prevails. Active measures to include these communities in the job market need to be pursued<sup>‡</sup>. The Progress report underlines that the protection of persons with disabilities and persons belonging to minorities, in particular the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, needs to be significantly strengthened<sup>§</sup>.*

With regard to the **MCR Strategy for Communities and Returns (2014-2018)**, this Action supports the strategy's intended final goal: *“to achieve sustainable returns of displaced persons within Kosovo and abroad and successful reintegration and stability for all communities living in Kosovo”*. The strategy emphasises how the provision of housing in itself is not sufficient and that efforts to support returns and reintegration needs to include support for obtaining personal documents, access to health services and security, freedom of movement, access to education in the mother language of the returnees, employment opportunities and access to infrastructure. With close cooperation between relevant institutions and actors in the region, by facilitating the return of displaced persons of Kosovo origin from neighbouring countries, the Action furthermore directly supports the priorities of the High-level Forum on Durable Solutions for Displaced Persons from Kosovo. The overall goal of this regional inter-institutional cooperation mechanism, with actors in Pristina, Podgorica, Skopje and Belgrade, is to co-operate regionally to support displaced persons from Kosovo, securing durable solutions, including voluntary returns. This will be underpinned by activities specifically focusing on securing property right and personal documents of returnees, as well as building the capacities of local institutions and community leaders to facilitate dialogues between returning and receiving communities. Furthermore the MCR is in the process of finalising the regulation on displaced persons and durable solutions with the aim of simplifying the procedures, updating the eligibility criteria and

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<sup>‡</sup> EC Progress Report on Kosovo 2015, p.26

<sup>§</sup> EC Progress Report on Kosovo 2015, p.5

assistance package and improved cooperation with municipal authorities. The regulation is expected to be adopted in 2016.

Lastly, by recognising economic self-sustainability as a precondition for successful reintegration, the Action, through its income generation assistance, contributes directly to the realisation of the Regional Cooperation Council's **South East Europe 2020 Strategy (SEE 2020)** whose two development pillars are Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Growth emphasising development of infrastructure, skills development, employment creation and inclusive participation in the labour market.

## **LESSONS LEARNED AND LINK TO PREVIOUS FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

This Action is the continuation of the “Resettlement support programme for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian returnees from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro” (IPA 2013) and the fourth phase of the “EU-Return and Reintegration in Kosovo (EU-RRK)” (IPA 2012). Through the implementation of these programmes, the MCR has gained valuable experience working in the sector of returns and reintegration of displaced persons from minority communities, allowing the Action to build on accumulated know-how and lessons learned from previously implemented projects.

As regards the specific challenges associated with returns and reintegration of members from minority communities, reports show that working with camp and/or community leaders contributes to greater sensitivity, where cultural and context specific aspects can be taken into account, hence minimising risks and ensuring the sustainability of the Action. Similarly, experiences from IPA 2007 and IPA 2013 projects have shown that working with school directors, health providers, legal offices and leaders of receiving communities, proved to have significant positive effects. Taking contextual and cultural factors into consideration and building trustful working relationships with minority community leaders have proved to be of particular importance in North Kosovo where political tensions and limited accesses to areas could otherwise limit the effectiveness of the Action. At the same time, special care is needed to ensure that the needs and interests of all women and men, girls and boys are considered (and not just the opinions of community leaders who may not always represent the interests e.g. of women). In this respect, involvement of women's organisations and other community groups is important towards ensuring that diverse women's and men's needs and interests are considered and addressed.

Municipalities will play a crucial role in the Action as they, beside the technical assistance provided, will be requested to make appropriate and tangible plans for land allocation to potential landless beneficiaries. Experiences from IPA 2007 and IPA 2013 show how public land allocation, for example as it was the case in Mitrovica/a municipality, is a crucial prerequisite for the implementation of any returns of landless beneficiaries. Similarly, the majority of families from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian community in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro (IPA 2013) could not have been included in return programmes without the full cooperation and support from municipal authorities (Kline/a, Gjakove/Djakovica, Peja/Pec, Istog/k, Kamenica), especially with regard to public land allocation. In addition, interethnic dialogues have proven to be key in promoting a climate of tolerance and understanding between communities, and particularly in contacts with government officials and decision makers. Through its activities, the Action will continue to actively create opportunities for interethnic dialogue between returnees, community members, and municipal staff. More specifically, the Action will maximise the opportunities for interaction where all communities can contribute to the reconciliation process.

Another key lesson learned from previously implemented Actions is that the provision of housing alone is not sufficient for sustainable returns and reintegration. For many returnees, issues of economic self-sufficiency remains an important challenge, particularly considering Kosovo's high unemployment and lack of investments. Against this background, the Action continues to look at best practice to aid sustainability through provision of employment support and other income generation activities. Furthermore, lack of civil status documentation has been identified as an important barrier for members of minority communities, in particular from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian community, which is a factor considerably affecting those without a birth certificate and other vulnerable families with limited financial means to access fundamental rights and public services such as education, health and social assistance. Therefore, this project will take on

a holistic approach assisting beneficiaries in registering and obtaining civil status documentation as it has proved to be a prerequisite for returns.

Lastly, experiences from the previously implemented programmes show that involvement and ownership of both central and municipal authorities are essential for the success and sustainability of any return and reintegration programme. At the central level, the MCR and international organisations should continue to promote co-operation and coordination between relevant actors involved in the return and reintegration process. At the local level, the Municipal Office for Communities and Return (MOCR) should coordinate Actions in order to support and facilitate dialogue between returnees and the receiving community. These dialogues should not be focused solely on the return and reintegration process but include issues of relevance for the whole (receiving) community taking into account the diverse needs and interests of diverse women and men e.g. dialogue sessions on community needs, pressing issues or other barriers for a prosperous life in the community. So far, increased cooperation between the MCR and municipal authorities has helped streamline and prioritise the requests for returns. Moreover, in the third phase of EU-RRK an additional component was introduced adopting a more community-based approach with a considerably stronger focus on the socio-economic self-sustainability of returnees, particularly with regard to employment of youth and women. In addition, the involvement of local actors to implement small infrastructure schemes involving and benefitting both the returning and receiving communities, as well as serving to increase trust between them, proved not only to aid social cohesion but also to be a more cost efficient-way of ensuring sustainable solutions for returnees and the communities to which they return.

Hence, efforts should be directed towards community-based development projects for the benefit of both returnee and receiving communities ranging from (i) support to education facilities, (ii) schools and playgrounds; (iii) healthcare facilities used by all communities; (iv) civil society and media related projects; or (v) investments in agricultural equipment. Furthermore, the community-based projects apart from offering improvement in the working conditions of the existing jobs will offer new short and medium-term employment opportunities for both returning and receiving communities. This has not only proved to significantly improve living conditions but it also contributes to reconciliation and inter-ethnic tolerance.

Last but not least, this component is in line with the "Thematic Evaluation of EU's Support to Refugees in BiH, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia" (from Dec 2013) where the specific recommendation for Kosovo states:

*"The main focus at Kosovo level of future assistance should therefore be on:*

- *Constantly keeping a high level of attention, upon next programming phase, to the additional re-integration challenges faced by Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian returnees, against the backdrop of the Government Roma Integration Strategy and implementing acts;*
- *Constantly taking into account, upon next programming phase, the effects for the implementation of return policies of the difficulties for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities to access property rights on land (or land use rights) even studying ad hoc solutions; and*
- *Monitoring, within the shortest possible timeframe, the actual level of commitment of local authorities, and use the results of the monitoring for the allocation of resources between the different local contexts, possibly reserving a part of the budget for individual returns in other municipalities than those primarily targeted until now".*

## 2. INTERVENTION LOGIC

### LOGICAL FRAMEWORK MATRIX

| OVERALL OBJECTIVE   | OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS (*)   | SOURCES OF VERIFICATION   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| To contribute to a stable multi-ethnic society in Kosovo by enabling sustainable livelihoods and the durable integration into Kosovo society for returnees, DPRs, IDPs and refugees who freely choose to return to Kosovo.  | -Progress made towards meeting Copenhagen criteria  | -DG NEAR – Progress Report  |   |
| SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE  | OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS (*)   | SOURCES OF VERIFICATION   | ASSUMPTIONS   |
| To increase the capacity of public and non-governmental actors to facilitate the dignified, sustainable return and reintegration of up to 400 families displaced in the region to Kosovo, including Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian families currently in informal settlements and camps in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro.        | <p>Number of minority families (displaced in the region) facilitated to return and reintegrate to Kosovo disaggregated by gender, ethnicity and age.</p> <p>Number of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian families (displaced in camps in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro) facilitated to return and reintegrate to Kosovo disaggregated by gender, ethnicity and age</p> | <p>-Projects interim and final reports, including gender perspective</p> <p>-UNHCR and OSCE reports</p> <p>-Statistics and reports by MCR, containing gender disaggregated data</p> <p>-Municipal monitoring reports, including a gender perspective</p> <p>-External evaluation reports</p>            | <p>-The political and security situation remains stable to return and reintegrate beneficiaries.</p> <p>-Receiving communities demonstrate a positive attitude towards returnees from minority groups.</p> <p>-Willingness of the relevant central and municipal public and non-governmental actors to collaborate and cooperate.</p> |
| RESULTS   | OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS (*)   | SOURCES OF VERIFICATION   | ASSUMPTIONS   |
| <p><b>Result 1.</b> Capacity of central and municipal authorities in facilitating voluntary return and reintegration is enhanced</p> <p><b>Result 2.</b> Up to 400 displaced families returned to Kosovo.</p> <p><b>Result 3.</b> Sustainability of reintegration of returnee families improved through the provision of tailor-made socio-economic</p> | <p>Number of staff of central and municipality level authorities trained and able to apply learned skills successfully and effectively in managing monitoring and reporting activities in the return sector.</p> <p>% of occupancy by the returned families of the (re) constructed dwellings in Kosovo</p> <p>Number of community-based development</p>                                  | <p>-Beneficiary assessments, evaluation form and selection list</p> <p>-Tripartite agreements</p> <p>-UNHCR and other partners monitoring reports</p> <p>-Implementing Agency and Municipal Progress Reports</p> <p>-Municipal monitoring and evaluation reports</p> <p>-Certificates of Completion</p> | <p>-Willingness of the respective central and local public and non-governmental actors to collaborate and cooperate</p> <p>-Political will exists in all beneficiary institutions</p> <p>-Sufficient budget and human resources allocated for proper implementation of activities</p>   |

|  |   |   |  |
|--|---|---|--|
| <p>support, and enhanced access to civil status documents and government services.</p> | <p>projects involving both men and women from returning and receiving communities.</p> <p>Number of returnee families having obtained civil status, land property, or other related documentation with the support of this Action</p> <p>Number of returnee families that have access to public services (including utilities, health care, education and social services)</p> <p>% of returnee families (disaggregated by gender) ensuring income and sustainable reintegration.</p> | <p>including by gender of recipient</p> <p>-Project progress/monitoring reports including a gender perspective</p> <p>-Mid-term evaluation funded by the project</p> <p>-Economic development database containing gender disaggregated data</p> | <p>-Municipal authorities allocate public land for landless returnee cases.</p> <p>-Political stability</p> <p>-Active participation of involved agencies and institutions</p> <p>-Continued interest of beneficiaries in sustainable voluntary return and reintegration</p> <p>-Stability and security in the project areas prevails and allows the implementation of the programme</p> <p>-The MCR and municipalities support the project activities and commit to participate in the trainings.</p> <p>-Willingness of the receiving and returnee communities to engage in inter-ethnic dialogue.</p> <p>-Beneficiaries are willing to acquire basic skills, and local conditions exist for suitable income generation activities.</p> <p>-Support from central and local authorities and other relevant stakeholders</p> |
|--|---|---|--|

## DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES

### Activities related to achieving Results Support to Return and Reintegration in Kosovo

#### **Result 1. Capacity of central and municipal authorities in facilitating voluntary return and reintegration is enhanced.**

- *Activity 1.1 Technical assistance and support to the MCR*

This activity will include training and additional capacity development for the MCR, as the central institution responsible for: a) providing policy guidance, coordination and assistance in the return sector, and b) promoting the establishment of conditions conducive to return. Furthermore, the technical assistance will support the MCR in: a) implementing its strategy and the forthcoming regulation on displaced persons and durable solutions, b) developing mechanisms to ensure transparent and objective collaboration between the MCR and municipalities to implement activities in the return and reintegration sector with specific emphasis on ensuring a gender-sensitive approach, c) increase capacities for monitoring and reporting of return related activities and d) increase capacities in returns database management. This activity is also contributing to SIGMA's Principle 5 of the Strategic Framework of Public Administration Reform.

- *Activity 1.2 Technical assistance and support to municipal authorities, particularly Municipal Offices for Communities and Returns.*

This activity will include training, on-the-job assistance, coaching for relevant gender diverse municipal staff and ensuring adequate representation of both women and men, in order to design, implement, monitor and take full ownership of return related activities, such as i) facilitation of pre-return (Go-and-see-GSV and Go-and-inform-GIV visits), inter-ethnic dialogue and reconciliation activities, ii) facilitation of physical return, iii) access to social services, including civil registration, education and healthcare, iv) inclusive community development projects, and v) employment and income generation activities for women and men. Special attention will be paid to new municipalities that were not part of the previous phases of the RRK programme.

#### **Result 2. Up to 400 displaced families returned to Kosovo.**

- *Activity 2.1 Construction or rehabilitation of up to 400 returnees' dwellings (individual, row houses or social housing), and assistance to municipal authorities in ensuring that all returnees have access to basic infrastructure, including water, electricity and sewage.*

This activity will include the building and/or repair of the returnees' houses in the communities of return, and will necessarily entail close cooperation between the municipal authorities and the implementing agency during the assessment of the infrastructural conditions in the relevant communities, as well as the construction and rehabilitation of community infrastructure (where necessary), in order to ensure that all returnees have access to basic infrastructure, including water, electricity and sewage.

- *Activity 2.2 Facilitation of the voluntary return of up to 400 families to Kosovo, and the provision of standardised Return Packages (food, non-food, and furniture).*

This activity will include the physical return of 400 families currently living in displacement in the neighbouring countries, as well as the purchase and hand-over of a standardised Return Package, in line with government regulations, upon the return of the beneficiaries.

**Result 3 Sustainability of reintegration of returnee families is improved through the provision of tailor-made socio-economic support, community-based projects and enhanced access to civil status documents and government services.**

- *Activity 3.1 Support the beneficiaries in obtaining civil status documentation as well as land and related documentation by working closely with Kosovo’s central and municipal authorities.*

This activity will include the assistance to beneficiaries in registering and obtaining civil status documentation in order to ensure their sustainable return and reintegration of the 400 families targeted by this Action, as without proper civil registration documents returnees face problems in obtaining equitable access to public services, education, health care and social services. The Activity will be implemented by the implementing partner in close cooperation with Kosovo’s central and local authorities in order to facilitate a quick and smooth administration process, and to ensure rule of law and protection of human rights, particularly for the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian community who face multiple layers of discrimination and exclusion.

- *Activity 3.2 Support for re-integration and reconciliation process*

This activity will include efforts to implement social and community-based development projects, (for the benefit of both receiving and returning communities) in support of inter-ethnic reconciliation (inter-ethnic dialogue and community based discussions), socio-economic and re-integration activities (cultural, sports and infrastructure community initiatives). Special attention should be given to women and youth related activities.

- *Activity 3.3 Design and deliver tailor-made economic sustainability packages focused on skills development and income generation activities*

This activity will include the assistance to the beneficiaries to engage in income generation activities through skills development, such as business-start-up, language courses, courses in information technology and other trainings, and also through the provision of tools and equipment necessary for income generation, in order to facilitate the sustainable reintegration of the returnees in Kosovo.

**RISKS**

| <b>Risks</b>   | <b>Mitigation measures</b>   |
|--|--|
| Deterioration of the political and security situation in the potential destination regions within Kosovo, or in Kosovo as a whole. | If the political and security situation deteriorates in the areas of return or in Kosovo as a whole, an appropriate and flexible response will be taken, which may include the delay of implementation of the activities or the reallocation of funds.   |
| Lack of positive attitude among the receiving communities towards returnee families.   | Ongoing dialogues will be facilitated among the receiving community members in order to maintain and/or build inclusive communities, enhance social capital at a community level and thus facilitate the sustainable reintegration of the returnees.   |
| Difficulties with sustainable economic reintegration of returnee families.   | The economic situation may jeopardise the reintegration process, therefore, close attention will be paid to developing a strategy on economic integration and delivering economic initiatives. Income generation support strategies will be carefully planned and designed taking the economic |

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|--|---|
|  | characteristics of the region of destination, as well as the skills and potential of each beneficiary into consideration. |
|--|---|

Additional assumptions for the successful implementation of the Action include:

- Prevalence of positive attitudes of the displaced families to return and remain in Kosovo.
- Ability and willingness of the municipal institutions to provide equal access to basic rights and services.
- Beneficiaries are willing to be engaged in income generation activities.

### **CONDITIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

The main preconditions that are considered to be critical for the success of the Action include:

- The political situation in general and the security and stability in Action areas remain sufficiently stable to allow for the implementation of activities.
- Coordinated effort between the central and municipal government to secure and allocate public land for construction of houses for landless returnee cases.
- Meaningful involvement of the Kosovo authorities at central as well as at local level in gaining ownership over this return project and in contributing to the overall success and sustainability of the project.
- Up to 400 displaced minority families agree to participate in the Action.

## **3. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS**

### **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

At the central level, the main institutional stakeholders of the Action are the MCR and the European Union Office in Kosovo who will have the broad mandate for overseeing the Action. The MCR is committed to the development and implementation of policies for long-term solutions of displaced persons, returnees and stabilization of minority communities. It aims to develop a comprehensive legal framework and conditions for the protection of the rights of displaced persons within Kosovo and in the region as well as strengthen the return process through the establishment of institutional mechanisms of cooperation with line ministries and regional and international partners.

At the local level, the Municipal Offices for Communities and Returns (MOCRs) will be the main stakeholders in the Action and have a broad role for supporting project activities in coordination with the implementing partner. As participants of the Inter-Ministerial Commission for Returns, which is headed by the MCR, the MLSW, Ministry of Local Government Administration (MLGA), Ministry of Internal Affairs, and Ministry of Spatial Planning will be additional stakeholders as contributors to the Government's coordinated effort to support the return process.

As implementing partner of the Action, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) will oversee the daily operations of the Action and ensure the timely and prudent delivery of assistance to the beneficiaries. Various United Nations agencies and international actors in the sector will be stakeholders of the Action, particularly UNHCR, as the activities of the Action are complementary to supporting their general mandate. Local civil society organisations (CSOs) and international NGOs concerned with supporting returnees and non-majority communities including but not limited to OSCE, Danish Refugee Council (DRC), Kosovo Agency for Advocacy and Development (KAAD), among others will all be stakeholders of the Action. Final beneficiaries of the action will be women, men, girls and boys from the displaced community (i.e. IDPs, DPRs and refugees).

A Project Steering Committee will be formed to guide programmatic decisions, comprising of the MCR, the EU Office in Kosovo, the implementing partner, and aforementioned stakeholders as deemed necessary during the inception phase of the specific Actions.

#### **IMPLEMENTATION METHOD(S) AND TYPE(S) OF FINANCING**

The total amount allocated for this action document is **EUR 10.75 million**.

This action is proposed to be implemented, through Pillar Assessed Delegation Agreement (PADA) with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) which is in line with Articles 58(1) (c) (ii) and 185 of the Financial Regulation (FR) due to its significant experience in the sector. IOM is a longstanding partner of the MCR and the EU in the field of minority community rights.

The involvement of IOM in this case is further justified considering: (i) IOM presence and experience in Kosovo and the fact that they are implementing both the EU and MCR programme funds in the sector for Return and Reintegration in Kosovo (RRK) under IPA 2010 and IPA 2012 programmes and Community Stabilisation Programme (CSP) under IPA 2009 and IPA 2011; (ii) IOM (under the RRK IV project funded through the IPA 2012 programme) has fully taken over the process of facilitating the return of the remaining Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian families displaced in camps in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro; (iii) IOM's increased involvement in facilitation and support of the regional inter-governmental dialogue between Kosovo and Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia respectively and (iv) IOM close cooperation with the MCR and concerned municipalities on all issues of return, re-integration and stabilisation of minority communities. The MCR has enjoyed excellent relations with IOM throughout the implementation of joint projects ensuring programmatic coordination and maximisation of resources between the MCR and the EU funds.

This component of the action is proposed to be financed through financial contributions from both the EU (EUR 8.00 million) and the MCR (EUR 2.75 million) in the total amount of EUR 10.75 million. The EU contribution is going to be implemented through PADA with IOM addressing all three foreseen results of the action while the MCR financial contribution will address mainly Results 2 and 3 of the Action.

The Action is expected to be implemented over a period of 36-48 months.

## **4. PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT**

### **METHODOLOGY FOR MONITORING (AND EVALUATION)**

The Action foresees regular monitoring including a gender perspective from the MCR and the EU Office in Kosovo through direct participation in the Project Steering Committee as well as regular reporting provided by the implementing agency. The Action further foresees monitoring from the Results Oriented Monitoring (ROM) teams from the EU.

The implementing agency will be responsible for:

- Regular monitoring of the Action beneficiaries to ensure that they are sufficiently supported and that regular contact is maintained in order to address any issues that might arise or to take remedial actions that may be required in order to ensure the sustainable return and reintegration of the beneficiaries.
- Conducting an evaluation to assess the overall impact of the Action and its ability to provide the needed support. The assessment will be used to provide suggestions for the future implementation of similar programming and draw out lessons learned from the current phase. Action monitoring and

evaluation will be based on a periodic assessment of progress in delivering specified Action results and achieving Action objectives. It will ensure inclusion of a gender perspective.

The European Commission may carry out a mid-term, a final or an ex-post evaluation for this Action or its components via independent consultants, through a joint mission or via an implementing partner. In case a mid-term or final evaluation is not foreseen, the European Commission may, during implementation, decide to undertake such an evaluation for duly justified reasons either on its own decision or on the initiative of the partner. The evaluation will be carried out as prescribed by the DG NEAR guidelines for Evaluation. In addition, the Action might be subject to external monitoring in line with the European Commission rules and procedures set in the Financing Agreement.

## INDICATOR MEASUREMENT

| <b>Indicator</b>   | <b>Baseline 2012</b>                  | <b>Target 2020</b>                            | <b>Final Target (2020)</b>                    | <b>Source of information</b>   |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|---|--|
| Number of minority families (displaced in the region) facilitated to return and reintegrate to Kosovo disaggregated by gender, ethnicity and age.  | 394<br>(previous RRK phases I and II) | 1050<br>(all planned phases of RRK programme) | 1050<br>(all planned phases of RRK programme) | Action implementation reports, MCR data, UNHCR data, ROM and evaluations reports |
| Number of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian families (displaced in camps in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro) supported to return and reintegrate to Kosovo disaggregated by gender, ethnicity and age. | 0                                     | 260   | 260   | Action implementation reports, MCR data, UNHCR data, ROM and evaluations reports |
| Number of staff of central and municipality level authorities trained and able to apply learned skills successfully and effectively in managing monitoring and reporting activities in the return sector.                | 20                                    | 60  | 60  | Action implementation reports, MCR data, UNHCR data, ROM and evaluations reports |
| % of occupancy by the returned families of the (re) constructed dwellings in Kosovo.   | 70%                                   | 80%   | 80%   | Action implementation reports, MCR data, UNHCR data, ROM and evaluations reports |
| Number of community-based development projects involving both men and women from returning and receiving communities.  | 16                                    | 56  | 56  | Action implementation reports, MCR data, UNHCR data, ROM and evaluations reports |
| Number of returnee families having obtained civil status, land property, or other related documentation with the support of  | 394                                   | 1310  | 1310  | Action implementation reports, MCR data, UNHCR data, ROM and evaluations reports |

|   |     |      |      |  |
|---|-----|------|------|--|
| this Action   |     |      |      |  |
| Number of returnee families that have access to public services (including utilities, health care, education and social services) | 394 | 1310 | 1310 | Action implementation reports, MCR data, UNHCR data, ROM and evaluations reports |
| % of returnee families (disaggregated by gender) ensuring income and sustainable reintegration.                                   | 70% | 80%  | 80%  | Action implementation reports, MCR data, UNHCR data, ROM and evaluations reports |

## 5. SECTOR APPROACH ASSESSMENT

**Strategy for Communities and Returns** - this Action is fully in line with the National Strategy for Communities and Returns 2014-2018. The Action, through the facilitation of returns and reintegration of minorities and the support of income generating activities, specifically addresses two of the four outlined Strategic Objectives: "Sustainable return of internally displaced persons, in the region: Serbia, Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" and "Empowerment and stabilization of communities in Kosovo." Furthermore, as a result of the special focus on Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian returnees, it will directly contribute to the integration of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in Kosovo 2009-2015 and the Government of Kosovo's commitment to facilitate transfer of informal economic activities into formalised economic activities. Moreover, the Action underpins the sectorial approach defined by the Strategy for Communities and Returns 2014-2018 targeting both returnees and members of non-majority communities in recognition of their need for extended support mechanisms.

This Action represents a continuation of four previous phases of the same programme funded jointly by the MCR and the European Union Office in Kosovo. With the mandate to develop guidance, promote and implement legislation for the protection of communities and to create conditions for returns, the MCR is the lead institution in this Action. At the local level, the MOCRs are the responsible authorities for community affairs, and to improve the livelihood of communities in their respective municipalities. The role of the MOCRs is hence significant, especially regarding their involvement in the field addressing the needs of the communities they serve.

**Institutional arrangements and coordination** - in order to further improve the issues in the return sector the MCR is involved at different levels with different stakeholders both inside and outside Kosovo. Such mechanisms are designed to improve conditions for return, reintegration and livelihood of displaced persons as well as facilitate easier inter-ethnic and reconciliation activities. In May 2015, the Government of Kosovo established Inter-Ministerial Commission on Returns. The Commission is chaired by the MCR Minister and represented by Minister or Deputy Minister from various ministries addressing various issues related to security of minority returnees, access to education, health and livelihood.

At the local level, the municipal authorities are closely involved at all phases of implementation facilitating the process of beneficiary assessment and approval, housing, access to social services and inter-ethnic dialogue activities. In particular the Municipal Offices for Communities and Return participate in the Local Action Groups (LAGs), supporting the returns process and coordinate activities between relevant local actors, returning and receiving communities.

**Regional coordination** - The MCR is involved at the Regional Initiative with the aim of finding durable solution for displaced persons from Kosovo. The initiative is supported by OSCE, UNHCR and the EU and it involves the representatives of the governments of Kosovo (MCR), Serbia, Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The forum operates at two levels i.e. (i) the High-level Forum with the aim of agreeing a framework for co-operation in the context of the regional process as well as (ii) Technical Working Group with the aim of discussing and coordinating various issues in specific areas such as Property Rights, Personal Documentation, Security, Dialogue and Reintegration, Data Management Advisory Group, and Solutions Planning.

In conclusion, it is fair to indicate that all of the above steps (i-the action being a continuation of the same programme, ii-the action addressing the objectives of the National Strategy for Communities and Returns 2014-2018 and iii-existence of different coordination mechanisms at central, local and regional levels) create good basis for the MCR to move towards sector approach. However the capacities of the MCR, the MoCR and other stakeholders in the sector need further improvements which will be addressed by this action.

## 6. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

## **GENDER MAINSTREAMING**

Gender related issues shall be actively mainstreamed throughout the Action within all target institutions and organisations, activities, and measurable outputs. At the local level, efforts shall be made to further empower gender focal points already established within municipalities including working in centres for social welfare etc. Similarly, to mainstream gender more widely and strategically, the Action will support central level institutions, namely the MCR, in ensuring a gender sensitive approach to return and reintegration programming is included within all relevant ministry strategies, programmes, and policy documents. Throughout the Action, decision making processes shall take place in full consultation with returning and receiving communities, including both men and women, and in particular women from minority communities.

In the income generation component, the Action will specifically target female single-headed enterprises and business associations. As in general incomes earned by women tend to be invested in the household, rather than elsewhere, facilitating the participation of women in income generating activities further assists the stabilisation of communities. This is particularly true in the more remote areas covered by the action. Furthermore, by accessing and operating in isolated areas too remote for financial institutions to access and monitor/service their loan portfolios the action provides a mechanism to better facilitate the participation of rural women in economic activities. The action will also take into account different gender needs when implementing the harmonised family assistance package. Socio-economic measures will be tailored to equally take into consideration the specific needs of male and female beneficiaries. In line with past EU programmes in Kosovo, a target figure of 25% of beneficiaries within the Action will be females, particularly female heads of returnee households. Also the potentially different needs of women and men in targeted communities will be considered. Monitoring and evaluation will include gender-disaggregated data.

## **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**

As mentioned above, special care will be taken to ensure the involvement of women-headed households, as well as the equal opportunity for beneficiaries of all genders. Additionally, at municipal level, decision making processes shall take place in full consultation with IDP and refugee women and men (particularly displaced minority women, people with disabilities). Efforts shall be made to further empower and involve gender focal points already established within municipalities. Special criteria for beneficiary selection shall be developed to take into account different gender needs and help enhance gender equality in local communities where return takes place.

## **MINORITIES AND VULNERABLE GROUPS**

The entire Action endeavours to improve the socio-economic situation of minorities and vulnerable groups. More specifically, this Action targets displaced non-majority women, men, girls and boys and their material conditions, such as housing and access to adequate infrastructure, to successfully and consciously exercise their right to return and durable solution. Furthermore, as part of re-integration members of minority communities, both women and men, will have opportunities to actively participate in the community-based initiatives, local economy and social life inter-ethnic related activities.

Since 2003, a system of “fair share” has been in use at municipal level, whereby a certain percentage of the municipal budget should be spent directly on the minority communities. In accordance with new legal requirements, this should also involve Gender Responsive Budgeting, ensuring it addresses the needs of diverse women and men, towards decreasing gender inequalities. This aspect shall be taken into consideration when negotiating with municipalities their co-financing contribution to the Action budget. The Action also foresees the active engagement and participation of vulnerable groups from these communities, who will be identified through an intensive outreach programme which will also include a gender perspective.

Throughout the action design and implementation, specific attention shall be paid to the needs of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, with at least 40% of the beneficiaries coming from this minority group. Tailored measures/positive Actions shall be considered to counteract the high level of discrimination these communities are exposed to. A special approach will be used with Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian women who are among the most disadvantaged in Kosovo.

#### **ENGAGEMENT WITH CIVIL SOCIETY (AND IF RELEVANT OTHER STAKEHOLDERS)**

Involvement of civil society has been an integral part of previous EU-funded return and reintegration related projects, including the previous four phases of the EU-Return and Reintegration (EU-RRK) programmes, and will continue to remain so under this proposed Action.

Civil society organisations provide assistance in cross-border cooperation, inter-ethnic dialogue facilitation, and community outreach, information dissemination, conducting joint trainings for returnee and receiving communities, and implementing community development through joint social activities.

Moreover, throughout the implementation of the Action, close cooperation with Local Action Groups (LAG) within targeted municipalities will be maintained. LAGs, which are comprised of civil society organisations, private sector actors, local and central level authorities, other local leaders, have proven to be key actors in the return and reintegration process. The project implementation team will keep close contacts with municipal authorities and community leaders to encourage participation of minorities and returnees in these structures. To achieve this, minority NGOs and other returnee groups that are part of the Kosovo Policy Action Network, which will be supported through the Action, will be put in contact with the MOCR of their respective municipalities and encouraged to participate in their MWGs and LAGs.

#### **ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE (AND IF RELEVANT DISASTER RESILIENCE)**

Environmental issues shall be actively mainstreamed throughout this Action. Project staff shall include a short-term environmental specialist to define environmental protection strategies, and to ensure close follow-up.

In line with the EU EIA Directive, any work involving the reconstruction of the dwellings and medium water supplies, and the upgrading or construction of rural roads may require an Environmental Impact Assessment. Care will also be taken to ensure that, as far as possible, construction techniques and materials are environmentally friendly. Particular attention shall be given to the disposal of waste construction materials. Disaster resilience and risk prevention and management should be integrated in the planning, preparation and implementation of the Action.

As per previous practices the RRK Action will work with the respective municipal authorities to ensure that environmental considerations are taken into account. More specifically the rubble and waste produced from the construction works will be disposed of at the appropriate municipal waste management sites. Furthermore all houses constructed under this action will contain thermos-insulation and external façade to comply with energy efficiency measures as foreseen under the guidelines for implementation of the return process. Where necessary, the action shall provide the municipal engineers with field-based, on-the-job training about issues related to environmentally-friendly construction methods and other safeguards.

### **7. SUSTAINABILITY**

As the issue of return can be extremely sensitive to inter-ethnic relations between returning and receiving communities, particular attention will be paid regarding any incidents that could harm trustful relations between concerned communities. In this regard, the Action will work closely with municipalities and local communities, and through the investment in small infrastructural projects that will benefit both returning and receiving communities have proved to be conducive for sound inter-

ethnic relations contributing to the sustainability of returns and reintegration of minority communities. A Community-based approach through inter-ethnic dialogue and community reconciliation activities are key to sustainable return. In this regard the GSV organisations for the potential beneficiaries to visit their places of origin and participate in de-briefing sessions chaired by Municipal Mayors, will aim at the promoting of inter-ethnic dialogue by ensuring the dialogue between the displaced people and receiving community, thus encourage tolerance and understanding between parties. In terms of the security of returnees, the Government of Kosovo, through the police and judicial forces, must adequately react to any violations of rights, thus sending the positive message of safe return to all current and future returnees.

Previous phases of the RRK programme show that the comprehensive package of assistance including informed decision for return, provision of housing and land allocation, household appliances, food and non-food items, income generation and community development projects are crucial for successful and sustainable Action outcomes. The places of return are most often rural and employment possibilities therefore limited where the majority of returnees still rely on agriculture as the main source of income. Nevertheless, previous implemented return and reintegration programmes for minority communities have demonstrated several examples of well-articulated business plans which resulting in viable self-sustainability solutions for some of the returnees and their families.

Moreover, MCR and MOCRs are increasingly more competent to deal with return and reintegration issues. The MCR remains committed to fulfilling its mandate regarding the return and resettlement of DPRs, IDPs and refugees and will be fully involved in the project promoting the MCR's ownership and responsibility over the resettlement process, hence aiding sustainability of the Action using its available tools such as:

- MCR Guidelines for Return;
- MCR National Strategy for Communities and Returns 2014-2018; and,
- Inter-ministerial Commission on return
- Regional Initiative for Durable Solutions for Displaced Persons from Kosovo.

In addition, the MOCR and other municipal authorities are committed to allocate land for the construction of housing, and further assist during the implementation of the Action. Of particular importance for sustainability of the action is the involvement of municipal authorities in facilitating access to health, social services and education needs for resettled families.

## **8. COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY**

Communication and visibility will be given high importance during the implementation of the Action. The implementation of the communication activities shall be the responsibility of the IPA II beneficiary, and shall be funded from the amounts allocated to the Action.

All necessary measures will be taken to publicise the fact that the Action has received funding from the EU in line with the Communication and Visibility Manual for EU External Actions. Additional Visibility Guidelines developed by the European Commission (DG NEAR) will have to be followed.

Visibility and communication actions shall demonstrate how the intervention contributes to the agreed programme objectives. Actions shall be aimed at strengthening general public awareness and support of interventions financed and the objectives pursued. The actions shall aim at highlighting to the relevant target audiences the added value and impact of the EU's interventions and will promote transparency and accountability on the use of funds.

It is the responsibility of the beneficiary to keep the European Union Office fully informed of the planning and implementation of the specific visibility and communication activities.

The beneficiary shall report on its visibility and communication actions in the report submitted to the IPA monitoring committee and the sectoral monitoring committees.