

PRESS RELEASE

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New publication \ Preparation and Networks are Key for Returning Migrants: Findings based on Four Years of Research at BICC on Returnees' Reintegration Trajectories

Migrant receiving countries in Europe have set up assistance programmes to facilitate the return and reintegration of rejected asylum-seekers, migrants with no legal status or those wanting to return. The question is: Do assistance programmes actually do so, and how do reintegration trajectories take shape from the perspectives of the returnees themselves? These were key questions in the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)-funded research project '[Trajectories of Reintegration. The Impacts of Displacement, Migration and Return on Social Change](#)' at BICC from 2019 to early 2023.

Results of the comprehensive empirical research are synthesised in BICC's latest report: [The Role of Return Preparedness, Assistance and Networks in Returnees' Reintegration in Origin Countries \(Synthesis Report\)](#).

This report summarises the findings of four case studies conducted in the Western Balkans ([Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia](#), [Albania](#), [Kosovo](#)), West Africa ([Ghana](#), [Senegal and The Gambia](#)) and the Middle East ([Iraq](#)). With the support of local researchers, the BICC team conducted more than 725 in-depth interviews with assisted and unassisted returnees and 213 interviews with experts and stakeholders to understand which factors influence their reintegration experiences. The study used a multi-sited and long-term research approach, and the sample consisted of both assisted and unassisted returnees and their social contexts.

'By bringing in the migrants' experiences, we found that the returnees' access to livelihood options, their long-term aspirations and life plans, as well as the political context in the origin country, play a decisive role in their process of reintegration', explains senior researcher and project leader, **Zeynep Sahin-Mencütek**.

Moreover, findings of the study show that the returnee's willingness and readiness to return—along with the support of social networks—has a greater impact on reintegration than formal assistance. However, assistance is critical for returnees with low return preparedness, especially in the initial phase after return. The study concludes that individualised, holistic and demand-driven approaches are required to achieve effects of

reintegration assistance in the longer term, and that the links between development and reintegration must be addressed more systematically. The author recommends that remigration and circular migration be considered a component of reintegration.

Synthesis Report

- / *Şahin-Mencütek, Z. (2023). The Role of Return Preparedness, Assistance and Networks in Returnees' Reintegration in Origin Countries (Synthesis Report) Bonn: BICC.*

Case study reports

- / *Rudolf, M. (2022). Talking at Cross-Purposes? On Ambiguous Relationships between International Policies on Return and Reintegration and their local Conceptualisations in Ghana, the Gambia and Senegal (BICC Working Paper series No. 1/2022). Bonn: BICC.*
- / *Schmitz-Pranghe, C. (2023). The Role of Mobility, Networks and Reintegration Assistance after Return. Insights from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia (BICC Working Paper series No. 1/2023). Bonn: BICC.*
- / *Mielke, K. (2023). Finding One's Place in Chaos. Returnees' Reintegration Experiences in Northern Iraq (BICC Working Paper series No. 2/2023). Bonn: BICC.*
- / *Vollmer, R. (2023). Reintegration in Contexts of High Mobility. Insights from Albania and Kosovo (Working Paper Series No.3/2023). BICC.*

More information and additional publications from this project can be found [here](#).

BICC will continue its research on return and reintegration in a new project funded by the BMZ, titled '[Attitudes and Practices in Minority Returns after Conflict-induced Displacement \(RE-MIG\)](#)'. This project will focus on the ethno-religious or –linguistic minorities and the distinct set of challenges these groups might face in exile and upon their return.