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REINTEGRATION OF RETURNING MIGRANTS AND LOCAL CAPACITIES

- Round Table organized by
Shpresë për të Ardhmen Association -



Tirana, 16 April 2004

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“Reintegration of returning migrants and local capacities”

(16th April 2004)

- 09:00** **Welcome of participants and round introduction**
Irena Dono, Executive Director of Shpresë për të Ardhmen NGO
- General Introduction of the Round Table**
Arben Muka, Chairman of Shpresë për të Ardhmen NGO Board
- 09:30** **Re-integration of the returnees – a challenge to face.**
“Kape të Ardhmen” project’s experience
Irena Dono, Executive Director of Shpresë për të Ardhmen NGO
- 10:00** **Questions and discussions**
- 11:00** **Coffee break**
- 11:15** **Debate – moderated by Arben Muka**

Issues to discuss upon:

- The structures that guarantee the re-integration and sustainability of the return:
Is the Albanian society with its structures able to face the huge number of returnees that will be returning from EU countries? How can the existing services become more efficient?
- How can expertise and information on re-integration be delivered to returnees?
- How can a better coordination among NGOs dealing with migration issues and the relevant governmental structures be achieved?
- How can local structures develop re-integration programmes without the support of international community? How can Albania become a proud nation that starts to develop its own concepts for development of its economy by making use of the small credits system that can help in the re-integration of the returnees and business sector?
- Cross-border cooperation – an additional support to the re-integration of the returnees.
How can the international community in Albania contribute to this cooperation?

14:15 **Evaluation**

14:30 **Buffet.**

WELCOME

Irena Dono- Executive Director of Shpresë për të Ardhmen NGO

Irena Dono opened the Round Table meeting with greetings and welcome to all the participants. She thanked them deeply for the presence in this activity and told that this Round Table aimed to present a successful reintegration programme with five year experience and confront up to now practices in the services offered for returning migrants.

Irena Dono expressed the regret for the indifference shown by the foreign embassies accredited in Tirana, which did not send any representative although the invitation and some other information material were delivered more than one month before. Donor organizations which operate in Tirana did not reply to our invitation as well.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION OF THE ROUND TABLE

Arben Muka, Shpresë për të Ardhmen NGO chairman, moderator of the Round Table

Arben Muka welcomed and thanked all the participants and invited them to make a brief introduction of the NGOs they represented. After that he spoke about the aims and objectives of the Round table stressing the great importance taking nowadays such initiatives assisting in the reintegration of the returning migrants.

“Albania got known with the emigration phenomenon early in the 19th century but the new one was only after the year 1990. It was a massive emigration that changed enormously the situation in the Albanian society and family.

Now it came the moment that Europe wants to say stop to the illegal migration and to return rejected asylum seekers. With opening of the negotiations with EU and signing the agreements of admission for returning migrants between our government

and EU, opening of more reintegration projects for returnees from EU countries seems to be indispensable. On this context I should say that without the direct interest and attention of central and local government, the contribution of local NGOs would be fragmented and not visible in this hard reality that offers a few chances to the repatriated people”, said A. Muka.

“REINTEGRATION OF RETURNING MIGRANTS – A CHALLENGE TO FACE” –presentation of Shpresë për të Ardhmen NGO activity.

Irena Dono- Executive Director of Shpresë për të Ardhmen NGO

Irena Dono gave a presentation of Shpresë për të Ardhmen NGO and Kape të Ardhmen project that are supported financially by HEKS (Swiss interchurch Aid), EED (Aid for Development of German Evangelistic Church) and IOM (International Organization for Migration).

She stressed that purposely had called the reintegration issue a challenge to face. That's because the reintegration process is very difficult and complicated and makes up a real challenge for those NGOs or governmental institutions that aim to deal with it.

Kape të Ardhmen project's office was opened in April 1999 and legalization of the Shpresë për të Ardhmen NGO in November 1999 having as a main goal to help in the reintegration in the Albanian society of returning migrants from EU countries mainly from Switzerland.

The office aimed to develop new professional and educational perspectives for the repatriated young people in order to help them to re-find their roots in Albania.

From 2003 and on internal migrants are included in our program as well.

The speaker continued citing some figures about the repatriated Albanians sent back from Switzerland in five last years. These figures were an indicator to show that how

big is the number of returnees only from one country and on the other hand to stress that how small is the possibility to assist these people through a sole project. Well it is important to stress that opening of more reintegration projects is a necessity of the time.

The main directions of the activity / services offered

1. Professional re-integration of the returnees includes:

- Opportunities for nine month apprenticeship at small and middle enterprises to get a profession
- Job facilitation
- Financial support for young people who follow university studies
- Subsidies for training courses.

2. Social reintegration includes:

Arrangement of Open House meetings where the young people join each-other, exchange experiences of life and spend some nice time in the company of each-other.

3. Cultural, sportive and other leisure time reintegration activities

These kinds of activities include visits outside the city, watching in collective a cinema movie or a football match, organization of soccer plays between the project's beneficiaries, celebration of the special events, awarding the yearly best story of emigration written by the young people involved in the program.

4. Raising awareness on the risk of illegal migration.

Prevention of illegal migration.

- Meetings with students of high schools in different towns of Albania are part of our activities.

5. Financial support for small businesses

In 2001 our NGO has given financial support for opening four small business enterprises and strengthening of existing business (two cases).

Other services available:

- Psycho-social counseling
- Financial aid for beneficiaries in need.

Some summarizing statistics being related with the number of the people enrolled in our files, number of beneficiaries up to March 2004 (526 persons) and the geographical coverage of the project (26 districts) were given in this Round Table.

Then the opinions and suggestions by some beneficiaries on the work done by the NGO and project office were read.

Irena Dono mentioned the donors that have contributed to develop this reintegration programme and stressed that a very good partnership with them has made possible to carry out the objectives and reach the success.

Speaking about the difficulties experienced during the implementation of this programme the speaker mentioned:

“1. Difficult target group. We were working with young people who were involved in illegal activities in Switzerland and used to make money easily. This programme created by a Swiss prison pastor was incomprehensible for them; they even had suspicions on our relations with Swiss policy. So it took some time to spread our activity and make our office trustful.

2. Adaptation of the programme designed in Switzerland needed time to take roots in Albania. The most difficult part was to make young people awareness that this programme was useful, because this determined their role into the reintegration process. It is more than clear that

understanding and being an active part of the nine month apprenticeship program and other supportive activities is the key for the sustainability of the return.

3. Sustainability of return also depends on stability of small business that offers employment possibilities for the returning migrants, which hardly can be found in nowadays business life in Albania.

4. Lack of the job opportunities especially in the region have not allowed us and young people to choose what fits more to their likings for job places what could give to them more guaranty to survive in the unmerciful competition of labor market.

5. The good of this reintegration programme on my opinion has to do with the offered opportunities to the returning migrants to be re-placed in a reality and society that change quickly. If a programme helps you immediately when you are back, give you a hand to go forward, it facilitates the difficult process of switching into two different societies.

6. Role of reception facilities is of a high importance. They must guarantee not only a kind of service but a variety of activities in order to provide a full reintegration process. I think that the role of our Association is accomplished if we try to make effective the programme we are working for, whereas the **role of state** should be complex and needs to be analyzed in many directions. First: to identify this target group and is it possible to build reception facilities for returnees? Albania has signed an agreement with some EU countries dealing with the return of Albanian migrants, while we ask: Is our country ready to receive these flow people?

7. In general Albania suffers the lack of information and expertise: Repatriated people do not know where to be forwarded for certain information dealing with job places or any other kind of information which serves for his/her new life in Albania.

I think that a joint work between NGOs and governmental structures that deal with migration and employment issues, reintegration process of returnees would be easier and of an affordable cost on Albanian society.

Note: A full presentation of the NGO activity made by I. Dono you will find at the end of this material.

Questions / Comments

No questions from the participants after the presentation. With regard to the comments it should be said that all the participants appreciated the work done by our NGO during five years of its existence.

STRUCTURES THAT GUARANTEE THE REINTEGRATION AND SUSTAINABILITY OF THE RETURN.

On this point the debate incited by Mr. Muka came to many comments that participants shared to each other. The most part of participants unanimously affirmed that government and state structures role is fundamental in providing the sustainability of the return.

Unfortunately Silvana Banushi, the representative of Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, left the Round Table meeting early, so that we couldn't hear the voice of State relating with the actual legislation on migration and what can and must offer our State to his citizens in the framework of reintegration.

All presents were of the opinion that the increase of collaboration between NGOs and governmental structures, drafting of the policies and strategies on employment are key elements at facing the rush of returning migrants and assisting them efficiently in the reintegration process.

COORDINATION OF WORK AMONG NGOs THAT DEAL ON MIGRATION ISSUES AND APPROPRIATE GOVERNMENTAL STRUCTURES.

Anila Shehu, chief of Social Services Sector at Tirana Municipality presented shortly the work done by the Municipality of Tirana in social services field. According to her the Social Services Sector of the Municipality of Tirana is relatively a new one created in January 2001. During this time they have faced out many problems: the lack of expertise and the limited budget have been a problem among the others. With regard to the returning migrants, there is a strategy for the future but on existing legal framework of the social services the employment or housing opportunities for returnees are not included.

In spite of that she mentioned that the Municipality of Tirana is prestigious and welcomes any collaboration with NGOs that offer assistance to returning migrants. Hope for the Future is a recognized NGO for them and the Municipality of Tirana is open to collaborate with it.

She continued to present to all the participants what the Municipality of Tirana is doing in order to improve the social services. For the moment they are doing the Social Services Map at which all governmental and non profitable organizations that offer services for the fifth target groups in need will have access.

They also are working to build up a Social Council which will select the projects submitted to the Municipality of Tirana and will also offer expertise in respective fields of projects that will be implemented.

Questions / Comments

Question: Which is the strategy that the Municipality of Tirana is implementing on reintegration?

Answer: Anila Shehu explained the fact that our state is still not working on

migration and reintegration policies level. Albanian state in cooperation with IOM Tirana has taken upon to draft a migration strategy. They actually are in the phase of building up the structures.

She mentioned two fields where the Municipality of Tirana is working intensively now: investments in public school buildings and handling the housing problem.

Services offered to the returning migrants

Some other local and national NGOs are actually working on assisting returnees -

Forum for Social and Economic Reintegration is one of them. Mr. Luan Pogaçe, representative of this Forum in the Round Table presented in brief their work. Up to now their work consisted in making a survey in Kakavija and Kapshtica boundary posts dealing with all migrants that leave and enter through these borders. According to this research such people's needs are different and often their situation is too much complicated. It demands a specialized work in combination with the help given by the government in order that their needs to be provided.

L. Pogaçe brought out his experience with Albanian returnees from Greece. He was expressed: "This target group as soon as are deported at Kakavija border is left in the mercy of fate and it is probable to be fallen a prey to illegal activities that hurt the individual as much as the society".

Looking through this problem Forum for Social and Economic Reintegration is making fundraising for a project which will assist migrants since the first moments of leave or enter the country.

Reintegration programmes also must be applied for all repatriated people apart from the country of their migration and the age they belong to. This target group must be assisted since they enter Albania and not to be picked up one by one all over the

country. These persons must not be left in the mercy of fate, often with no money and no assistance at all. Their employment one by one is often even more difficult to be done.

He appreciated the results of Hope for the Future Association and stressed that it is necessary a better cooperation among NGOs dealing on migration and Albanian State to be established.

Representative of IOM Tirana, Dëshira Shehu, thanked Hope for the Future staff for the undertaken initiative considering it as effective and fruitful.

With regard to the cooperation with Hope for the Future Association under the framework of VARRP (Voluntary Assisted Return and Reintegration Programme) she underlined the fact that IOM Tirana considers itself not only as a donor organization, but as partner with Hope.

Nevila Gremi, representative of ICMC (International Catholic Migration Committee) thanked Hope for the Future Association for the undertaken initiative. She presented shortly the research made by ICMC in collaboration with CESPI (Italian Institute for Research) where Hope for the Future was involved. For this research there were made interviews with familiars of migrants repatriated mainly from Switzerland and some EU countries either. They were aimed to view emigration effect on the Albanian family. This was the first phase of a reintegration project for Albanian emigrants, being in prison in Italy. The idea was to train these young people in the most required professions here in order to be able to place them in proper job places upon their return in Albania. This research was also aimed to view how welcomed are the returnees being back home and what opportunities are for their reintegration.

Information and expertise on reintegration

On this issue Dëshira Shehu, representative

of IOM Tirana spoke about the work done by her organization. She especially mentioned the investigation and research made by IOM in 2002 where 31 young people were interviewed and after were assisted by VARRP reintegration programme. The most part of them were supported to find a job place, some others to attend vocational training courses. Information on legal migration was provided as well.

Currently IOM Tirana is providing information and assisting Albanian people how to prepare and complete a file for seasonal employment in Italy.

IOM Tirana has also set up a network where some local, international NGOs and representatives of governmental institutions are involved. This network secretariat organizes monthly meetings where different topics dealing with migration are being treated. The network is aimed not only to exchange information among participants and giving expertise but also to serve as a lobbying structure for different problems that have to do directly or not directly with migration.

Luan Begaj, Executive Director of Migration Support Centre presented the programme of this Centre set up in 2003. It has offered vocational training courses for emigrants who worked in the region of Venetto (Italy) and actually they were dealing with researches and surveys on migration issue.

Main focus of the centre is economic emigration, employment and instruction for regular migration, assistance for returnees, researches and surveys.

According to Mr. Begaj voluntary and forced returnees must not be treated or assisted in the same way. For the forced returnees specialized services and manifold training must be offered.

“Currently we are making a survey to see what real possibilities exist for being more efficacious in the services provided for them. It is absolutely known that if you want to assist someone money is needed, the

money come from the donors and the donors often have their influence or run the policy of the programs. In this respect we should be focused on the most important issues in order to be able to have their support. On the other hand we must study the real possibilities for assisting the individuals and draft a strategy for possible services.

It is already known that Europe will reject a part of emigrants. Meanwhile the local NGOs should be prepared to afford the post return situation taking into account that our State is out of the game. We must take into consideration that the economic level and unemployment rate in our country is in alarming figures whereat returning migrants from EU countries will be in increase”, - Mr. Begaj was expressed.

Mr. Begaj stressed the necessity of cooperation with foreign NGOs because the Albanian State doesn't possess the required capacity to face the flux of repatriated people. But he also was of the opinion that even though an NGO is a non profit organization it should run a profitable activity to a certain degree it makes possible the implementation of its projects.

Questions / Comments

Question: *Sh. Kërpica (beneficiary of the programme of Hope for the Future Association)*

As our State is not able to receive returning migrants why does it sign agreements on their returning?

Answer: Dëshira Shehu, representative of IOM Tirana, was answered. Albania is one of the countries that inspire to join EU countries. Agreement signed for accepting the returning migrants is one of the criteria it has to fulfill to be eligible.

“My history of migration”: Two returning migrants tell their history of migration, return and reintegration

Three beneficiaries of Hope for the Future programmes were invited to participate in this Round table: two from Take the Future project and one from VARRP programme. They admitted to share with us their stories of migration.

Sh. Kërpica, Berat.

“After high school graduation I decided to migrate to Italy because of my town Berat couldn't offer any job opportunity. I spent some months in Italy working part-time, sometimes eating and sometimes being hungry. One day I was caught by the police and I was provided with a document where was written that I had to leave Italy immediately. At once I decided to migrate to Switzerland. So I went there and sought for political asylum. I attended school and respected Swiss laws during all my stay there. But 6 months later a letter came by mail that informed me that I should leave Switzerland within three days. Right this moment I decided to do the utmost to gain some money and this behavior led me to prison.

One month later they sent me back to Albania. My family picked me up at Rinas airport. When I was back often asked myself “what I am going to do?” Quite by chance I got information about Hope for the Future Association in my birth town. I visited NGO office and they offered me their reintegration assistance for 9 months. I could find a job place and have a normal salary needed for a normal living in my small town.

After completing the nine months program I felt myself in difficulty again because my salary without the supplement of Hope for the Future was rather low so I was obliged to change the job place even the profession. The salary I get now is still not sufficient to provide my needs and what troubles me more is that I don't know how long I'm keeping on this job place.

Personally I appreciate the work done by Hope for the Future Association, but also think that only one NGO which work in this field is too little. State should do more for its citizens and promote and support such initiatives.

Questions / Answers

Question: During your time in Switzerland did you get any information on return and reintegration programmes?

Answer: No.

Question: Would you consider remigration as possible?

Answer: In the conditions I'm living yes. Our state doesn't function and what makes me now to stay in Albania is only my family.

Question: What would you make to stay in Albania?

Answer: A job place that provides a good salary. Man must be ambitious in his life. I can't be satisfied with the salary I actually get. My salary can't provide me a normal living standard not to think to save some money for building up the future.

Silvana, Berat.

"I'm not going to speak about the reasons of my migration because they are almost the same for all Albanian migrants. I want to share with you my experience of return and the big support given to me by Hope for the Future Association.

I was back in Albania after 5 years spent in a Swiss jail. I don't like to speak about what I did in Switzerland because I know it was completely wrong, but it can happen to some people to deviate from the right path and then to suffer the consequences. I was turned back in November and was treated not as a human being by the police in our airport. I was kept isolated for 24 hours with no food and water as I was the most wanted criminal. I was released only when my father came and signed in stead of me even I was 32 years old and considered to be mentally healthy and fully responsible for myself. It was the most difficult moment of my life when I faced a harsh reality far away of the reality I was coming from.

Nevertheless I was glad that a friend of mine suggested me to visit the office of Hope for the Future Association. I had heard about this NGO even before from a social worker in the prison. So I applied in this NGO to be involved in its program and they offered me their reintegration

assistance. This Association has done a lot giving me a hand to restart from the beginning my life in Albania. For a person like me who don't live in Tirana this is a great help. I have some months involved in this programme and I'm training in the hair-dressing profession. It is a great help for me – this is what I can say with certitude".

Questions / Answers

Question: Could you tell us how did you get at Switzerland?

Answer: Together with my fiancée as clandestine.

Question: Did you practice any profession when you were in the prison?

Answer: I worked as babysitter and in the kitchen as an aid to chef but I couldn't learn a real profession.

Question: What did offer Hope for the Future Association to you?

Answer: First I can say that at once I met the social worker I was felt well, not prejudiced as in my town by different people. I felt myself free and open to talk with her about my life and what had happened to me. Later on this association helped and supported me to be trained in the hair dressing profession.

Question: Would you like to re-migrate?

Answer: No, I think. I'm turned back in Albania to stay forever. This is my country; I have my family and my friends here.

Question: On your opinion what would make Albanians to stay in their country?

Answer: I guess a permanent job with a good salary and more care and interest by our state towards his citizens.

All participants showed a big interest in hearing the stories of migration, return and

reintegration told by Take the Future project beneficiaries. Many of them were also interested in “In the crossroads of life” book with the migration histories published by Hope for the Future Association.

Comments: Teuta Grazhdani from IOM Tirana did a short comment on the returnees’ arrival in Rinas airport. She told that the most part of the returnees come back bearing in mind the idea of remigration. The reception in the airport by the police is not rare out of every ethic norm and human behavior. So that one can hardly believe that they can stay in Albania forever.

Representative of the Tirana municipality said that it was absurd to pretend from the state for a permanent job when future is not secure even for none of us. “We all here have a job place at the moment, but who can guarantee that will be at the same situation tomorrow”.

Stavri Trako, manager of a non public school and Hope for the Future NGO board member remarked that we should not pretend so much to be more supported by a state like ours that is in huge debts and so not able to provide something substantial for its citizens even to improve the employment policies.

Existing financial resources and reduction of foreign donors.

Patrice de Mestral, initiator and one of the donors of Take the Future project

Z. De Mestral thanked all the participants for their presence in the round table, also all board members of Hope for the Future Association, executive director and all the staff of Take the Future project for their successful work done in these 5 years existence. In particular he expressed his pleasure to have present in the Round Table two beneficiaries who came on purpose from Berat.

Presenting shortly his job as the initiator of Take the Future Project he declared that

after 5 years life of the association time to “albanize” it has come.

“To be honest, the first step started to keep foreigners away from Switzerland, concretely Albanians. This way came to practice this project. Nevertheless a great work done by all the staff made this project develops and be unique in Albania. First services were offered to a very hard target group, young Albanians repatriated from Switzerland who had left their country because of poverty, dreaming for a better life. Now 5 years later there are assisting returning migrants from Germany and United Kingdom. I can say obediently that it’s time this project becomes an institution”.

Z. De Mestral held on his speech speaking about the developments of the Albanian society and the priorities of Albanian government. He was in Albania for the 22nd time and was impressed by the fact that the Albanian government has as priorities building new roads and blocks and is not at all interested in the fate of emigrants who are all the time back and forth. Referring to the representatives of Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs who left the meeting till the beginning he was expressed: “Once more State told that it has other priorities”.

He went on speaking about funds reduction from foreign donors who are leaving Albania day after day considering their mission done and delegating their responsibility to Albanian State. Now it’s a fact that many donors are stepped back completely or partly leaving space to state institutions and NGOs. Nevertheless he added that personally he will be always interested for Take the Future project and will try to make its life longer.

Comments

Stavri Trako said that our country needs the support of foreign donors yet because it is not able to face the huge problems it has. European developed countries, rich in experience and financial power must give their contribution towards development of small and poor countries to prevent major

problems as migration is. Major problems have their negative influence not only in the country they appear but also in the neighbors too.

Denada Deliallisi from Swiss Contact remarked that we must not expect to have the support of the foreign donors for the entire life; it's time to try the ways for self sustaining. She compared the NGOs development with raising a little baby; when the baby is matured there's no need the parent takes care of him.

Utilizing the alternative resources, encouraging of the microcredit system

Concerning the alternative resources of the reintegration assistance, Shpresë për të Ardhmen Association applied in the year 2001 the micro credit scheme for returning migrants in order to encourage opening of small business workshops. There were thus supported four groups of beneficiaries to open their own small enterprises.

It should be said that it was an experience not so successful for Hope because three business workshops out of four failed in their attempts to set up a stable business. It is still continuing to work the carpentry named by the beneficiaries "Kape të Ardhmen". Three others failed paying back only a small part of the loan to our project office. The reasons of failing were different: it was not a good business choice, big lack of electricity, high taxes not affordable by them, high competition in those businesses, not a full motivation to work by their side.

What we found not good by our side was that we could not provide expertise for them.

Arlinda Baçi, representative of the **TAULEDA** agency, transmitted a successful experience in this field.

This agency works in three levels: Durrës local government, NGOs and Durrës & Kruja development local agencies.

Tauleda operates as a credit institution for small and medium enterprises. It

cooperates with Credins Bank which has signed agreements for giving credits with.

By knowing very well the place where operates TAULEDA is supportive to new ideas and private initiatives. Expertise and counseling is also provided for small businesses.

Questions/Comments

Comments: With regard to the micro credit system Patrice de Mestral brought the Indian micro-credit experience of the "Women for women" project.

A group of Indian women began to run a micro-credit system in which these women managed and circulate the income. Getting started by this experience de Mestral alluded that Shpresë për të Ardhmen successful staff, consisted mostly of women, could try to organize such a micro credit system and reach the success.

Arlinda Baçi declared that Tauleda is willing to collaborate with Shpresë për të Ardhmen NGO whether it restarts to apply the micro credit schemes offering the appropriate expertise and experience for setting up small businesses.

Denada Deliallisi, representative of **SWISS Contact** (Swiss Foundation for Technical Cooperation) thanked Hope for the Future NGO staff for organizing such an event and gave short information on the activity of Swiss Contact.

According to her the aim of the foundation was to raise employment opportunities for persons who abandoned the school and no skilled other young people. Through its projects Swiss Contact assisted in development providing with vocational skills young people offering 3-4 months training in adaptation with the labour market needs.

The main directions of the activity were:

- Improving the quality of teaching by instructors;
- Increasing the number of professions;
- Opening new branches in the region (so far they operated in the Middle and South Albania).

D. Deliallisi explained that their foundation did not secure job places but raised the opportunities for employment by offering them vocational training.

The vocational training fee was done by Swiss Contact with a small contribution by the individual who participated in the programme.

Questions/Comments

Comments: Arben Muka was of the opinion that there are potential opportunities for cooperation between Swiss Contact and Shpresë as it is already known that the majority of the returning migrants are young people with no special skills and qualification and not a certain profession. This cooperation would be a guarantee more in the process of sustainability of return and reintegration.

Dono dhe Deliallisi approved that and said that the opportunity for cooperation has been discussed even before between two parties expecting in the concretization of this initiative in the near future.

After that A. Muka declared the activity closed. He thanked once more the participants and invited them in the buffet organized on this event.

Conclusions and recommendations

Increase of the cooperation among NGOs

It is very important to have more frequent contacts and share of information in order that the existing services provided for the returning migrants to be improved. For NGOs that operate in the migration field involvement in common researches and studies is always necessary.

Governmental structures' involvement in the services provided for returning migrants.

The appropriate state structures should pay proper attention to these people first identifying them and after assisting them. In

this way the state would help and contribute in the alleviation of the reintegration process in the Albanian society and labor market.

Cooperation with NGOs which deal with migration and reintegration issues, improve of legislation on emigration policies and opening new job places by the state would be essential elements to ensure the reintegration and sustainability of return.

Drafting of the efficient reintegration strategies

Drafting of a national reintegration strategy with inclusion of socio-economic integration policies would enable facing of the huge flux of returning or internal migrants.

Application of the micro credit system

The returning migrants should be encouraged to apply for short terms or long terms credit according to their interest. Proper expertise should be provided to them for strengthening old businesses or opening new business enterprises.

Lobbying should be made for them in order to put pressure on the government to enable fiscal facilities and encourage the small and medium business enterprises.

Vocational training

More vocational training opportunities should be provided for young people with a low educational and vocational training level in adaptation with the labour market needs and requirements enabling them to be competitive in this market.

This can be achieved through a better cooperation with the vocational training centers and labour offices all over Albania.

Re-integration of Returning Migrants – a Challenge to Face

- by Irena Dono -

Prezantim i aktivitetit të Shoqatës
"Shpresë për të Ardhmen"

Tiranë 2004

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5. Statistics
6. Evaluation of the programme by beneficiaries. Opinions and suggestions
7. The donors
8. Conclusions drawn by our own experience

THE BEGINNING OF KAPE TE ARDHMEN PROJECT AND SHPRESE PER TE ARDHMEN LEGALIZATION

Kape të Ardhmen project commenced since in October 1998 but the Information, Counselling and Support office for Albanian repatriated young people was opened in April 1999.

The legalization of the NGO under the name "Shpresë për të Ardhmen" was done in November 1999.

"Kape të Ardhmen" was born as an initiative of the Swiss prison chaplain Patrice de Mestral. He had frequent contacts with Albanian young people penalized in Switzerland and thought to open a reintegration programme that aimed to encourage these young people to create their future in Albania and not in other countries dealing with illegal activities.

De Mestral made also fundraising mainly the two first years.

◀ OBJECTIVES OF SHPRESE PER TE ARDHMEN

- *To help in the re-integration of repatriated Albanians from EU countries into the Albanian society.*
- *To develop new educational & professional perspectives for their own future in order to help them to find and re-discover new roots in Albania.*
- *To create new alternative job-employment for these repatriated Albanians, as a first step of re-integration in Albania.*
- *To promote the social reintegration*
- *To bring into public focus the problem of so many young Albanians who seem to see no future for them in Albania except to migrate to other countries.*
- *To raise awareness of Albanians on the danger of illegal migration.*

The TARGET GROUP:

- Returning migrants from EU countries mainly from Switzerland, Germany and UK.
- Internal migrants

◀◀ Some figures on the repatriated Albanians returned by the Swiss authorities in the last five years

These figures are only unofficial because they are not available in the public. These are approximate figures, which correspond to P. de Mestral regular inquiries at the border police at the airport of Kloten and include repatriation from all the cantons of Switzerland.

Year	Returnees / a year	A month about
1998	2543	212
1999	1613	134
2000	1100	82
2001	830	69
2002	415	35
2003	216	17

Main Directions of our activity / services offered

◀◀ Professional re-integration of the returnees includes:

- Possibility for 9 month apprenticeship at small and middle enterprises to get a profession
- Job facilitation
- Financial support for them who study in the University
- Subsidies for training courses.

Methodology:

For this purpose it is signed a contract between the employer and our office where we assume to supplement the beneficiary's salary by 80 € for 9 months.

- Number of the project beneficiaries is actually 6 persons per month.
- From 1999 to 2002 the number of beneficiaries has been 10 a month.

◀◀ Social Reintegration

It includes: "Open House" periodical meetings. They are organized once a month in Tirana and once in three months in the region. These meetings are free and open where the young people meet each other, exchange their life experiences and spend nice time in the company of each other. They serve to socialize the young people, make new friendships and change the every day routine.

Some special topics were discussed in the Open House meetings of the last year.

"Open House" meetings were also organized with some entrepreneurs who have employed our clients. Our office pays much attention to the consolidation of the relationship with them.

◀◀ Cultural, Sportive and other leisure time reintegration activities

These kinds of activities include visits outside Tirana, watching in collective a cinema movie or a football match, organization of soccer plays between the project's beneficiaries, celebration of the special events, giving out the yearly best history of emigration written by the young people involved in our programme.

All young people show a good willingness to be involved in these activities and their participation is a good one.

We have noted that the reintegration process would be more easy and efficient if more activities of this kind would be organized.

◀◀ Raise of awareness on the risk of illegal migration Illegal migration prevention

- Meetings with students of High Schools in different towns of Albania to talk about the risk of illegal migration are part of the activity of our Association.
- Young people's opinions about the risk of illegal migration are gathered not only by the organized debates but also by the questionnaires distributed on this purpose. Respective data are published in periodical bulletin of Hope.

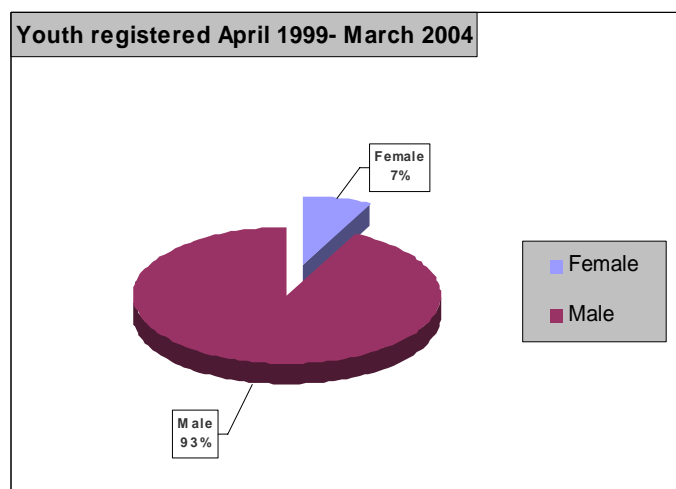
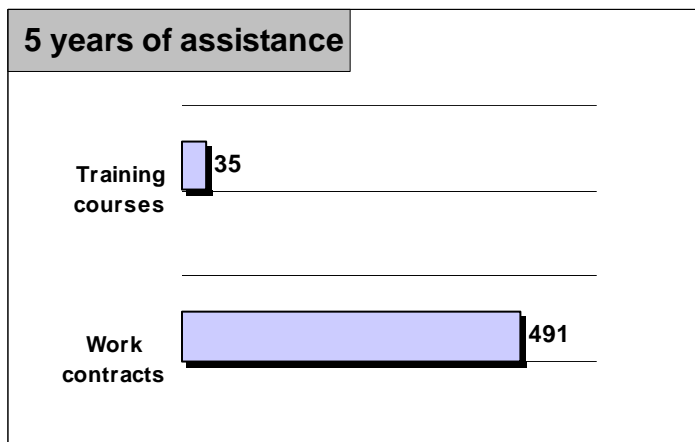
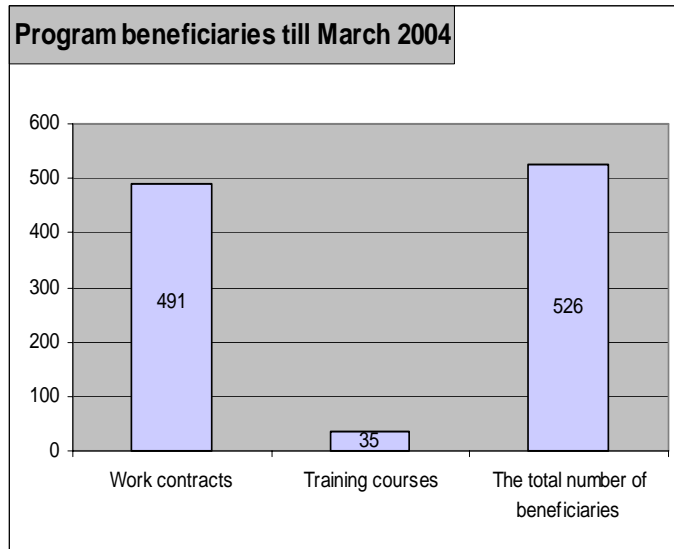
◀◀ Financial Support for small business enterprises

- From 2001 "Hope for the Future" Association has offered financial support to small business initiatives for 4 (four) groups of young people after they had finished their 9 month apprenticeship and capacity building for two existing businesses.

◀◀ Other services:

- Psycho-social counseling
- Financial support for particular cases of programme beneficiaries in need.

◀ STATISTICS



◀◀ **Beneficiaries feedback about the work done by “Hope” Association and “Take the Future” project.**

I think that the work of “Take the Future” Project is wonderful. It has helped us a lot and it is still helping to our reintegration into the problematic Albanian society. My single suggestion is that this project will continue to work with the same rhythms.

G. Spahia (Shkodër)

This project is a unique support to us because not only helps us economically, but is also vital to the reintegration of the new generation, getting down to work and coming back to the normal social life.

Our gratitude to the initiators and the project staff.

N. Lubisha (Berat)

I think that the project has been very useful to the persons assisted at this reintegration programme. The support has been not only financial, but also moral, because it motivates you to work and change the concept of earning the money. I suggest that the project expands its activity in other regions.

S. Dardha (Berat)

This project is very interesting because it helps young people to work and not be involved in drugs activity in Switzerland.

Thank you

B. Lamaj (Berat)

Your project is very valuable. If he goes on helping Albanian returnees, it will be a financial and moral support. Project staff was very helpful and supportive for me. Thank you very much and I wish you further success.

Z. Dauti (Tiranë)

This vocational training helped me to learn the profession of the chef. I thank this Association for its given help and wish to go on helping all repatriated young people as I am to learn a profession.

Thanks a lot. Thanks all the association staff for the good work they do and the support they gave me.

S. Doraci (Berat)

I think “Take the Future” project has helped me within its power and I thank them a lot.

With respect

A. Hakaj (Tiranë)

◀◀ Opinions and suggestions from programme beneficiaries

- » To open new offices in main regions of Albania
- » To be involved in the programme all young people in need
- » To support poor families with a lot of members
- » To give financial support and long-terms micro credits
- » To organize more social-cultural activities especially in the region
- » To prolong the apprenticeship time and raise the salary supplement
- » To build different structures which make possible the self-financing of the Association in the future
- » To design and implement more projects.

◀◀ DONORS and PARTNERS

Take the Future Project was born as an initiative of Mr. Patrice de Mestral, who made fund-raising to private Swiss donors since 1999 up to the end of 2000.

A contribution is also given by HEKS (Swiss Interchurch Aid).

During the years 2001-2002 Shpresë për të Ardhmen Association was supported by SDC (Swiss Cooperation and Development Agency) and HEKS.

In 2003 a new donor accepted to support for two years our association : EED (German Evangelist Church Aid for Development) and HEKS in continuity.

In 2003 Shpresë për të Ardhmen Association signed two agreements with IOM (International Organization for Migration) to cooperate and include in its reintegration programme voluntary returnees from UK on the framework of VARRP Programme (Voluntary Return and Reintegration Programme), initiated by IOM London.

Our association is financed by IOM for the common part of the programme in line with the mutual agreement.

In 2003 several Swiss private donors, who have recognized and got familiar with our achievements regarding the Albanian repatriated young people, had the kindness to give some contribution as well.

We consider the relations with the donors as very good ones. These relations have a partnership and fair basis, which serves to the further progress of our activities and the success of our association.

◀◀ CONCLUSIONS DRAWN FROM THE EXPERIENCE

“Take the Future” project started as a pilot project in Albania and we experienced a lot of difficulties because of:

1. Difficult target group. We were working with young people who were involved in illegal activities in Switzerland and used to make money easily. This programme created by a Swiss man was incomprehensible for them; they even had suspicions on our relations with Swiss policy. So it took some time to spread our activity and make our office trustful.

2. Adoption of the programme designed by Patrice de Mestral from Switzerland needed time to take roots in Albania. The most difficult part was to make young people awareness that this programme was useful, because this determined their role into the reintegration process. (We have to take into consideration the fact that the major part of the young people belongs to a low educational level).

Understanding and being an active part of the 9 month apprenticeship and other supportive activities is the key for the sustainability of the return.

3. Sustainability of return also depends on stability of small business that offers employment possibilities for the repatriated people, which hardly can be found in nowadays business life.

4. Lack of the job opportunities especially in the region have not allowed us and young people to choose what fits more to their likings for job places that could give to them more guaranty to survive in the unmerciful competition of labour market. Although the questionnaires data show that 80% of young people continuo to work in the same job places even after 9 month apprenticeship, this figure doesn't make us sure that the sustainability of return is realized to those parameters we would like. On the other side we can't pretend that we have helped the young people to learn the profession of their life because this means to stop the development and positive ambition to go forward.

5. The good of this reintegration programme on my opinion has to do with the offered opportunities to the returning migrants to be replaced in a reality and society that change quickly. If a programme helps you immediately when you are back, give you a hand to go forward, it facilitates the difficult process of switching into two different societies. So, it is the first phase of the reintegration process which determines the way the emigrant will follow; will look for his future in Albania or he'll try again migrating.

6. Role of reception facilities is of a high importance. They must guarantee services of a kind but a variety of activities in order to provide a full reintegration process. What our Association has achieved to formulate and implement is:

- warm atmosphere and hospitality which make the office ethics
- individual and group counseling
- equal chances for all applicants of our programme
- make evident the needs and real possibilities for vocational reintegration
- offered help through priorities
- inclusion of all young people in different activities we organize

- collaboration with beneficiaries and their inclusion in social-cultural activities organization
- support and continual contacts with the beneficiaries even after 9 month apprenticeship

I think that the role of our Association is accomplished if we try to realize the programme we are working for, whereas the **role of state** should be complex and needs to be analyzed in many directions. First: to evident this target group and is it possible to build reception facilities for returnees?

Albania has signed an agreement with some EU countries dealing with the return of Albanian migrants, while we ask: Is our country ready to receive these flow people?

7. In general Albania suffers the lack of information and expertise: repatriated people do not know where to go for certain information dealing with job places or any other kind of information which serves for his/her new life in Albania. Our Association has experienced the same situation, plus the arrogance of public administration that doesn't inform you, but often misinform.

I think that a joint work between NGOs and governmental structures that deal with migration and employment issues, reintegration process of returnees would be easier and of an affordable cost on Albanian society.

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