

The European Union's IPA programme for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia

## Thematic Evaluation of EU's Support to Refugees in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo\*, Montenegro and Serbia

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# Final Report

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\*This designation is in line with the UNSCR 1244 and ICJ Advisory opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of independence



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## PROJECT SYNOPSIS

<b>Project Name:</b>	FWC DEVCO BENEf 2009 – LOT 12 Thematic Evaluation of EU's Support to Refugees in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro and Serbia		
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<b>Overall Objective:</b>	Provide findings and recommendations to assist the European Commission Enlargement Directorate General (DG ELARG) in the programming and implementation of EU assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia in their support to refugees and IDPs.		
<b>Expected Results:</b>	<p>Assessment of the intervention logic of EU assistance to support refugees and IDPs in the relevant countries.</p> <p>Judgment on the actual or expected performance of assistance, in the light of the standard EU evaluation criteria. Provide operational recommendations for programming future EU assistance at both strategic and individual country programme level + SMART indicators to measure progress towards achievement of objectives for future programmes.</p> <p>Outline corrective measures to improve implementation and monitoring of on-going actions.</p>		

<b>Key Activities:</b>	Review and analysis of documentation, Interviews, Report drafting
<b>Key Stakeholders:</b>	National IPA Coordinators Relevant ministries EC (DG ELARG, EU Delegations in beneficiary countries, EU Office in Kosovo) International organizations
<b>Report N°:</b> <b>Authors of the Report:</b>	2 – Final Report Alessandro Simoni, Thomas Vasseur, Cristiana Spinola

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

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

BCR	Bureau for Care of Refugees, Montenegro
BPRM	Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration
CARDS	Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation
CC	Collective Centre
CfP	Call for Proposals
CRS	Commissariat for Refugees and Migration of the Republic of Serbia
DACU	Donor Aid Coordination Unit – Sector for Planning, Programming, Monitoring and Reporting on EU funds and Development Assistance (former)
DEI	Directorate for European Integration, Bosnia and Herzegovina
DG	Directorate General
EAR	European Agency for Reconstruction
EC	European Commission
EQ	Evaluation Question
EU	European Union
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IGA	Income Generation Activities
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
IO	International Organisation
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
IP	Implementing Partner
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession
IR	Inception Report
ISDACON	Intersectoral Development Assistance Coordination Network
LNGO	Local Non-Governmental Organisation
MCO	Municipal Communities Office
MCR	Ministry of Communities and Return, Kosovo
MEI	Ministry of European Integration, Kosovo
MHRR	Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees, Bosnia and Herzegovina
MIPD	Multi-annual Indicative Programme Document
NIPAC	National IPA Coordinator
PSH	Partial Self Help
RAE	Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptian communities
ROM	Results Oriented Monitoring
RRK	Return and Reintegration in Kosovo
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
SEIO	Serbian European Integration Office
SHPE	Social Housing in Supportive Environment
SUTRA PLOD	Support to Results-Based Approach : Partnership for Local Development
TA	Technical Assistance
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With the assistance provided to refugees and IDPs in the Western Balkans, the EU addressed as a major actor one of the main humanitarian challenges of Europe after WWII, and the related financial instruments had to operate in an extremely complex context. The strategic and programming objectives established in this field under CARDS and IPA had, therefore, to strike a difficult balance between available resources, priorities on the ground, and political constraints. The volume of resources employed was certainly significant, with 55,4 MEURO under CARDS funds, and 76,5 MEURO under IPA (Grants and Services, National and Regional), with a total of 9,972 families supported under CARDS and 4360 under IPA (grants only). The programming process had to take into account the huge variety between the countries involved in terms of dimension, institutional framework, social structure and nature of refugees/IDPs problems. Guidelines applicable to the whole region were not easily built, also considering differences in financial distribution, with two-thirds of the assistance allocated to Serbia, and indicators were primarily linked to the quantitative achievements of assistance.

The project selection mechanisms were quite articulate, and generally adequate in terms of transparency and predictability, with an effort at ensuring relevant results through extensive consultations with government agencies, and some difficulties linked to the slow development of a network of local organizations of sufficient technical competence. With regard to instruments, the nature of the sector implied a prevalence of grant contracts, integrated by service contracts primarily focused on capacity building of government bodies. Prioritization and sequencing of the different components of assistance also appears to be generally adequate. Tendering procedures, however, are perceived by stakeholders as exceedingly lengthy. This is indicative of the difficulty of conveying adequate information on the constraints due to existing administrative regulations, and underlines the necessity to strive at flexibility to adapt to conditions changing over time.

In a broad overall assessment at regional level, one can say that the main strengths of the current approach in supporting refugees/IDPs are certainly represented by the clarity in the formulation of precise and realistic objectives, the foundation of these on a reasonably sound needs assessment and valuable empirical data, and a generally good linkage with national policies and legal frameworks. In terms of gaps and weaknesses, in the first place come the difficulty to realize an actual regional approach and a limited degree of flexibility in programming the assistance, together with a relative weakness of socio-economic measures oriented towards employment.

The link with developments specific to each country has been certainly built taking into account national policies and strategies, although these are often not easily implemented due to political factors and limited resources available at the local level. Besides national governments, the EU made a constant effort for the involvement of relevant organizations in the assessment of needs and definition of strategies. Such participatory features are generally considered as satisfying, although the absence of a clearly structured participatory approach, and the fragmentation of civil society in the area, can imply problems for the involvement of underprivileged groups with unclear political representation. This mainly involves the Roma, as part of a broader social and political issue not limited to refugees/IDPs assistance.

Adequate efforts are also made for coordination with activities of other key donors. Considering the variety of actors involved, a good level of harmonization exists and major overlaps are avoided, although improvements are possible in order to learn lessons from the various experiences. Strong linkages between IPA and pre-IPA programmes certainly exist, also due to the mounting commitment of stakeholders for a regional dimension. This has a highlight in the CEBs Regional Housing Programme (which is not covered by the present evaluation), that continues and complements IPA programmes as an outcome of the Sarajevo Process. Strong linkages between programmes are

crucial particularly when it comes to the inclusion in the assistance package of complementary components necessary to improve sustainability.

IPA appears as markedly country-focused, with the regional dimension poorly reflected in national EU programmes, due to the fact that regional benchmarks could not be set in the early years, and such features are partly amplified by the limited level of structured regional coordination between EU representations. As mentioned above, the absence of a real regional approach represents, together with the limited flexibility upon programming the assistance, a procedural problem, while in terms of content one can note a limited focus on socio-economic measures, with housing still having the lion's share.

The maximisation of flexibility in programming future TA, while safeguarding certainty and transparency in tendering, is important for an effective and efficient achievement of strategic objectives, in order to avoid "path dependency" (i.e. activities steered by prescriptions originated under different political and factual conditions). This is also linked to the features of the assisted target groups, which are characterised by constantly changing conditions influenced by social, psychological, and economic factors. In order to achieve more impact and sustainability, in both return and integration, it is recommended to plan, in the early programming phases, concerted actions aimed at ensuring that economic opportunities benefit both the returning groups and the receiving communities, together with systematic actions ensuring the follow up of returnee families after return has taken place.

In order to ensure the quality of programming, it is important to diversify the sources of information used in the programming process, so that the evolution of the needs and priorities of refugees/IDPs is ascertained from different perspectives, and to rely on structured methods aimed at ensuring strong participatory features, without relying solely on information available within the main institutions. Equal attention must be paid to the municipal level, since local authorities are unavoidable actors in the assistance process, and in the mediation between conflicting interests. A markedly inclusive approach must also be followed when consultations take place for the design of Project Fiches. The programming process must be also linked with national and regional strategies on Roma integration, considering the importance of the problems experienced by Roma within the refugees/IDPs communities. All issues must be dealt with in both a national and regional dimension, to the extent that this is allowed by political and institutional conditions. When coordinated/joint actions are not practicable, the double level must be, however, taken into account in order to compare practices and tools.

With regard to performance, one can generally state that the administrative and organisational structures currently in place at central level in the countries concerned are in line with the standards required for efficient and effective implementation. There are certainly important differences between countries, but such differences are mostly linked to the different administrative levels involved (with problems related to the frequent scarcity of resources at municipality level) and the dimension of administrative units, rather than to the overall institutional setting. Problems are mostly related to the interaction between different branches and levels of the administration, and are often also due to political factors.

The functioning of monitoring mechanisms and structures seems also to be generally in line with the requirements imposed by the refugees/IDPs sector, although such mechanisms are not fully consistent over the region. Monitoring mechanisms seem to be generally structured so to give more weight to quantitative rather than to qualitative data, an approach that does not always allow to fully appreciate the strength or weakness of certain actions.

Generally speaking, financial assistance seems to give an effective contribution to achieving objectives and priorities, and all programmes contributed to the provision of durable solutions. Providing sustainable livelihoods to returnees is, however, a permanent challenge. Creating the

conditions for a sustainable income can only be done on the basis of a thorough understanding of the local economy.

The balance of organizations supported, including international NGOs, UN agencies, local organisations, seems fairly good. There are, however, still situations in which the selection of organisations to be supported seems incapable of attracting new organisations, especially those representing underprivileged groups.

Measurement of the impact of return assistance proved to be difficult, as very few in-depth surveys have been conducted and actual impact (or absence of impact) can be linked to socio-economic factors independent from the quality of implementation. Until recently, this sector experienced a severe selection of the organisations supporting implementation, with a dispersion of the good practices developed over time. The concept of “return support” aimed at supporting spontaneous return, and focused on individuals, proved difficult to operate in a challenging political context and partly jeopardised the establishment of development-based programmes. More impact and sustainability could have been achieved if more attention had been paid to introducing consistent socio-economic measures for both refugees and IDPs and, on a limited scale, for resident population as well.

Experience makes clear that sustainable return does not have to mean “permanent return”, as the stability of return is linked to a multiplicity of factors linked to the professional and educational opportunities available for families and to the loyalty to specific social networks. It is clear as well that income-generation assistance does not systematically mean sustainable permanent employment, while income generation does not per se imply increasing integration. The condition of refugees/IDPs and the stability of return are indeed increasingly linked to the improvement of social and economic standards that apply to the overall population. Problems experienced by refugees and IDPs are more and more general problems related to the weakness of the welfare state at the local level and to the overall vulnerability of categories of persons because of poverty or ethnic identity.

Apart from increasing communication between EU representations and reducing the time used in the tendering process, a great deal of attention must be paid to the obstacles arising from the difficult cooperation between central and local levels, and to the frequent lack of resources in the latter. Project cycle shall be adapted so to stretch over a longer timeframe, in order to reflect a development approach. Coordination with other supranational actors must be aimed at supporting the transition from a displacement to a social and economic development perspective, in order to integrate the refugees/IDPs issue in the overall national welfare policy. Clear incentives must be introduced for local authorities cooperating to the solution of refugees/IDPs issues, together with mechanisms ensuring that good practices are integrated in their work. Overall, it is recommended to go beyond the income-generation grant, which alone cannot provide long-term and durable livelihood, although it remains essential as a start-up tool. In order to achieve sustainability and increase impact, it is crucial to strengthen the economic/employment aspect, otherwise refugees and returnees may end to live in extreme poverty, although “at home”.

Notwithstanding the huge diversity of the national contexts, a number of lessons equally applicable over the region can be drawn from the experience of EU assistance.

In terms of understanding of the assistance contexts, the primary lesson is certainly that of the difficulty to assess in purely quantitative terms actions aimed at improving the situation of refugees/IDPs, with the parallel difficulty of distinguishing, within the condition of refugees/IDPs, factors linked to their status from factors of different origin (poverty/ethnicity).

In terms of action priorities, the main lesson is most likely that of the importance of good economic conditions and income perspectives on the ground as “pull factor” for return, while in terms of

facilitating intervention, it is certainly crucial to create incentives for a proactive role of the “last segment” of the assistance chain (local authorities and local branches of the central government).

The observation of EU assistance and its impact makes clear that the return and reintegration process is extremely sensitive to external socioeconomic factors. These can strongly increase or reduce the impact of a project, or even programme, irrespective of the quality of planning and implementation.

With regard to the definition of objectives and related SMART indicators that shall facilitate the measurement of performance and design of future support to refugees/IDPs, the proposed programming level objectives are focused on the improvement of the living conditions of refugees and IDPs, the facilitation of access to and realisation of rights of refugees and IDPs, and the development of the capacity of authorities in managing refugees and IDP issues. Indicators are built primarily around these objectives, with a special attention paid to respectively social integration and economic integration. The proposed indicators will be measuring not only the performance of the assistance components but also their expected impact. Measuring the performance of programmes aiming at achieving durable solutions and sustainable integration is certainly a challenge, since integration is a complex phenomenon and process which quantitative indicators alone are insufficient to describe. The rationale behind measuring the performance of external interventions supporting this objective is similarly complex. Performance is composed indeed of quantitative and qualitative indicators, not always tangible or visible.

The indicators proposed are developed based on three programming level objectives: 1.The improvement of living conditions of refugees and IDPs 2.The facilitation of access to and realization of rights of refugees and IDPs 3.The further development of capacities of authorities in managing refugees and IDP issues. The indicators referring to the first two objectives are organised around respectively an economic integration and a social integration axis. Indicators with reference to social integration are based inter alia on the number of returnee/refugee/IDP families successfully using public health facilities/services, public schools, receiving benefits, and using the legal system. With reference to economic integration the indicators are based inter alia on successful use of employment seeking services and gain of stable professional occupation. In both fields, a specific place is given to the evidence of actual commitment of local authorities/institutions in acting for social or economic integration, as well as to contribution in the production of data. The timing of performance has also been taken into account, as well as issues of sustainability in the measurement process, which is per se a time-consuming and costly activity.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Evaluation Purpose and Scope

The current evaluation takes place in the context of the extensive financial assistance already provided by the EU after the armed conflicts in the Western Balkans in order to find solutions to the problems posed by the massive presence of refugees and IDPs displaced across the countries of the area, that reached in the past a peak of three millions. Notwithstanding the huge efforts made by the concerned countries and by the various international actors in recent years, the number of refugees/IDPs still in need of a durable solution remains significant, requiring extensive actions for supporting return and reintegration, or integration in the place of residence, and targeted actions for vulnerable groups more severely touched by the problems related to displacement. Considering the dimension of the problems still unsolved, the resources committed by the EU and other international actors will remain significant in the coming years.

In this perspective, the general objective of the evaluation is that of providing the European Commission Enlargement Directorate General (DG ELARG) with findings and recommendations to assist in the programming and implementation of future EU assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia in their support to refugees and IDPs, starting from the evaluation of the financial assistance provided under CARDS 2004-2006 and IPA 2007-2011.

Such general objective encompasses two specific objectives, which are:

- 1) To assess the intervention logic of EU assistance to support refugees and IDPs in the relevant countries.
- 2) To provide a judgment on the actual or expected performance of assistance, in light of the standard EU evaluation criteria (relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, sustainability). The evaluation is expected to provide operational recommendations for programming future EU assistance, provide indicators to measure progress towards achievement of objectives for future programmes, and outline corrective measures to improve implementation and monitoring of on-going actions.

As specified in the ToR, the evaluation had to take into account the specific context of enlargement assistance in the concerned countries. This context is permeated with institutional complexities, and national specificities. Such factors, together with the dimension of the financial resources mobilised by the EU, the number of projects involved, and the volume of related documentation easily explain the time devoted to the evaluation (the original expected duration of the assignment per ToR corresponds to 180 man-days distributed over a period of 10 months, which was eventually extended of a further two months in the last phase), that included an extensive field phase in the concerned countries. During the evaluation, several stakeholders raised the issue of the absence of Croatia in the group of countries covered, notwithstanding the fact that assistance in this field was provided under CARDS. While it cannot be denied that Croatia is a relevant country with regard to refugees/IPDs problems in the Western Balkans, it has not been included in this evaluation by DG ELARG because of the absence of IPA funds in this sector.

## 1.2 Methodology

The Evaluation Team followed the methodological steps recommended in the ToR, integrated by the suggestions provided during a kick-off meeting in Brussels. The approach combined a documentation review and analysis phase with a field phase, using standard social sciences tools, namely

stakeholder interviews, community and household interviews organised in the form of individual discussions.

The evaluation work was, therefore, split in three different phases.

First, a *Desk Phase*, comprising: (1.) Understanding and summary of evaluation objectives, scope and output; (2.) Identification, inventory and classification of the relevant available documentation informing the Specific Evaluation Objectives; (3.) Proposal of final evaluation questions, judgment criteria and sources of information; (4.) Identification of interview needs; (5.) Review and analysis of relevant available documentation; (6.) Development of a workplan, including a field visit schedule.

Secondly, a *Field Phase* involving: (1.) Field interviews preparation; (2.) Stakeholders interviews and further field work (projects site visits); (3.) Analysis of collected information.

Thirdly, a *Synthesis Phase* dedicated to the preparation of the Evaluation Report itself.

The evaluation questions as outlined in the ToR of the assignment (see section 2.4.2) were generally adequate to building a sound and well-balanced evaluation process. Their broad formulation, in line with the nature of a programme level - rather than project level - evaluation, gave to the team of evaluators a significant degree of autonomy in fine-tuning the results on the basis of the findings. A few modifications were proposed to the evaluation questions contained in the ToR, particularly with regard to the influence that other related policy issues could have on the performance of EU assistance programme dealing with refugees and IDPs.

The results of the field phase did not bring to discover any further weakness in the evaluation questions or in the methodology outlined in the ToR. It is rather relevant to go somewhat deeper in the methodology applied to the *treatment of quantitative data*, since such data frequently recur in the refugees/IDPs sector. Quantitative data on supported families are indeed provided based on information available on different types of reports and IPs project fact sheets. As regards to CARDS, information is not exhaustive, whereas for IPA, some projects are still ongoing. Data collection refers thus to *grants* only, as it is hardly feasible to quantify support when it comes to *services* (mainly consisting of capacity building/technical assistance).

It must be primarily taken into account that the number of houses reconstructed (return projects) is not necessarily equivalent to number of returns. The scope of this evaluation did not allow for directly assessing "real returns", even though, through field visits, vacant reconstructed houses were noticeable. Moreover, statements from stakeholders as well as report analysis underlined this weakness. Some evaluations have been attempted to verify number of returns and sustainability of returns, but this was done through questionnaires completed by beneficiaries who stated that they returned/planned to live in their home on long-term basis, which is not a verifiable indicator, unless post-project visits take place at frequent intervals.

It must be stressed that with the concept of "Real returns" one refers to those returns where the family as a whole is living permanently in their reconstructed pre-war home. In order to assess this, visits at each of the returnee families supported by the EU should have been undertaken, which of course was not feasible in terms of available time and resources. The evaluators were indeed bound to use external evaluations prepared by the implementing agencies in order to verify the achievements, as well as the results of interviews with involved stakeholders and a small sampling of visits on the site. Extensive checks on the physical presence of supported returnee families were simply not possible to be carried out in an evaluation of this kind. If extensive checks are considered crucial and practicable, specific impact surveys on return projects should be envisaged.

### 1.3 Implementation of the Assignment

The team undertook preliminarily a desk research on the basis of the documents made available by the European Commission, that were complemented through on line researches and through the use of the experts' previous knowledge of refugees and IDPs related sources of information referring to the Western Balkans. The documents were classified by country, including as well a distinct regional component (i.e. IPA Multi-Beneficiary). The team has collected over 300 documents, which have been classified, distinguishing CARDS and IPA assistance files, following ToR requirements, and further organised into categories. The team proceeded also to the identification of further sources of information, and particularly of needs for interviews, divided by location, category of stakeholder and the form of interview, as well as to the identification and prioritisation of potential site visits. As much as possible, field sites corresponding to selected key Refugee/IDP assistance programmes were selected in each country.

The Inception Report included the final evaluation questions and judgment criteria, a programme and project sampling, and - as annexes - a list of documents, a work plan, a schedule of field visits, and a list of contacts. After approval of the Inception Report, the team completed the desk phase with the further classification and analysis of the documentation, and started the field visits. The team received active assistance from EU Delegations and Office, and no major problems were met on the field.

The field visits were completed on the basis of the list of contacts attached to the IR (see the updated list of persons met in the annex to this report), with the active cooperation of local actors. Very few meetings were cancelled or denied (although senior officials were often substituted by persons lower in hierarchy). The evaluation was generally welcomed by stakeholders, and the style of interviews was aimed at maximizing openness and frankness of answers from interviewees. The overall number of interviews held was of 123 (70 stakeholders and 53 beneficiary families), according to the following distribution: Serbia 31 stakeholders and 19 beneficiary families, Kosovo 13 stakeholders and 12 beneficiary families, Montenegro 11 stakeholders and 9 beneficiary families, Bosnia 15 stakeholders and 13 beneficiary families.

The amount of material examined and the number of interviews held do not mean that the quantity and quality of information retrieved was always in line with the ambitions and expectations of the team. As it is repeated quite often along the report the assessment of particularly effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the programmes/projects involved is far from easy, also with regard to issues related to the available sources. One problem is, for instance, represented by the fact that the materials available on each of the programme projects are quite different, depending inter alia on whether evaluation/monitoring missions took place. The overall assessment becomes, therefore, the sum of more specific assessments taking place on very different grounds. Also interviews, whatever their structure, represent a quite uneven information basis. The persons interviewed had very different observation points on the same activities, and unavoidably much of the information provided simply replicated the content of the available documents, although the interviews remain quite useful to have a "feeling" of the context beyond the limits implied in official reporting.

As a general remark, one could raise the issue whether the situation of refugees/IDPs should not be in the future studied with an extensive fieldwork made by qualified researchers spending relevant time with large sections of refugees/IDPs communities, and mapping the different ways in which individual lives are reconstructed and priorities perceived, thus going beyond the limits implied in the "case specific" information gathered during short field missions.

## 2 ASSESSMENT OF INTERVENTION LOGIC OF EU IPA ASSISTANCE 2007-2011

### 2.1 Responses to Evaluation Questions.

#### 2.1.1 EQ1: Strategic, Programming Level Objectives

Generally speaking, strategic and programming objectives are in this field defined in a way that does not raise major problems in terms of level of precision and clarity of formulation for the external observer, being strictly linked to a well known policy and social issue as that of refugees/IDPs.

Actual measurability of accomplishments is instead – as we will see – sometimes problematic, but it can certainly be said that the definition of objectives took place on the basis of the best available empirical data and context information. This in a field where the problems addressed by project activities are influenced by a huge number of external factors with potential impact that are clearly out of the scope of the EU programmes/projects, particularly with regard to politically sensitive topics as actual or alleged population movements.

Definition of objectives seems to have taken place on the basis of a balanced assessment of the context and factual background. In terms of proportionality between allocated resources and objectives' priority, the allocated resources are certainly significant, although the dimension of the refugee/IDP problem in the Western Balkans is such that - whatever the resources allocated - these unavoidably represent only a share of the overall needs. EU action seems to have taken place where intervention needs, as well as the overall priorities, were hardly debatable, at least at programming level.

Besides the issues specific to each national context, this impression is confirmed also with regard to IPA Multi-beneficiary assistance taking place in the form of regional and horizontal projects. The IPA MIPD Multibeneficiary 2008-2010 and 2009-2011 correctly interprets the empirical data and context information that make clear the link between minority rights/protection of vulnerable groups and refugee return, and particularly between the completion of the process of return of IDPs/refugees and progress towards their economic and social integration, considering it as a "Human Rights and Protection of Minorities" priority area. This link represents, by the way, an improvement in relation to the 2007-2009 MIPD Multibeneficiary where the refugees issue was under the "Supporting civil society" heading (see under 2.2.6 of the relevant MIPD). Regional programmes Project fiches designed under Multibeneficiary MIPDS confirm this sound link, giving an important role among project purposes to non-discriminatory access to rights (see 2008 Regional Programme for Refugee Return in the Western Balkans and 2009 PF, Regional Programme for refugee return and provision of durable solutions for refugees and IDPs in the Western Balkans), also under the application of the 2007-2009.

Key findings and conclusions at regional level: *Good level of precision and clearly formulated objectives; objectives are increasingly well adapted to empirical data and context information linking together interrelated problems (minorities/refugees & IDPs/vulnerable groups).*

#### 2.1.2 EQ2: SMART Indicators

As will be seen with regard to each specific national context, the indicators used seem to be generally adequate, although they are designed so to primarily capture the quantitative achievements of the assistance (and in this sense they can be considered as generally available, measurable, and specific to the relevant programmes) and less so the qualitative ones. Including quantitative indicators only may alter the reality of achieved results, as it is the case especially concerning return projects, where

the number of reconstructed houses does not correspond to the number of families who returned to their pre-war homes. As a matter of fact, information of qualitative nature can hardly be translated into numerical indicators, and developing qualitative SMART indicators is also a challenge. However, be it SMART or not, there are no meaningful, effective programming or monitoring mechanisms – especially when it comes to complex, multidimensional interventions – without the consideration and integration of qualitative aspects of the monitored situations.

An assessment of the quality of programming at the MIPDS level in terms of SMART indicators is, however, quite a complex exercise, as it was correctly stressed in the 2010 Mid-Term Meta Evaluation of IPA Assistance<sup>1</sup>. According to this evaluation (p. 6) strategic objectives for IPA assistance as formulated in MIPDS are “inevitably broad” because of the structure imposed by EC Programming Guidelines. According to the META evaluation (which makes use of previous evaluations) MIPD strategic objectives do not completely fulfill SMART criteria, being “not sufficiently linked to specific priorities identified in the EC and BENEFC strategic documents” as well as “too wide to be achievable within the life-times of the MIPDs and, therefore, not effectively time-bound”.

*Key findings and conclusions at regional level: Indicators of achievement are generally precise, specific, and based on actually available and measurable data, but primarily focused on quantitative achievements (which implies inter alia a difficulty to adjust to evolving needs); strategic objectives in MIPDS often fall short of SMART criteria.*

### **2.1.3 EQ3: Needs Assessment in Planning and Programming of Assistance**

As it can be seen particularly from the project fiches specific to the different national contexts, planning under IPA is made on the basis of a sound assessment of needs, rooted in an extensive mechanism of consultation (that was lacking in the first years of CARDS, as noticed in several evaluations, like the 2008 for the CARDS Regional Programme), and are now ordinarily strictly coordinated with national strategies and relevant policy documents (like national/sectoral investment plans).

With regard to the data used, project fiches for all national contexts clearly show an improvement over years of the data concerning dimension and distribution of refugees/IDPs communities, ordinarily gathered by international organisations, like UNHCR or IOM, and Governments. Although increasingly bound by national policy documents, needs assessment is unavoidably influenced by the existence of several potential policy choices. In the context of problems of such a magnitude like that of refugees/IDPs, the ascertainment of needs is indeed only the first step in a broader process including also decisions on the prioritisation between these same needs, decisions that are clearly based on social and political assumptions rather than on pure factual judgments.

With regard to the quality of the information available on the refugees/IDPs communities, this is now of a level sufficient to found a quite precise assessment of the required financial and human resources, and of the time range for their use. The fact that needs assessment is a pillar of the planning and programming process does not seem, however, to be equally accepted in all countries, probably as a reflection of the very different development of the refugees/IDPs situation at the local level.

With regard to the citizenship/statelessness issue, it seems that it gained increasing importance within needs assessments and in the IPA project fiches at country level (e.g. in Montenegro), as an effect of the increased attention to this phenomenon, and its visibility in connection with the attempts to facilitate return from EU countries of persons originating from the Western Balkans. Considering the delicate political implications, project fiches are, however, rather focused on the aspects concerning

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<sup>1</sup> *Mid-term Meta Evaluation of IPA Assistance Evaluation Report*, Project No. 2010/231987 (Evaluation implemented by HTSPE Limited).

lack of documentation rather than on the legislative mechanisms that in the countries of former Yugoslavia are partly responsible for the emergence of the phenomenon of widespread statelessness.

Key findings and conclusions at regional level: *Following the introduction of far-reaching consultation processes and data gathering by international organizations and governments, needs assessment is now based on information of good quality and is linked to national policy documents, allowing proper allocation of human and financial resources. Links with national developments on the position of non-citizens are increasingly present, within the limits imposed by political implications.*

#### **2.1.4 EQ4: Project Selection Mechanisms**

At the very first stage of the project selection mechanism, i.e. during the programming cycle coordinated by NIPAC and the EU, extensive consultations have taken place with Government relevant counterparts, and technical advice both in the form of trainings and regular support have been delivered to Government Programme Units so as to ensure quality of project design. As evidenced for instance in the 2010 Mid-Term Meta Evaluation (p. 12), and confirmed by other sources and most notably by NIPACs, there are differences between countries in the actual articulation of the project selection mechanism, depending on the presence of central/decentralized management, but also on different practical arrangements, as is specified with regard to national contexts. Although interviews with government officials show that the possibility to ensure an effective input during early project selection phases can be sometimes hampered by local absorption difficulties (like staff turnover), in the specific sector of refugees and IDPs the overall capacity levels were normally sufficient to ensure an adequate assessment of the relevance and quality of the projects.

At the subsequent stage, i.e. upon the very procurement/tendering phase, current project selection mechanisms can also be considered as generally appropriate, with the main practical shortcomings linked to the difficulties of developing a network of local organizations of sufficient technical competence. In the period between CARDS 2004 and IPA 2011, it is possible, however, to observe a sharp increase in the number of local organisations participating to the tendering process, after these were able to acquire the necessary five years of experience. The evaluation grid contained in call for proposals provides sufficient information on the way proposals are assessed (scoring on relevance and design, effectiveness, organizational structure, etc.). Project selection can be now considered as characterized by adequate levels of transparency and predictability.

Key findings and conclusions at regional level: *Experience gained during CARDS provided at local level sufficient know-how and absorption capacity to ensure an adequate assessment of the quality and relevance of projects; a growth of the network of organisations participating in the tendering process can be observed.*

#### **2.1.5 EQ5: Efficiency and Value Added of the Different Instruments**

Across all the countries concerned, this sector is definitely dominated by grant contracts, integrated with few service contracts, mainly focused on providing technical assistance to enhance capacities of governments. All actors seem to agree about the superiority of grants as instruments of support, particularly considering their effectiveness and efficiency when it comes to concrete inputs such as housing and income-generation support activities. One of the main criticisms addressed to the technical forms of the support provided, i.e. the high cost of the expertise involved, is not likely to be addressed by a change in the balance of instruments used. Services contracts were used in a limited way, mainly for capacity building support to government institutions dealing with refugees and IDPs/migration management/social inclusion (two CARDS in Serbia and one in Montenegro, and two IPA in Serbia) and for legal aid support (one CARDS and three IPA contracts in Serbia).

Key findings and conclusions at regional level: *The structure of this sector is such that there is no empirical ground to prove a discrepancy in terms of efficiency and value added between different instruments of support intervening in the same area with the same level of resources.*

### **2.1.6 EQ6: Prioritisation and Sequencing of Assistance**

Across all the countries concerned, prioritisation and sequencing seem to be generally in line with needs and priorities evidenced in programming documents. It must be noted that, according to several interviews on the field, the refugees/IDPs sector is characterised by a frequency of projects connected by clear sequential links higher than in other areas. The outcome of the evaluation is also corroborated by the 2010 Mid-Term Meta Evaluation (p.16), according to which “good examples of projects showing good quality sequencing (linkage and continuity), were reported in the area of Refugees and IDPs, in Kosovo and Serbia”. Although the length of tendering procedures appears to be simply in line with the constraints imposed by the applicable EU procedural framework, interviews on the field revealed a widespread perception among stakeholders that tendering procedures are exceedingly lengthy. Since the time elapsing between Project Fiche and Call for Proposals/Project proposal preparation can indeed stretch up to two years, it can be questioned whether this can reduce the positive impact of adequate sequencing and prioritization.

Key findings and conclusions at regional level: *Prioritization and sequencing on the basis of ascertained needs is relatively frequent in this sector, although the length of procedures can reduce its benefits.*

### **2.1.7 EQ7: Complementarity with national authorities' policies and strategies**

On the basis of the review of the various national contexts, it can be certainly affirmed that national strategies and policies are properly taken into account at the level of project fiches, although full interconnection with national policies and strategies can sometimes be complex because of the mobility of the political scenario. The main problem is indeed not the absence of policies and strategies, but rather the fact that such policies and strategies usually neglect to pay attention to the limited resources available for implementation at the local level, and that it is possible in several national strategies to face a plurality of strategies with no overarching framework. National strategies/policy documents have less prominence in the text of programming documents like MIPDS, because of their broad formulation and limited space available to provide the background of all sectors concerned. Interviews with actors of the programming process and logical inferences clarify that national documents are taken into consideration also in earlier programming stages. Before the launch of the Sarajevo process, IDP/refugees issues ranked in any case relatively low among immediate priorities, and such weak political commitment had implications in terms of availability of detailed policy documents.

Beyond policy documents, the programming process is also strictly linked to the legal framework of each of the countries involved, something that adds a further level of complexity. In this respect, the most prominent problems are issues concerning citizenship status, and the requirements for the naturalization process, with special regard to the naturalization of persons that continue to reside in the country also after the revocation of the refugee status. Also crucial in the programming process are the rules on access to employment and right to work of persons with refugee/IDP status, as well as the right to education, health care, social welfare and insurance. Ample treatment is understandably given to the legal framework for the resolution of housing issues. Generally, project fiches give primarily space to legal rules that are clearly addressed to persons with refugee/IDP status, sometimes – however – neglecting rules of general application that could be potentially relevant for refugees/IDPs.

Key findings and conclusions at regional level: *Although not clearly visible before the Project Fiche stage, consistency and synergy between programmes and national strategies/policies seem to be satisfying along the whole process; national legal framework seems to be taken into consideration only when it clearly contains rules addressed at refugees/IDPs.*

### **2.1.8 EQ8: Stakeholders' Involvement in Intervention Logic**

Interviews on the field confirm that IPA programming cycle is in general considered by stakeholders as fully satisfying in terms of participatory approach. This general perception is not based, however, on any kind of structured mechanism for the involvement of non-governmental actors operating in the concerned countries. The approach followed for the involvement of civil society actors is seemingly developed on a case-by-case basis, not allowing a precise assessment of which values and priorities have been taken into consideration in the selection of actors. This absence of a precise methodology is problematic in the context of very fragmented civil societies like those of the Western Balkans, particularly with regard to the representation of certain underprivileged groups that have problems in expressing a unified political representation, like Roma. As it is widely known, that of "who speaks for the Roma"<sup>2</sup> is a complex institutional dilemma, with the frequent occurrence of organizations and individuals with a de facto leadership role that are challenged as non-representative by members of the same communities they claim to represent. In the absence of precise guidelines, the participatory approach seems moreover not to be maintained consistently over time in the different countries.

Key findings and conclusions at regional level: *The quality and quantity of activities aimed at involving organisations in the intervention logic seems adequate, and is ordinarily perceived as such by mainstream stakeholders, although it is not the result of a clearly structured participatory approach. This can imply problems for the representation of underprivileged groups with unclear political representation and fragmented structure, as e.g. Roma.*

### **2.1.9 EQ9: Assistance provided and reforms promoted by key donors**

Further donor assistance and ongoing reforms promoted by key donors are usually taken into account within Project Fiches in all countries concerned. Considering the variety of actors involved, that include also certain non-EU member states implementing ad hoc programmes for specific groups of refugees/IDPs, full monitoring is indeed possible only for key donors, like international organizations and major states (BPRM). A full coordination of actions is, however, complex because of the different procedural paths followed by respectively EU and non-EU assistance, and by the unpredictability of the political process at national level, which can have different implications for the different donors.

The forms in which further assistance is taken into consideration in the planning phase are adequate to ensure that major overlapping is avoided, but improvements are possible in order to increase the possibility of learning lessons from the experience of other donors.

Key findings and conclusions at regional level: *Programming is reasonably synergic and coordinated with assistance provided and reforms promoted by key donors, although full coordination can be hampered by different political priorities and procedural paths.*

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<sup>2</sup> A. MacGarry, *Who Speaks for Roma? Political Representation of a Transnational Minority Community*, London, Continuum, 2010.

### 2.1.10 EQ10: IPA and Pre-IPA national and regional programmes and assistance from other donors

Strong linkages between IPA and pre-IPA programmes are increasingly noticeable over the years, also due to the mounting commitment of stakeholders for a regional dimension. Examples of “structural synergies” are many, with IPA programmes clearly integrating lessons learned from previous CARDS programmes (presented in the below section on Performance). Regional programmes, implemented by UNHCR, clearly complement national ones, delivering similar outputs, or focus on the needs of a particular target group, such as the Roma Social Inclusion Project.

A clear highlight is the CEBs Regional Housing Programme (not covered by the present evaluation), that continues and complements IPA programmes as an outcome of the Sarajevo Process started in January 2005, as it brings together governments of BiH, Serbia, Croatia and Montenegro in tackling and solving all remaining problems of refugees (and IDPs). As stated in the EU Enlargement Strategy Paper 2012, “as regards *refugees*, a ministerial declaration of Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro was signed in November 2011 in Belgrade renewing political commitment to bring to a close the Sarajevo process. A Regional Housing Programme was agreed and presented at an international Donors’ Conference in April 2012, at which the EU and the international community pledged further substantial financial support. National authorities need to ensure implementation of this programme, which aims to facilitate sustainable return of the most vulnerable refugees to their places of origin or local integration in the place of refuge. This would allow the final reception centres, housing refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) from the region, to be closed and the formal deregistration of the current 74,000 remaining refugees completed. The Commission welcomes these developments and calls on the countries to work with vigour to resolve the remaining refugee and IDP issues”<sup>3</sup>.

There are also other institutional actors that are actively involved and mentioned in programming documents (UNHCR, BPRM, UNDP, etc.), though interviews brought to surface a strong interest for a coordination platform on existing funds, both national and international, particularly with regard to complementarity concerning socio-economic measures accompanying the return and integration process, that can be vital in pursuing impact and sustainability. Strong linkages between programmes are crucial particularly when it comes to ensuring that the assistance package includes complementary components necessary to address the several factors impacting on sustainability. Differences in terms of value of the assistance per family, the frequent lack of support to local vulnerable domicile population, and a weak focus on meaningful income-generating activities have been reported as sources of concern at local level. It is, therefore, particularly crucial that other donors are aware and able to complement EU assistance in the search for economic sustainability. Such is the case with the current composition of RHP’s assistance, the resources of which are predominantly directed to housing and less on the creation of livelihood opportunities.

Key findings and conclusions at regional level: *Quality and quantity of information on actual or potential linkages is available at an adequate level. Linkages are taken into account, and even advocated, though more stable and permanent coordination is perceived as crucial particularly with regard to complementarity in socio-economic measures.*

### 2.1.11 EQ11: Complementarity of National and Regional IPA Projects

Regional and national IPA projects are quite similar in terms of type of support provided (housing, income-generation, legal aid, etc.), unless in the cases where they target a specific group, as in the

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<sup>3</sup> *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2012-2013, Brussels.*

case of projects specifically targeting the Roma community. IPA appears as markedly country-focused, with the regional dimension poorly reflected in national EU programmes. This is due to the fact that regional benchmarks could not be set in the early years of the IPA instrument and it has only recently concretised within the RHP (Belgrade Declaration, November 2011).

At the same time, interviews revealed that some stakeholders perceive the programming of the Regional IPA Project Fiche as characterised by an insufficient level of consultation with national governments at both planning and implementation phase, without applying the same procedure as national ones. As a matter of fact, most Regional IPA projects are contracted through direct agreement between the EU headquarters and UNHCR, and this could explain the perceived absence of involvement of national governments.

Moreover, it must be noted that in the sector there is a limited level of structured regional coordination between EUD/EUO task managers, both at the time of planning and during implementation, which makes best practices developed in one country less likely to replicate in the whole region.

Key findings and conclusions at regional level: *Programming takes into account potential complementarities between regional and national IPA projects, although programming of the Regional IPA Project Fiche is perceived by some actors as characterized by a low level of consultation.*

#### **2.1.12 EQ12: Main gaps/weaknesses in programming**

In general terms, the lack of a real regional approach has emerged as an overall weakness. Faced to the objective differences of the national contexts, a limited amount of effort is devoted to understanding where there is the possibility to learn from the respective experiences, or formally exchanging information in a structured way. This is true also in the case of some national contexts, like Serbia and Kosovo, where interconnections are many. In the later case indeed, the solutions to displacement require that this phenomenon is considered as one single issue and process, common to Serbia and Kosovo. IPA Programmes in Serbia and Kosovo do provide synergies of actions on the two sides of the border. However, at the time of the present evaluation, initiatives in the right direction – including joint field visits - had started take place.

A further potential weakness is most likely represented by the limited degree of flexibility in programming the assistance, with limited possibilities to adapt actions to changes intervened in the field. During the programming cycle, governments' programming teams are provided with technical support (through the NIPAC) in all the different stages of the project fiche preparation. The Logical Framework Matrixes (LFMs), provided as annexes to Project Fiches, show that results and activities are listed and broken down in very detailed manner, which appears to be a constraint once projects are implemented, in average 1,5 to 2 years after the Project Fiche is designed. As a matter of fact, specific needs may meanwhile have changed, and the way Project Fiches are structured makes it difficult to introduce adjustments, although these are formally not impossible. Proposals in this respect are included in the recommendations section.

When it comes to the content of the assistance, the main weakness is certainly represented by the relative weakness of socio-economic measures oriented towards employment, with an assistance "package" still unbalanced in favor of housing. This, of course, is in its turn related to the mighty issue of the sustainability of external assistance. While the present evaluation clearly indicates that the increasing demand for sustainability-driven interventions generated some feedback, this is often structured with weak links to the local socio-economic fabric.

Key findings and conclusions at regional level:

*Lack of an actual regional approach in terms of learning from experiences of other countries*

*Limited degree of flexibility after programming the assistance*

*Weakness of socio-economic measures oriented towards employment*

## 2.2 National Context Remarks

### 1. Bosnia and Herzegovina

In BiH, the focus of strategic and programming objectives (EQ1) has been understandably on the creation of a climate for inter-ethnic tolerance, sustainable multi-ethnicity, stabilisation of the socio-economic situation of ethnic minority communities, together here also with a legal component in the form of “promotion of human and minority rights (including a gender perspective) conducive to minority return and reintegration of displaced persons”. In such a perspective, it is clear that tolerance and sustainability of multi-ethnic environments are per definition linked to a multiplicity of factors that are mostly independent from project implementation, and the development of which can hardly be foreseen during the programming phases. The concept itself of “promotion of human and minority rights” unavoidably tends to merge refugees/IDPs issues with the problem of the building of new state/entity structures in the two countries, in an articulated balance of the prerogatives of ethnic communities that have few comparable examples even in a global perspective. Given all these complex variables, it seems that the EU programming process did not go below the level of realism and fact-based orientation that could be expected considering the institutional context, procedural constraints and necessity of action.

With regard to the adequacy of needs assessment in terms of realistic and reliable data (EQ3), it must be observed that a comprehensive in-depth review of main unmet needs and remaining integration obstacles is made in the Progress Analysis Report of Annex VII of DPA<sup>4</sup>. This report marks the beginning of an advocacy effort aiming at renewing the mobilization of the national authorities and the donor community to give a new impetus to returnees integration support. The document describes a relatively forgotten returnee situation, pointing at the unimproved situation of returnees with limited access to essential services combined with insufficient funding to addressing their needs. It has sparked a positive reaction among the donors under EU's impulse. In response, UN agencies have jointly elaborated a concept paper on displacement<sup>5</sup>. This initiative is a response to a weak Annex VII implementation combined with a political context not conducive to implementation, in addition to poor IDP/returnee coordination, and it calls for a “policy shift” to resolve the problems of displacement. At the start of the Regional Housing Programme, UN agencies recall that past experience shows that when housing alone is provided, there is a high rate of return failure. All this is an important attempt at improving programming efficiency through the maximisation of limited available resources. It also provides programming guidance to enhance the sustainability of assistance efforts with complementary measures at three levels:

1. Individual-level support to sustainable livelihoods through training, employment services, etc.

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<sup>4</sup> *Pilot Project on Social Housing and Annex VII Strategy Implementation – Annex VII Progress Analysis Report*, ARS Progetti – ItalTrend, prepared by Richard Allen, Donatella Bradic, Merita Behluli, Tatjana Spasojevic, June 2012, prepared on behalf of the European Union Delegation in Sarajevo.

<sup>5</sup> *UN BiH Policy Paper: A Joint UN response to the continuing challenges of displacement in Bosnia and Herzegovina*.

2. Community-level support aimed at improving local public services and build cohesion
3. Policy-level support with the translation of national policy into the local level with matching responsibilities and financial resources. This is expected to create a stronger coherence between individual, community-level and policy interventions so the three level mutually support each other.

With regard to the involvement of relevant organisations in needs assessment (EQ8) realized in the past in BiH, during field interviews representatives of entity level noticed that the EU relied primarily on field observations made by UNDP, without fully consulting local communities in order to integrate these data.

## 2. Kosovo

With regard to the adequacy of prioritization and sequencing of assistance (EQ6), and particularly the presence of a logical order in implementation, this appears as being generally satisfying in the programming of the three phases of the Return and Reintegration in Kosovo Programme (the fourth phase being yet to be implemented under IPA 2012), although time could have been reduced between the completion of one programme and the beginning of the following one.

The taking into account of the assistance provided and reforms promoted by key donors/other donors, so to ensure synergy and coordination, (EQs 9-10) appears to have happened along good quality standards and with a significant practical impact.

The forthcoming RRK IV (IPA 2012), as stated in the Project Fiche, “suggests the continuation of the EU's and the Government of Kosovo's joint programme to support voluntary return and reintegration of minority communities with emphasis on central and municipal authorities' involvement in the process. Furthermore this project aims to address the increasing number of requests that are coming from municipalities covered under the previous RRK phases (RRK I under IPA 2007, RRK II under IPA 2008 and RRK III under IPA 2010). As such it addresses continuous demand for return in existing RRK municipalities, particularly the ones which have shown high dedication and commitment towards return and reintegration of minority communities”<sup>6</sup>. From early programming phases, it appears therefore clear that the pivotal role in the return and reintegration process is in the municipalities, and that any general approach outlined for the assistance must allow sufficient flexibility of action so to allow to take into consideration the huge variety of municipalities in terms of ethnic structure, financial resources, and political attitudes towards returnees.

Involvement of stakeholders (EQ8) takes place on the occasion of different events for information sharing under the umbrella of UNHCR, but without any specific orientation to planning.

In the specific case of Kosovo and Serbia, there is a need to improve complementarity between national IPA projects (EQ11) in terms of exchange of information about potential complementarities. There is indeed a limited amount of formalised exchange of information about respective assistance programmes, with no regular cross-EU office field visits made until the time of this evaluation.

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<sup>6</sup> Project Fiche 2012 Kosovo: 2012 Annual Programme – Return and Reintegration Phase IV.

### 3. Montenegro

With regard to the adequacy of needs assessment in terms of realistic and reliable data (EQ3), this seems to have been in general sound. No standard overall needs assessment was, however, made, but rather one focused on Konik camp in the context of the Action Plan for preparation of IPA 2011. While past EU assistance has targeted municipalities with the largest IDP/Refugee population and needs, there has been a relative over-attention and multi-donor support to the Konik I and II camps, in recent years though, based on the main strategic priority of the Government. Most importantly, Konik is mentioned as the 7th priority for action related to the 2010 Progress Report.

In terms of organisational capacity and administrative structure for programming, the IPA Interim Evaluation is very much in line with the statements of stakeholders: "In general, beneficiary institutions lack experience and knowledge in long-term planning and they are much more focused in solving immediate issues. The programming is affected by this situation since very often the beneficiaries submit projects that aim to solve short-term, and sometimes urgent issues. However, IPA Component I is not designed to rapidly respond to the urgent issues of the beneficiary institutions since it usually takes two years from the beginning of programming to the implementation (which is usually too long a period in case of urgent issues). As a consequence it happens that the beneficiary institutions, while waiting for IPA Project implementation, apply to multinational and bilateral donors to fund activities that are already agreed to be funded by IPA projects"<sup>7</sup>.

EU assistance has included the following components: 1) *Construction of collective housing*: Since Montenegro had no law on Social Housing at the time of implementation (such a law is currently under discussion in the Parliament), the concept was not as fully elaborated as the SHPE in Serbia (see below). The absence of a strong and comprehensive concept in Montenegro opened some space for gaps, such as integrating building maintenance costs and responsibilities into collective housing contracts. As results, some of the construction outside Podgorica suffers from superficial deterioration, because of poor maintenance and lack of funds 2) *Distribution of building materials*: This is based on the self-help principle and applies an approach similar to the one of Partial Self-Help described under the below Serbia case. It is implemented in several locations (outside Konik) 3) *Prefabricated houses*: See description under the following Serbia example. This component also targets refugee/IDPs outside Konik 4) *Support to Roma integration*: This is a comprehensive package including Income-Generation support, Education access and Healthcare support ("early childhood counseling"), and legal aid 5) *Facilitation of return*: through "go-and-see" visits, information dissemination, counseling, collection of needed documents, provision of return parcels.

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<sup>7</sup> SOGES, *Strategic/Interim Evaluation of EU IPA Pre-Accession Assistance to Montenegro*, December 2010.

#### 4. Serbia

The new Government formed in 2008 has brought policy changes, with refugees from BiH and Croatia as well as IDPs from Kosovo living in collective centres and private accommodations becoming a top priority for the country. Strong advocacy on behalf of the Government in all possible fora has served the purpose of putting refugees and IDPs problems very high on the EU agenda. This is reflected in the amount of financial assistance devoted to refugees and IDPs within IPA Programmes and the Regional Housing Programme of the CEB (with the Joint Ministerial Declaration being part of its legal basis). There has been a sharp increase of IPA budgets for this sector over the years, i.e. from 6 MEURO in 2008 (PF 2008) up to 15,2 MEURO in 2012 (PF 2012). IPA 2010 was entirely programmed for capacity building in migration management, resulting from the transformation of the main institution in the field, the Commissariat for Refugees, into the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration, enlarging considerably its mandate.

In the case of Serbia (but the same would apply to Montenegro), with regard to the formulation of project objectives (EQ1) one can note that these have been mainly focusing on integration/durable solutions but also on support to strengthening human rights standards/minority protection or “realization of rights”, “facilitated access to essential rights”, with particular attention to most vulnerable groups (with frequent references to Roma). Before reviewing the integration/durable solutions aspects, it is probably worth to stress that the rule of law and the legal condition of the members of the target groups is inherently problematic in terms of realism and measurability of objectives. “Access to rights” or in other words their “realization” is something that can be hardly measured in objective, quantifiable terms, particularly when – as in this case – the rights of refugees/IDPs to be “realized” through external aid, are often not rights deriving from the position of refugee/IDPs, but rights that can be in principle enjoyed by any citizen/person. This implies that the realization of the rights of members of the target groups can be difficult because of overall weaknesses of the legal system, on which projects focused on refugees/IDPs can only have a limited influence. This is particularly true when it comes to Roma, who in these countries as elsewhere can provide examples of extreme exclusion from the enjoyment of individual rights. Notwithstanding these objective difficulties (that are not specific to these kind of programmes, but rather reflect broader problems of measuring the effectiveness of rights theoretically granted to individuals), the programming process seems to have taken a quite realistic approach, that would not have had – given conditions on the ground and time constraints – practical alternatives.

With regard to integration/durable solutions, in the programming process of CARDS-IPA assistance a huge importance has been given (besides facilitation of the return process, provision of legal aid, capacity building and institutional building), to providing housing solutions, according to the schemes described here below. The following schemes can be indeed observed: 1) Social Housing in Protected Environment (SHPE): SHPE is a form of social protection project, which is supported by the Commissariat for Refugees and by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. The project has two main components – the construction of new social housing units and the creation of a supportive environment to assist residents who find themselves in a position of social dependence. The project is delivered in close cooperation with the local municipalities and the local Centers for Social Welfare (CSW). It foresees an accommodation in a non-institutional environment in the form of extended family support, where people are encouraged to actively take participation in everyday life. The project represents an integrated approach where emotional and physical wellbeing of beneficiaries is the priority. Social integration of vulnerable displaced persons in a local context is possible throughout their adaptation to independent life, community involvement and their recognition as dynamic personalities. Besides CSWs, the building of a supportive environment is also facilitated by a “host family” within each apartment building. The “host family” is a socially vulnerable refugee/IDP family with working capacity that is responsible for other households in the building. This family facilitates the

integration in the new social environment, the development of good relations in the newly formed community and a positive atmosphere in the building, as well as establishing contacts with relevant local bodies. The SHPE residents do not pay rent, but only running cost/utility bills. Additional help is available from the municipality/CSW in cases a household lives on the minimum benefit level. 2) *Partial Self Help (PSH) / Delivery of building materials*: Building material grants are delivered to refugees/IDPs who have started constructing their own house but do not have the necessary means to complete it and move in, or have acquired existing housing object in need for rehabilitation/reconstruction works. The precondition that has to be fulfilled is the existence of appropriate legal basis for construction of a housing object, as well as necessary level of construction completeness. This way, inadequate housing units which are still unsuitable for living will be brought to the "ready to move in" state, therefore ensuring durable housing solutions for refugees and enhancing the living conditions of IDPs. 3) *Village houses*: Purchase of a village house is a type of housing solution for refugee/IDP families, capable of living independently. This assistance is foreseen as a long-term/permanent solution for refugees and IDPs, who are engaged in or are willing to be engaged in agricultural or other activities suitable for rural area, but do not have any other way to secure funds for accommodation. The assistance involves purchasing of a village house in solid construction and welfare condition and donation to beneficiary family for permanent usage. Beneficiary family may participate in the purchase with their own funds up to 50% of the value of the donation. In order to further enhance livelihood conditions, a household is also given a start up grant comprising either building material for the small rehabilitation of the housing object or basic furniture, home appliances and agricultural inputs. The composition of families supported by this type of assistance is normally between three and six members. 4) *Prefabricated houses*: Provision and installation of prefabricated houses is addressed to refugee/IDP families who own a plot of land and have the required building permits, or to refugee/IDP families who are provided with a plot of land by the municipality in the place of displacement, with infrastructure and required building permits and at the same time have no sufficient financial resources to further construct their own house. This type of assistance is usually affordable for a family who has some members in working capacity generating at least some income as they need to have power to purchase a plot of land for construction, as well as financial means to obtain necessary permits and pay connections to local electricity and water supply network. The average family participating in the project is composed of three/five individuals. 5) *Apartments for rent* (with buy-off option) targeting refugee families that have possibilities to reach a sufficient income level.

With regard to *Income-generation activities* (IGA), these are aimed at supporting the start up of a new economic activity or already existing one. Depending on the specific expertise of each IP, the support can *inter alia* consist of:

- Vocational training, business counseling
- Distribution of income-generation sets for carpenters, tailors, etc...
- Distribution of agricultural inputs
- Distribution of livestock

All these approaches can be considered as responding, albeit in different ways, to the requirements of realism and reliability of data about underlying needs

With regard particularly to needs assessment (EQ3), the quality of Project Fiches designed by the relevant Government body has been appraised as very high by NIPAC. Extensive needs assessments were implemented and led by the Government, namely the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration, with support from international organisations (UNHCR, UNDP, IOM).

Also in respect of instruments mix, complementarity of grant and services (EQ5), this seems to be adequate in terms of efficiency as evidenced by the IPA 2012 in Serbia, of which implementation is yet to start (Grant scheme for housing and return and Services scheme for monitoring of those grants). With regard to prioritisation and sequencing (EQ6), IPA was constructed as a logical continuation of CARDS, integrating lessons learned from the application of the previous instrument. Also, over the

years, due account of lessons learned from previous IPA programme was reflected in the following IPA programme. IPA 2007 and 2008 have provided comprehensive support in the form of housing and income-generation as well as legal aid, while IPA 2009 has gone beyond that with the inclusion of an employment component through a PMU and greater return assistance.

In terms of interconnection with national authorities' policies and strategies (EQ10), crucial has been the shift from a "only return to Kosovo" policy for IDPs under CARDS 2004-2005 to the inclusion of improvement of living conditions in the place of displacement as well under CARDS 2006 and IPA. Going a step beyond that would mean to open to IDPs the whole range of solutions available for refugees, i.e. pure local durable integration for vulnerable IDPs that have no intention to return to Kosovo. With regard to stakeholders' involvement (EQ8), various platforms for involvement in intervention planning of main stakeholders dealing with refugee/IDP issues, including civil society and refugees associations, were regularly organized, until a few years ago (IDP Working Group). In the last three years, those forums are almost not taking place anymore.

Other institutional donors are indeed actively involved and mentioned in programming documents (UNHCR, BPRM, UNDP, etc), though it was reported by some actors that a coordination platform on existing funds, both national and international, could be useful, particularly with regard to socio-economic measures that are insofar not sufficiently accompanying the return and integration process, that can be vital in pursuing impact and sustainability. This being said, positive examples were assessed, namely the fact that donors such as UNHCR and BPRM covered, even if partly, the funding gap resulting from the impossibility to include village houses in IPA Programmes in Serbia. Funds could, however, have been better synchronised with those from the Serbia Programme to reduce possible gaps. The Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration, however, constantly stresses its commitment to ensure the complementarity between the interventions envisaged within programming at national level and the actions to be implemented within the scope of the IPA, RHP and other donor's projects, and it keeps a practice of regular meetings with all stakeholders, as well as with main donors present in Serbia. Information is also shared in the context of the of the donor coordination mechanism established by the Serbian EU Integration Office.

# 3 ASSESSMENT OF THE PERFORMANCE OF EU ASSISTANCE UNDER CARDS 2004-2006 AND IPA 2007-2011

## 3.1 Responses to Evaluation Questions

### 3.1.1 EQ13: Administrative and organisational structures in place

The administrative and organisational structures currently in place in the central administrations of the countries concerned appear to be generally in line with the standards required for efficient and effective implementation. There are - certainly - important differences between the countries in question, in terms of current capacity and development trends, but such differences are mostly specific to the different administrative levels involved (central v. local) and to the dimension of the involved administrative units rather than due to the overall institutional setting of each country.

The fact that, generally speaking, national institutions (at least central ones) objectively have a sufficient capacity level is not, however, sufficient to ensure a relatively smooth implementation. Obstacles are indeed most often not linked to objective capacity, but rather to problems related to the interaction between different branches and levels of the administration, often due to political factors.

Certainly, the capacity levels of municipalities are far from uniform across the countries touched by this evaluation (particularly opposing small/under-developed municipalities and large-more developed municipalities). At local level, staff mobilized to follow EU-funded projects (implementation is so far the responsibility of implementing agencies, with the exception of recently awarded Grants to Municipalities under IPA 2011-12 in Serbia) lacks adequate additional compensation to properly carry out these specific tasks. Also, under-qualified staff may face objective difficulties to meet required assignments. The lack of incentive for Municipal employees' involvement in the implementation of EU IDP/Refugee assistance programme, has been indeed repeatedly highlighted as an issue during field visits in municipalities. Municipalities' participation to implementation requires employee's preparation and participation to assistance-related meetings. However, this often comes as extra-work outside the ordinary tasks of employees, with no compensation offered notwithstanding salaries that are usually very low, and certainly much lower than those of the staff of implementing organisations. Often, the municipal role in IDP/Refugee implementation of assistance is introduced a project-based, external and additional layer of work to concerned municipal employees, which is sometimes impacting negatively in terms of ownership and motivation. This implementation-level issue can still be tackled and anticipated at the programming level by possibly integrating IDP/Refugee donor-funded projects into the concerned staff's TORs.

EU delegations and EU Office also have sufficient administrative and organisational resources, although as already mentioned one can observe a limited effort for sector coordination at regional level. It is certainly advisable that Task managers in charge of refugees/IDPs issues in the four missions have a regular exchange of information regarding their programmes, in a formal framework, so that procedures allow for a smooth acceptance and integration of practices into IDP/Refugee assistance programming by EU Delegations/Office.

*Key findings and conclusions at regional level: Taking into account the nature of the programmes to be implemented, the level of the administrative and organizational structures in place appears generally adequate with regard to central administration and EU Delegations. Staff, competence and resources available in municipalities often do not reach equal levels – or are not as easily mobilized – because of poor integration with the further administrative work burdening the municipal structures.*

### 3.1.2 EQ14: Functioning of the monitoring mechanisms and structures

The functioning of monitoring mechanisms and structures seems to be generally in line with the requirements imposed by the refugees/IDPs sector. Such mechanisms are, however, not consistent over the region. For instance, the IPA 2007 project in BiH was never monitored by an EU monitor (only field visits of Task manager and an audit), although a system for monitoring exists on the basis of the Service contract for a Monitoring system on the implementation of projects and programmes of external cooperation financed by the European Community, Lot 6 (Western Balkans and Turkey). Throughout this Service Contract, a sample of IPA 2007-2011 projects in the refugee sector in Serbia was regularly monitored and recommendations made by monitors were taken into consideration during implementation. All implementing partners have noted and welcomed the sharp increase of monitoring missions since 2010.

The more recent Monitoring and Evaluation system established within the SEIO (Serbia) is also described as very satisfactory. In January 2013, at the IPA Conference focusing on the new IPA II instrument, the Coordinator for EU funds of the SEIO had underlined the importance of strengthening local monitoring and evaluation capacities. The IPA II Conference aimed at finding ways of tailoring the new instrument to needs and capacities of governments, so as to achieve more targeted and efficient pre-accession assistance.

Monitoring mechanisms seem to be generally structured so to give more weight to quantitative rather than qualitative data, an approach that in this specific sector does not allow to fully appreciate the strength or weakness of certain actions (particularly with regard to impact and sustainability). Unlike monitoring, evaluations are more suited to develop a more qualitative screening of projects, but these are often formulated too late to allow re-allocation of funds.

While monitoring is effectively functioning, there is room for improvement. For monitoring to produce a tangible impact on the quality of programming and implementation, it needs to derive directly and accurately from the measuring indicators of programming objectives. In the case of sustainable return supportive interventions, the successful verification of the physical presence of returnees during the visits is not an indication of a successful or sustainable return.

First, the assessment is to take place not in the immediate period following the return, but should take place on regular intervals so as to verify if a life routine exists. School attendance, for instance, is a strong indicator of a durable and stable return.

Second, monitoring the state of the assistance (e.g. housing) is not sufficient to provide final evidence of integration. What needs to be looked at is the interaction of the IDP or returnee with its daily living environment, and specifically whether the assistance has permitted building links ensuring viable assimilation to the local context. These existential connections are either of social (education, health services) or economic (employment services, access to livelihood such as the local food market) nature and represent the place where indicators are to be identified.

*Key findings and conclusions at regional level: Monitoring mechanisms and structures are generally adequate and functional, with frequent monitoring actions. Quality of the outputs is in general good, although it could be improved in terms of links with measuring indicators of programming objectives, distribution over time of assessments of the situation in areas where projects took place.*

### 3.1.3 EQ15: Efficiency and Effectiveness of assistance

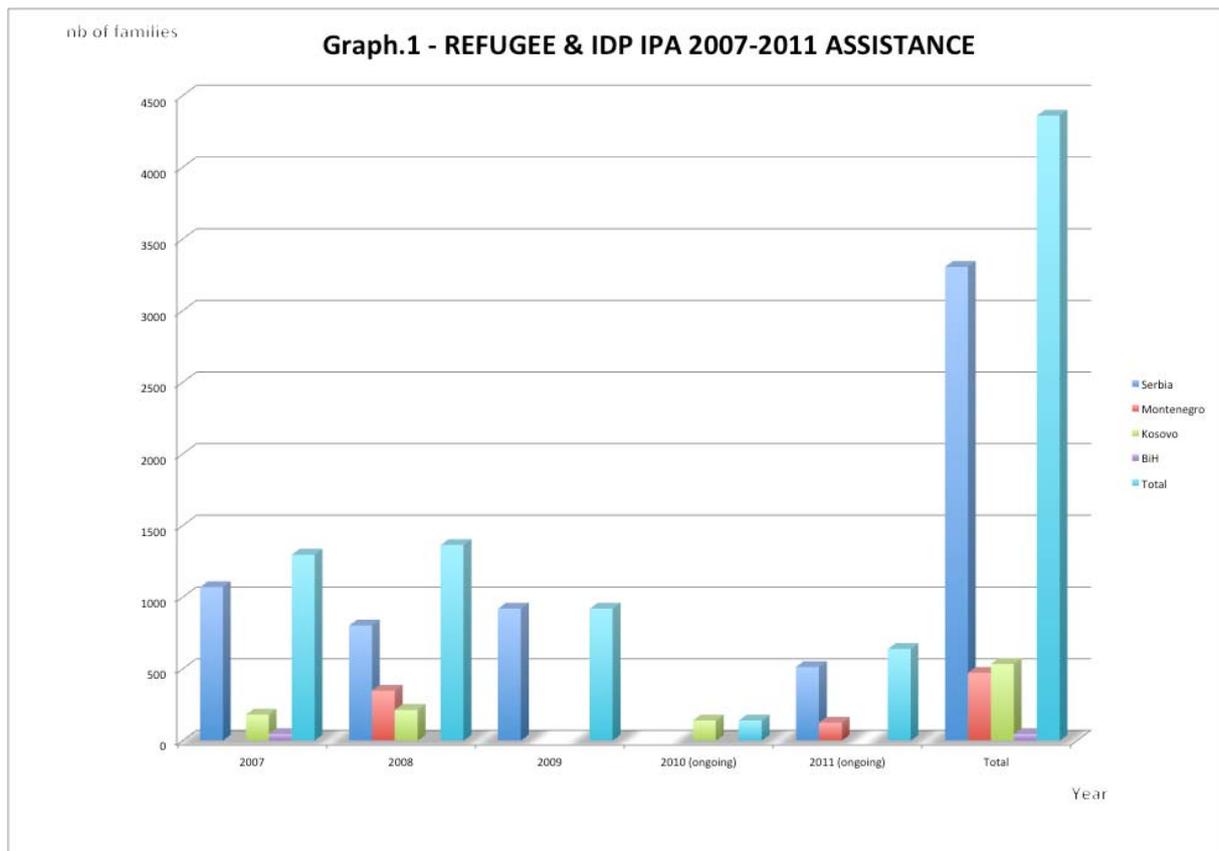
In general terms, financial assistance seems to give an effective contribution to achieving objectives and priorities, with a use of resources that – taken into account the multiple constraints and challenges that have to be faced by the implementing agencies – can be considered as economically sound in

terms of quality and quantity of the support provided, and timing of its delivery. EU's long-standing and deep commitment to improving the refugee/IDP situation was praised by all stakeholders, including governments, UN, NGOs, direct beneficiaries themselves. All programmes have well achieved the strategic objective of contributing to provision of durable solutions, and in all relevant reporting the outputs (particularly housing solutions) are usually praised for their high standards. The implementing procedures and monitoring systems are such that delays do certain occur, but are kept under control, and the protracted timing is mostly linked to the lengthy tendering procedures involved. Efficiency is thus generally ensured, with the main challenges being more on the level of effectiveness, because of the difficulty of addressing the multiple problems faced by the target groups.

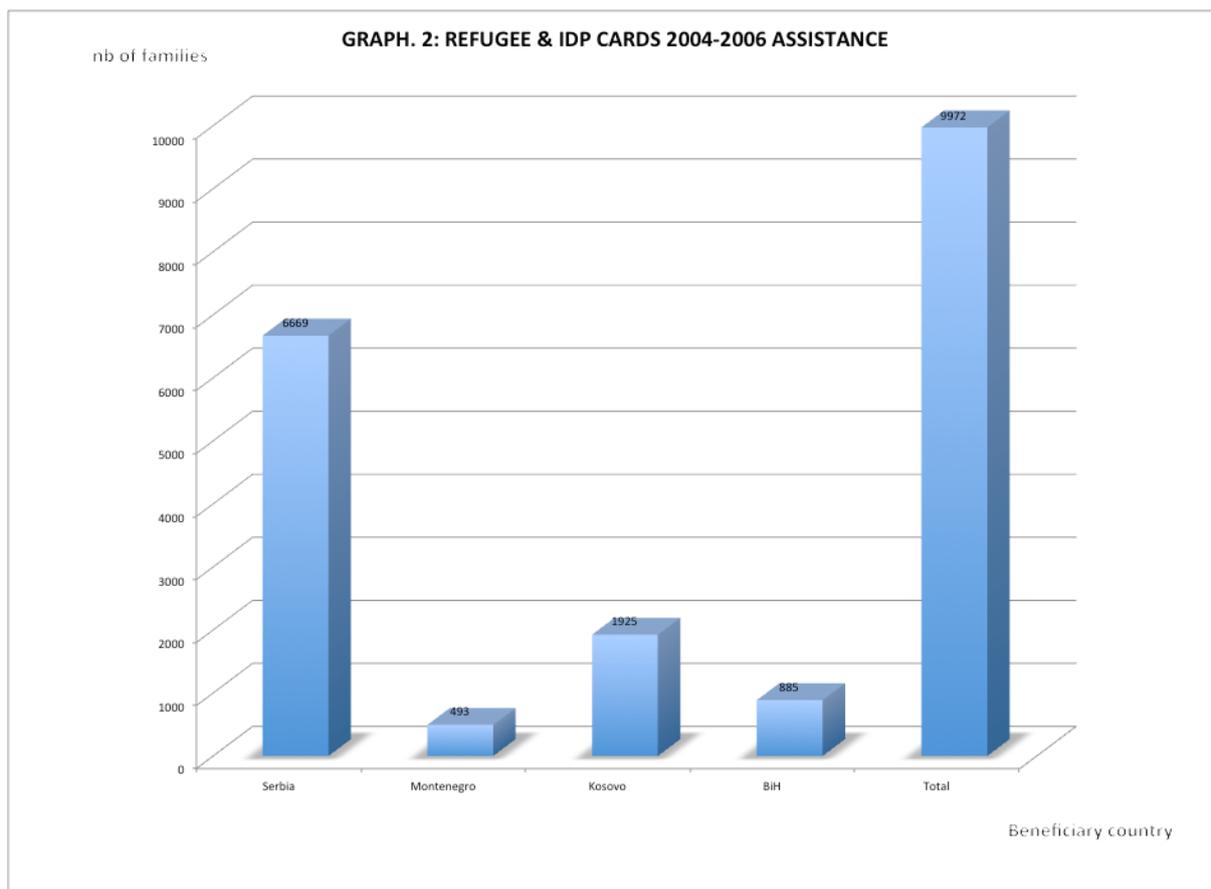
Based on the documentation review and the field work, results achieved are as follows:

- Refugee/IDP families were provided with their desired housing solution in order to integrate in their place of displacement and live in dignity;
- Refugee/IDP families were provided with income-generation grants for self-sufficiency;
- Returnees were provided with houses reconstructions and start-up kits in order to reintegrate in their pre-war place of origin;
- Refugees/IDPs were provided with legal assistance in order to obtain needed personal documents, repossess properties;
- National and local governments were provided with technical assistance support in order to enhance their capacities in designing and implementing strategies and action plans.

In quantitative terms, according to data contained in the relevant project fact sheets, an estimated 4360 families have been supported/are being supported thanks to IPA funds (Grants), be it for integrating in the place of displacement or returning to place of origin.



Based on data from different sources (EAR Annual Reports, Project Fact Sheets), 9972 families have been supported through CARDS. It is important to note that forms of assistance were much more basic at the time of CARDS. On the other hand, the village houses project funded under CARDS proved to be very efficient and was not funded under IPA.



It is, however, important to estimate to which extent EU assistance is contributing to achieving strategic objectives. Per se, the amount of resources involved has been significant (76,5 MEURO under IPA funds, and 55,4 MEURO under CARDS funds (including both Grants and Services, National and Regional). Obviously, assistance alone cannot overcome the multiple integration challenges, nor it can compensate all factors threatening the durability of integration.

With regards to the issue of economic stability, programming objectives and priorities often refer to livelihood support for more dignified living conditions, without necessarily pointing at economically sustainable lives. Despite the remarks made in the above section, where it was stressed that future programming shall boost sustainability via a more thorough planning of economic measures, results achieved from the actions implemented to date have fully matched expectations.

With a return environment made more favourable in all former-Yugoslav territory, the economic crisis - that brought to local contexts plagued by skyrocketing unemployment rates - has become the number one threat to a sustainable integrated life. The generation of a lasting income has become the most difficult task for returnees and IDPs, already confronted with multiple integration challenges. Internationally funded programmes, including EU-funded programmes, have insufficiently contributed to the objective of enabling refugees and IDPs to gain solid livelihoods. Income-generating grants have often been identified as the most flexible and preferred option, being easy to set-up and implement, although the evidence on the field shows a difficulty to achieve stable incomes.

**Key findings and conclusions at regional level:** *The financial assistance delivered by the EU provides actual and relevant support to sustainable return, assistance and local integration, up to a level sufficient to further strategic objectives, with economic factors linked to contexts and the crisis*

becoming the major obstacles to integration when income generation support is not (or no longer) provided.

### 3.1.4 EQ16: Balanced coverage of organizations supported

Generally speaking there seems to be a good balance of organizations supported, including international NGOs, UN agencies, local civil society organisations. Within the last group, it is clear that in the last years (also due to EU funded civil society support actions) a “large number of organisations [in the Western Balkans] have increased their skills, knowledge and expertise”<sup>8</sup>, but – as the same source stresses - “lack of stable funding, decreasing donor support and the on-going need to fundraise and compete for funds create significant challenges for sustainability of these organisations and contribute to enlarging the gap between the large and small CSOs”. Particularly in the refugees/IDPs sector, it appears that there are situations in which the systems for the selection of subjects to be supported seems capable of attracting organisations with required management capacity but incapable of attracting new organisations, especially those representing underprivileged groups. There are several mutually interacting factors behind such a difficulty. An overarching one is certainly the recent economic crisis and the general reduction of assistance programmes, which caused a selection among civil society organisations, which primarily affected the weaker ones, and a further one the difficulty often evidenced by underprivileged groups in expressing organizations having the required management skills while sufficiently representing the interests of a significant share (and not only of specific fragments) of a given group.

Key findings and conclusions at regional level: *The combination of type, size and profiles of the organisations supported allows the reaching of strategic objectives, certainly with regard to capacity and local rooting albeit there are some relative weaknesses when it comes to specific marginal and underprivileged groups.*

### 3.1.5 EQ17: Balanced support in terms of instruments mix

As mentioned in the answer to EQ 5, assistance to refugees and IDPS is primarily made through grants contracts, integrated with few service contracts, mainly focused on providing technical assistance to enhance capacities of governments in view of the transition to IPA. An instrument mix privileging grants seems thus in line with the features of this sector, including a large amount of direct material support to beneficiaries, and no criticisms against dominance of grants or alternative instrument mix proposals are advanced in reports or statements beneficiaries. In general, however, beneficiaries tend in case to criticize service contracts that would allegedly imply a higher dispersion of resources for the costs of expertise. Considering the nature of the assistance primarily delivered on the basis of service contracts (capacity building to major government institutions), it appears in any case difficult to envisage major changes in the current instrument mix. In an implementation perspective, the adequacy of grants as primary instruments of support seems, moreover, confirmed by the generally cost-efficient manner in which assistance is delivered, with cases of poor efficiency being not linked to the choice of instruments.

Key findings and conclusions at regional level: *The applied instruments mix is certainly adequate for the reaching of strategic objectives, being resources primarily channeled through grants, consistently with the needs identified in the programming phase, apart from service contracts for capacity building.*

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<sup>8</sup> *Thematic Evaluation of the EU's support to Civil Society (CS) in the Western Balkans and Turkey, Implemented by IBF, Draft final report, p. 17.*

### 3.1.6 EQ18: Impact and sustainability of assistance

In the countries of interest for this evaluation, it is difficult to measure the impact of return assistance, as very few in-depth surveys have been conducted and actual impact (or absence of impact) can be linked to socio-economic factors independent from the quality of implementation. This applies to whatever main indicator is considered: reduction in the number of the refugees, increase in the number of returns, evidence of local integration. Also with regard to the quantity and quality of the assistance provided, until recently this sector experienced a strong selection within the pool of organisations created for the purpose of supporting implementation and ensuring an inclusive, multi-stakeholder approach, with a dispersion of the good practices created during project implementation.

The concept of “return support” aimed at supporting spontaneous return, and focused on the individual rather than to the institutional level, proved difficult to operate in a challenging political context and jeopardised the establishment of development-based programmes. More impact and sustainability could have been achieved if more attention had been paid to introducing consistent socio-economic measures for both refugees and IDPs and, on a limited scale, for resident population.

The weakness of initiatives aimed at connecting socio-economic programmes with the local environment implied a limited impact and sustainability of interventions. As explained in the section concerning the prospects for impact and sustainability of on-going IPA assistance of this report, the capacity of international assistance, comprising of EU support, to make integration lasting, has been only partly achieved. Efforts to turn any return opportunity into reality were generally crowned with success; ensuring returnees are able to remain is the key challenge. While security is no longer a major obstacle, and freedom of movement is drastically improved as is housing quality standards and access to essential services, sustainable responses to the widespread absence of stable income are still to be identified.

Given that this is now the individual, community and national concern number one, programming has grown increasingly complex and requires substantial analysis efforts ahead of the implementation stage.

Key findings and conclusions at regional level: *The actual impact of the assistance provided is difficult to measure partly because of the absence of focused studies and partly due to the difficulty to separate the multiple factors affecting returns and their sustainability. The individualized idea of return support weakened the focus on socio-economic programmes.*

### 3.1.7 EQ19: Prospects for impact and sustainability of assistance

Past experience made clear that sustainable return does not have to mean “permanent return”, as the stability of return is linked to a multiplicity of factors linked to the professional and educational opportunities available for families and to the loyalty to specific social networks. Past experience made clear as well that income-generation assistance does not systematically mean sustainable permanent employment, while income generation does not imply per se increasing integration.

The condition of refugees/IDPs and the stability of return is now increasingly linked to the improvement of social and economic standards that apply to the overall population. Problems experienced by refugees and IDPs are more and more general problems related to the weakness of the welfare state at the local level.

The hardship experienced by several groups of persons having the status of refugees/IDPs is increasingly linked to their overall vulnerability (poverty, membership in marginalized ethnic groups) rather than to their status.

Key findings and conclusions at regional level: *The medium and long term perspectives on impact and sustainability are certainly multi-faceted, imposing to consider the refugees/IDPs situation within the overall social and economic development of the local contexts, and to take into account the huge variety of forms that a “sustainable return” can take.*

## 3.2 National Context Remarks

### 1. Bosnia and Herzegovina

It must be noted that the desk review was not able in this case to build upon the results of previous evaluations as in other contexts, since the ad-hoc evaluation of CARDS BiH programmes did not cover the UNDP-EU intervention, with SUTRA-PLOD (Support to Results based Approach: Partnership for Local Development) only mentioned as future planning, while the IPA Interim Evaluation did not include the IPA 2007 return project.

With regard to the capacity of the organizational and administrative structures in place to ensure efficient and effective implementation (EQ13) the current political crisis has certainly partly jeopardized the implementation capacity in the assistance to the return process, with the relatively better staffed offices existing at entity/technical level experiencing a difficult interaction with political actors. Due to difficulties greater than in other national contexts, the strategic objective of Annex 7 of the DPA was very partially achieved, though IPA 2012-13 has earmarked 14 MEURO for the refugee sector.

In terms of contribution to achieving the strategic objectives/priorities (EQ15), it can be confirmed that, as determined in previous evaluation exercises, that in terms of relevance “SUTRA II project structures and development processes have been relevant to the needs of returnees and have also emphasised the relevance and benefits of an inclusive approach to strengthening community viability at the local level”<sup>9</sup>, while with regard to effectiveness, “EU monitoring reports also draw attention to the possibility that SUTRA II’s effectiveness in implementing community development plans could have been strengthened if key stakeholders had managed to re-define and extend institutional responsibilities to incorporate economic and social reintegration”<sup>10</sup>.

Within the Return to Kotor Varos project (IPA 2007-EU contribution: 500,000 Euro), efficiency was ensured by the contributions from the Entities and Municipality amounting to a total of 100,000 Euro which, together with the IP’s contribution of 60,000 Euro, resulted in a higher number of returnee families supported than those planned (46 instead of 40). This was underlined both at the IP’s Regional Representation office and at the Mayor’s office. Moreover, it is worth noting the synergy observed during the field phase, with visible joint efforts for comprehensive support to “real returnees”. Besides houses reconstruction, infrastructures were considerably rehabilitated so as to favour overall community and connect villages (a bridge was repaired within the project). At the time of the interview, the Municipality of Kotor Varos was expecting feedback on a request for roads rehabilitation submitted to the Federal Ministry for displaced persons. The evaluators were extensively informed by the representative of the IP about the selection of beneficiaries performed on the basis of a preselection made within CARDS project and in line with applicable legal provisions. The contribution to the reaching of objectives was, however, partially compromised in the implementation of IPA 2007, as many families (mainly Croat refugees from Western Europe) did not actually return to their reconstructed houses. This problem must be understood against the backdrop of the applied selection

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<sup>9</sup> UNDP Bosnia and Herzegovina, *SUTRA II Evaluation Report*, April 2007.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*.

criteria (even beyond this specific project), as appeared from the documentation review (Gap analysis and UN Policy Paper) and from information collected during interviews with international agencies and municipalities. Even if the EU does not rely on the selection criteria issued by the Government (Guidelines for procedures in the implementation of reconstruction and return projects of the MHRR) for Annex VII project, IPA projects beneficiaries' selection criteria was conducted on the basis of a scoring system favouring an ethnic allocation of assistance, thus having as mentioned refugees of Croat ethnicity living in Western Europe receiving reconstruction assistance without any actual intention of returning to Kotor Varos. Inadequate selection criteria can indeed jeopardise return processes, when focus is not exclusively on vulnerability and need for return rather than ethnicity (the new RHP seems on the way to correct these weaknesses).

At the entity level, in the case of RS the stakeholders share the view of the necessity of a stronger focus on complementary measures rather than solely on housing, stressing that this would increase the need of a stronger cooperation between different ministries, that is now is lacking, with most of the work being done by the ministry for refugees and displaced persons. The ministry is inter alia implementing activities in favour of ethnic minorities (e.g. lodging and school facilities for Roma in Prijedor) that risk to be only sporadic considering the scarcity of funds.

The disparity between social security benefits between entities remain a problem, recognised in both entities, although the actual difference (in terms of amounts and scope of coverage) should be reassessed in light of the new law on social protection issued last year in RS.

However, stakeholders' feedback and project-level monitoring evidence a significant degree of failure of small grants in achieving stable incomes. This was noted especially in Bosnia during field visits to the CARDS-funded SUTRA-PLOD beneficiaries, where families are living in poverty with no real income perspectives for family subsistence, five years after the project was completed. One explanation for this was that individual grants schemes are not sufficiently market demand-driven and are not the result of a thorough study of the local economy. Indeed, creating the conditions of a sustainable income require a thorough analysis of the public and private sector's potentials. Deprived of this economic investigation, individual economic schemes, in most cases, can at best complement families' essential needs temporarily, putting those in a situation closer to survival than wellbeing.

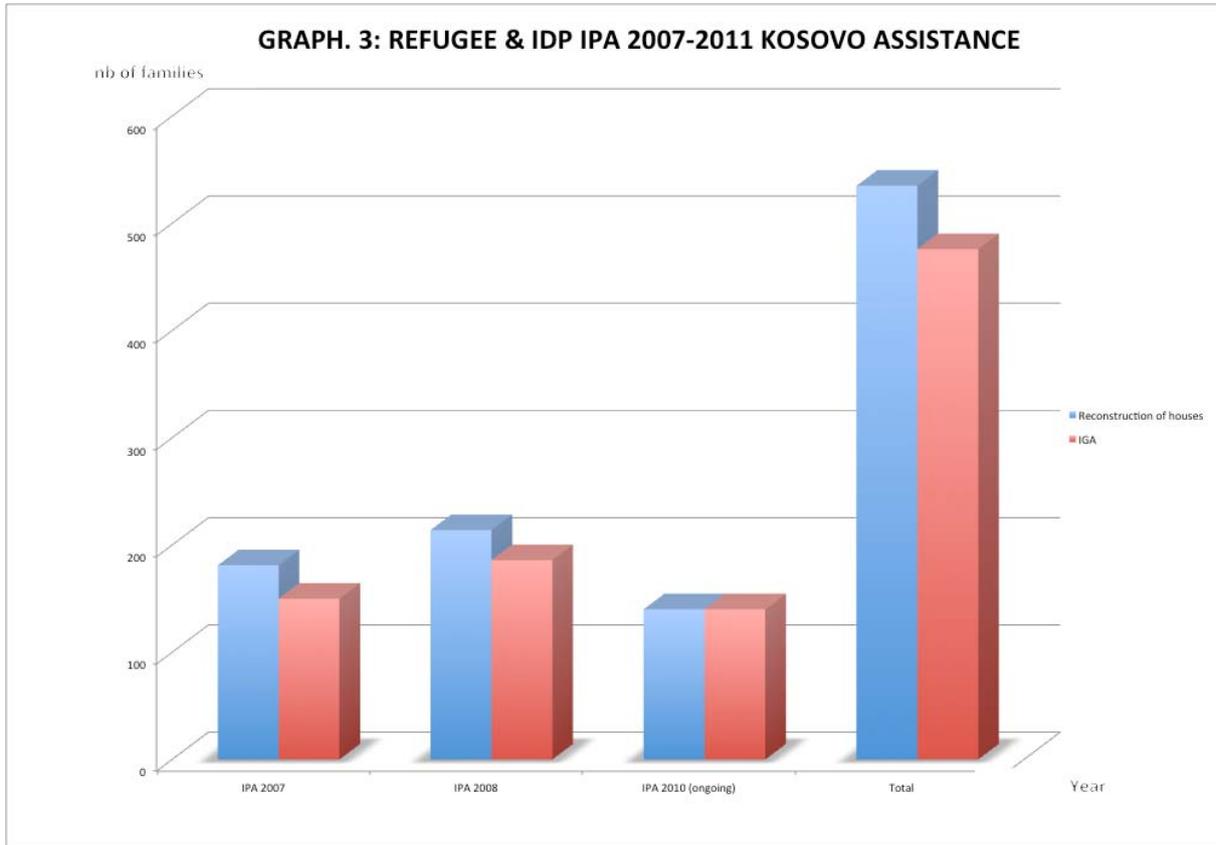
Overall, the key strength of the SUTRA PLOD projects seems to be represented by their participatory/inclusive approach adopted through the establishment of the LAGs is. Although this clearly goes beyond the scope of the present evaluation, it would be interesting the reasons why in certain municipalities these structures are still functioning and in others not. This same aspect comes back also with regard to the impact and sustainability of the assistance (EQ18). The Evaluation of the SUTRA PLOD II mentions indeed that the "Local Action Groups (LAG) partnership approach has proved beneficial both during identification, development, implementation and co-funding of project. EU monitoring reports consider this to be the greatest impact of SUTRA II"<sup>11</sup>. However, external evaluations undertaken by UNDP on the SUTRA PLOD II and III Projects highlight the need to complement housing/infrastructures reconstruction with socio-economic measures.

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<sup>11</sup> Idem

## 2. Kosovo

A total number of 535 families have been/are being supported to return through housing reconstruction and start-up grants.



In terms of contribution to achieving the strategic objectives/priorities (EQ15), the CARDS 2006 project (Multi-sectoral Returns to Lazovic/Llazoviq and Individual Returns to Western Kosovo) was definitely relevant being the first one to support return of Serbs to the Pec/Peja region, and in terms of municipal and community support for the return process the project has been defined as “an outstanding success”<sup>12</sup>, since it actually paved the way for more returns and triggered interest in more families to return.

In terms of impact and sustainability of assistance (EQ18), it must be taken into account that under CARDS return projects were designed within a pure humanitarian dimension, so as to respond to most pressing return needs, so that only limited support was provided for economic self-sufficiency. This was visible through field visits to CARDS beneficiaries who benefited from housing reconstruction and provision of livestock. They are grateful for having being able to return home but have only limited self-reliance means. CARDS projects ended in 2007-early 2008, so that after six years, the impact of this type of humanitarian support is represented by overall community stabilisation rather than community economic development. IPA has then paid more attention to fostering economic opportunities, as a logic trend from humanitarian assistance/reconstruction to development. However, in the human rights

<sup>12</sup> *Multi-sectoral Returns to Lazovic/Llazoviq and Individual Returns to Western Kosovo, End-of-project external evaluation report, April 2008.*

sector, the approach adopted within IPA is far from being “developmental”, since the needs to be addressed still derive from patterns of displacement.

In quantitative terms, EAR Annual Report 2007 points out overall relevant results in terms of support to return since 2002 as well as results during 2007: some 613 returning families, mainly Serb and RAE, but also including families from receiving communities, have received assistance through EC-funded multi-sector returns projects that include housing reconstruction, support for business start-ups, school repairs and promoting inter-ethnic dialogue. In 2007 alone, about 194 families were assisted, allowing them to return to their rebuilt dwellings in various parts of Kosovo. These figures represent one of the Agency’s major successes in fostering returns and stabilising minority communities, which go beyond the number of returned or assisted families. For instance, the relatively low number of families (35) from RAE communities returned to their houses in the Roma Mahalla district in South Mitrovica should not overshadow the extremely high political significance of this project. In fact, it marks one of the first important successes of the international community in reconstructing a multi-ethnic community in the town of Mitrovicë/Mitrovica. Equally important was the successful relocation of 23 families to the newly built social housing building. These families were previously hosted in the Plemetina refugee camp, well-known for its harsh living conditions.

With regard to impact and sustainability of the assistance (EQ18), one can preliminarily remember that the Interim Evaluation and Meta-evaluation of IPA assistance in Kosovo made the following assessment : “Impact is also visible in the Human Rights sector, where assistance has had a positive impact on the community of returnees and the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Minorities. However, the substantial scale of the problem is disproportional to the level of donor funds available”<sup>13</sup>. As a matter of fact, various stakeholders have regretted the disproportion between the amount of assistance allocated to return programmes and the needs on the field, which very often go beyond the targeted municipalities (in general four) and the target population (Roma families with no property titles over land are excluded).

With regard to monitoring mechanisms in place (EQ14), the evaluation stresses that “the Ministry for Return and Communities (MRC) is in charge of monitoring the process of return of internally and externally displaced Kosovo people. It deals mainly with the return of displaced minorities and cooperates closely with the Ministry for Social Affairs as well as municipalities, as well as with the Office for Good Governance (OGG) at OPM”<sup>14</sup>. Field interviews pointed out, however, a certain weakness of the overall monitoring role by the government because of the lack of human resources devoted to this task, while immediate and regular post-return monitoring is essential for return stabilisation and socio-economic integration of returnees. As a matter of fact, monitoring visits may identify gaps during this period of time and allow immediate responses not to discourage returnees.

In terms of efficiency in the use of resources and effectiveness of the contribution to achieving the strategic objectives/priorities (EQ15) for the programmes assisting returnees (RRK I and II, Community Stabilisation Programme) the Report reads: “All projects largely achieved or exceeded their numerical targets for the returnees, i.e. 391 houses constructed or repaired, 16 infrastructure projects completed; over 400 returnees were trained and 174 supported with grants and 170 businesses by returnees were supported in their establishment by providing simple productive assets such as agricultural tools. Over 70 community development projects were started. RRK also had a ‘balancing component’ for vulnerable local Albanian population, under which houses were built and

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<sup>13</sup> ECORYS, *IPA - Interim evaluation and meta-evaluation of IPA assistance, Country Report Kosovo*, June 2013.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*.

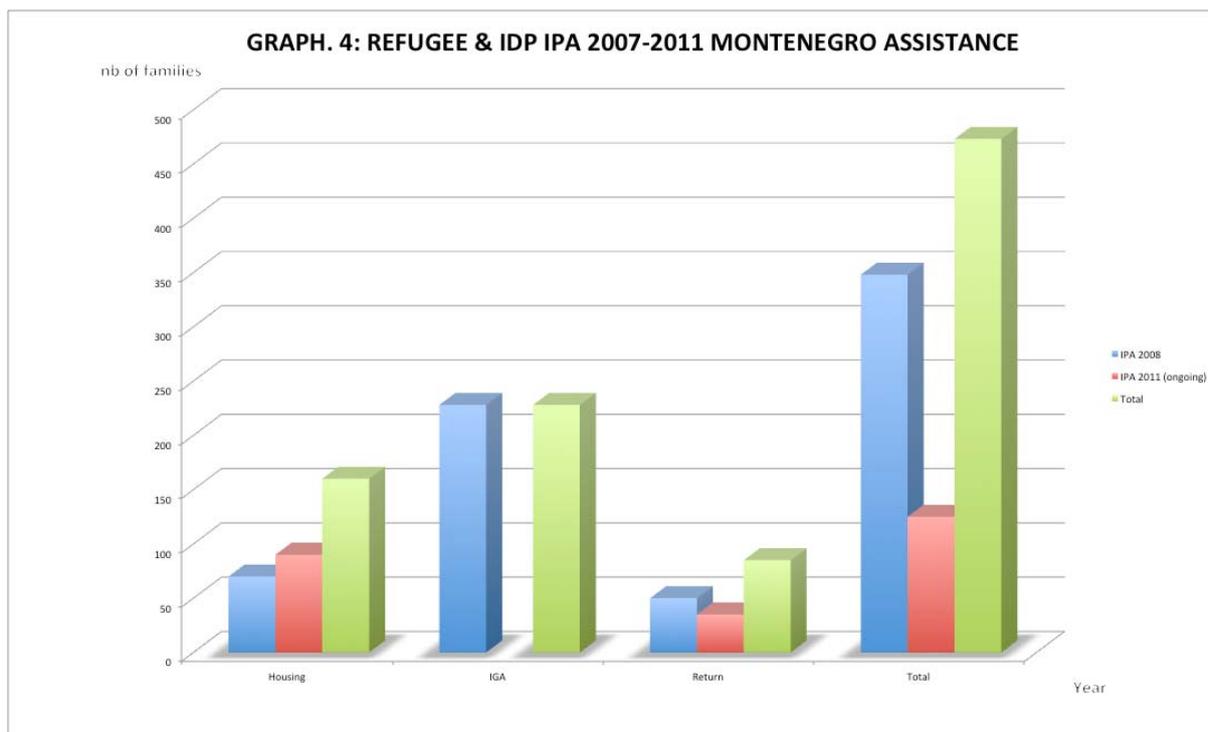
<sup>16</sup> OSCE Mission in Kosovo, *An assessment of the voluntary returns process in Kosovo*, October 2012.

some community development projects were realised. In the 36 participating municipalities Steering Committees were established and local government staff trained in monitoring. Not surprisingly, the projects met with problems, e.g. the issue of land allocation for returnees who were either landless before their departure or could not prove the ownership was never fully resolved. Some municipalities had no official land-owners<sup>15</sup>. Field interviews confirmed the appropriateness of these findings. As already mentioned in the report, stronger economic support measures and stronger linkages between the returnee community and the receiving one around a viable economic project would strengthen the interventions in terms of impact and sustainability. As for efficiency, the evaluation assessed the RRK I as less efficient (appointed staff not fully devoted to the project, four months delay in implementation) than the RRK II. It concluded that in the human rights sector, efficiency was better achieved when working with NGOs rather than International Organisations. Sustainability was only partly assured because of the lack of capacity at municipal level to manage funds. Capacity to manage the return process was assessed as adequate and improved over the years. Particularly relevant are the results of the Results Oriented Monitoring (ROM) performance scoring: the RRK I and II had an average score of B for effectiveness; for efficiency, RRK I scored C and RRK II scored B; whereas for sustainability and impact they both scored B. A number of IDPs cultivate small pieces of land to cover their food needs but do not connect economically to the community through this activity. Other IDPs practice seasonal agricultural activity keeping other seasonal occupations in Serbia. Educational tracks started by children in Serbia can decrease incentives to return. Also in contexts where ethnic tensions are limited, and income generation activities available, the overall situation in terms of available social networks and educational opportunities can be so poor to make permanent return less likely for families now settled in Serbia.

In a context where it is important to establish strong incentives for return, the key of success or failure definitely is – again - at the municipal level, where a structural improvement is represented by the approval in 2010 of a government regulation establishing Municipal Offices for Communities and Returns (MOCRs), that according to OSCE 2012 report “constituted an important first step towards addressing identified problems in the returns and reintegration process at the municipal level”<sup>16</sup>. Still, no major practical impact of this innovation can be observed. Against this backdrop, low-level harassments and minor incidents (like damaging monuments) are still enough to create a state of permanent tension. As stressed also in the OSCE 2012 report, “in a small number of cases municipal officials themselves openly condition the returns process on external factors, such as the resolution of outstanding property issues or a change in overarching political circumstances”. In such a context, the scarcity of incentives for municipalities – and not only for returnees - is perceived as problematic, and potentially generating the risk that political calculations of costs/benefits decrease the level of commitment.

### 3. Montenegro

In Montenegro, a total of 473 families have been/are being supported to locally integrate through housing, income-generation support or to return.



Regarding quantitative data, one can refer to the EAR Annual Report 2007 with regards to CARDS assistance. According to the report, the EU assistance programme targeting Roma Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) from informal KONIK settlements facilitated the return of 22 RAE families to Kosovo (municipality of Pec/Peja). The programme also aimed to support the social inclusion of RAE displaced persons through organised literacy and Albanian language courses for a total of 80 youths, and regular health-related counselling for 80 RAE adults, mostly women.

Another project assisted Montenegro's Commissariat for Displaced Persons in developing and improving its organisational capacity to deal with refugees and IDPs. Within a housing and economic livelihood assistance programme worth €2.4million, displaced persons in Montenegro have been provided with alternative housing solutions and income generation support. The project constructed 24 prefabricated houses for 27 Roma families living in the municipality of Berane and delivered building material and income generation support to some 60 displaced persons.

In terms of organizational and administrative structures in place (EQ 13), concerns about the organisational capacity at government level have been raised during interviews, and were also expressed in the previously mentioned Interim IPA Evaluation, but their practical significance must not be overestimated in a context where difficulties are mostly linked to the political difficulty of solving the outstanding problem of the permanent settlement of camp residents, particularly those of Roma ethnicity. In the specific case of Montenegro, the permanent solution of the DPs problem is closely and strictly linked not only to pure relocation issues (like that of Konik camps), but also to underlying political dilemmas like those of rules for the acquisition of citizenship or of official foreigner status.

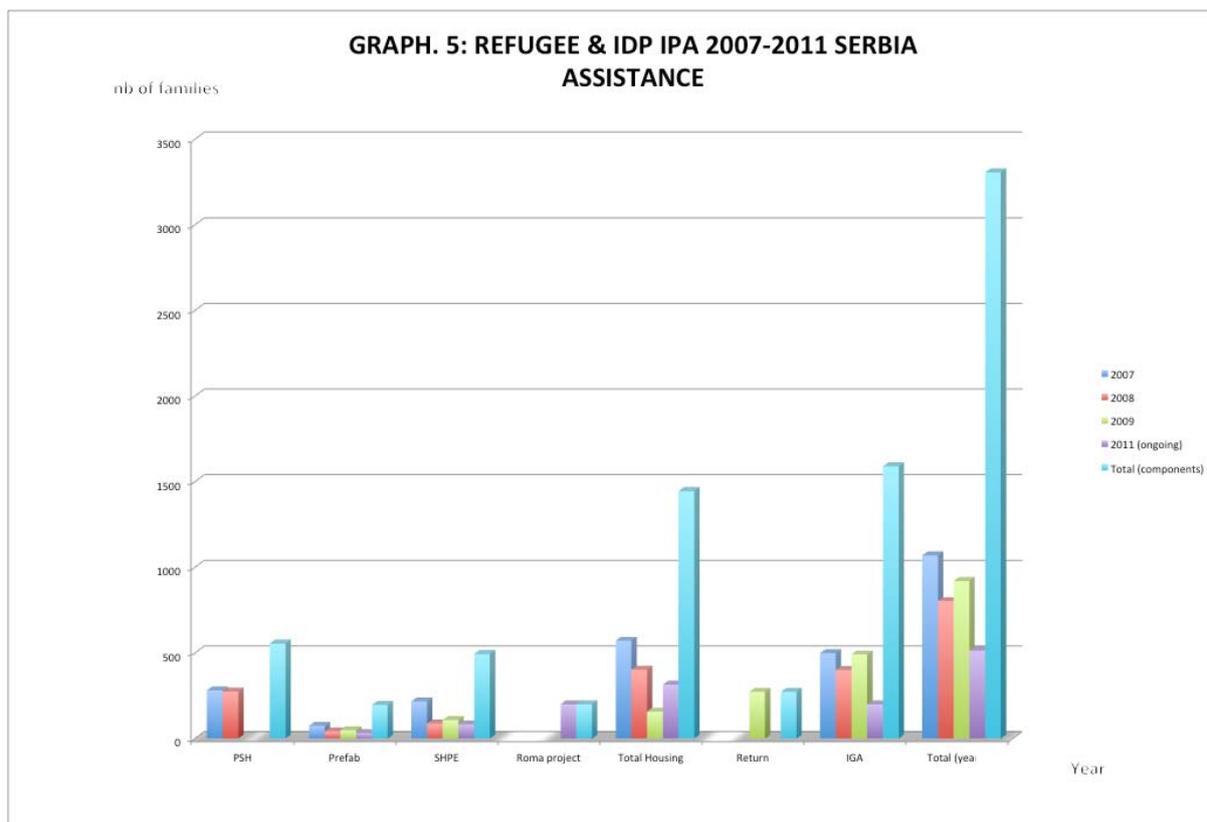
With regard to the functioning of monitoring mechanisms and structures (EQ14), the Interim IPA Evaluation does not specifically address the Refugee Sector, and the IPA 2008 project is only mentioned in the list of IPA projects. Based on an explanatory note of the Ministry of Finance Sector for Finance and Contracting of the EU assistance funds, NIPAC Office, i.e. Ministry of European Integration, is in charge of establishing and managing national monitoring system within the IPA, in the Decentralized system of Montenegro. Monitoring is performed through the activities of different

committees, which competencies differ based on the level of their competence, the IPA Monitoring Committee- covering the overall IPA and the Sectoral Monitoring Committee – covering components level. In accordance with the Framework Agreement and the IPA Implementing Regulation each beneficiary country of the IPA, is required to establish the IPA Monitoring Committee within six months following the entry into force of the first Financial Agreement. This Committee represents the highest level in the hierarchy of committees dealing with monitoring issues, and its task is to monitor the implementation of programmes financed through IPA funds. The IPA Monitoring Committee is composed by following representatives: representative of the European Commission (EC), NIPAC, national Accrediting Officer (NAO), Programme Accrediting Officer (PAO) and Senior Programme Officers (SPO). The Committee meets minimum once a year, co-chaired by NIPAC and EC representative. The Committee verifies whether the general implementation efficiency and quality is in compliance with the objectives set by a concrete Financial Agreement and Multi-annual Indicative Planning Document - MIPD. In accordance with the aforementioned, the Committees is proposing to the EC, EK, NIPAC and NAO measures for the provision of compliance between programme and activities, as well as the measures to Sectoral Monitoring Committees to be undertaken in reference to achieving objectives of a concrete programme. Besides the above framework, which includes a reporting system as well (sectoral and implementation reports), all IPA projects are regularly monitored by ROM monitors, which are contracted through one Service Contract for the Monitoring of all Western Balkans countries programmes. The monitoring system can be considered therefore as generally adequate.

The ROM reports provide indeed a good source for the assessment of IPA 2008, that scored B in all 5 criteria. Being a continuation of previous CARDS 2006, it builds on previously achieved results and is in line with the Government Strategy. It was well designed and efficiently/effectively implemented according to PCM guidelines. Coordination with the Government Bureau for Care of Refugees and UNHCR was undertaken on a regular basis especially as regards beneficiaries' selection. Linkages and synergies with actions implemented in Kosovo (RRK I and RRK II) were ensured through direct project activities or through cases referral, which can certainly be defined as good practice to be replicated. This has been the case in previous CARDS projects as well where joint efforts in providing and linking the assistance in Montenegro and in Kosovo ensured an effective solution to the displaced. In Montenegro, projects are built upon results and lessons learned from previous actions so that sustainability and impact are visible. The IPA 2011 focuses on assisting Konik Camp residents in order to follow the priority of the Government. It is still ongoing, and at the time of interviews, the identification and selection stage of beneficiaries was underway. Solid experience acquired over the years by the contracted IPs in dealing with this sensitive caseload may envisage prospects for smooth implementation.

#### **4. Serbia**

In Serbia, a total of 3306 families have been/are being supported with different types of housing schemes, income-generation support or they were facilitated to return. Only Grants have been taken into consideration.



The strategic objective of closing down all collective centres in Serbia has been almost achieved, representing a good example of “success story”. From a total of more than 300 CCs back in 2003, the remaining 18 CCs will be closed thanks to the forthcoming IPA 2012 Grant programme. Several stakeholders have regretted that IPA 2009 and 2011 have focused on families living in CCs without support extended to those living in private accommodations as well. However, this programming objective was made on the basis of the strategic priority of the Government to close all CCs in Serbia. Moreover, families in private accommodations have been/are being supported by other actors, including UNHCR, as well as, recently, by Grants to municipalities within IPA 2011-12, and refugee families in private accommodation will be the main target group of the RHP. As for IDPs from Kosovo, high-level talks in Serbia during the visit of the Special Rapporteur indicate the commitment to pledge funds for IDPs living in extreme poverty.

With regard to administrative and organizational structures in place (EQ13), significant progress in terms of capacity enhancement at central level was made since the introduction of the IPA instrument (partially building on capacity building/institutional building projects implemented under CARDS phase), although organisational standards could be yet improved, particularly in terms of availability of qualified staff. At local level, Trustees for Refugees are still dependent more on personal motivation rather than consistent and effective task allocation. The adoption of Local Action Plans since 2008 is a significant step forward in having local governments taking responsibility over refugees and IDPs issues. Their implementation shall be closely monitored: this action is already planned within the IPA 2012 Programme. Thanks to the commitment of local governments not only in planning concrete measures for refugees and IDPs but partly financing them, sustainability of actions is ensured.

In terms of contribution to achieving the strategic objectives/priorities (EQ15), it must be considered

that within the EU Monitoring Missions conducted in 2010 in Serbia, two IPA 2007 Grant Projects in the refugee sector were shortlisted as success stories and identified as best practices, given that they scored in average more than 3,00 and classified as “very good” projects.<sup>17</sup> Key recommendations were progressively taken into consideration by IPs and Contracting Authority and reflected in the implementation the following years. Efforts have been made to make use of lessons learned from previous projects and apply adjustments to project components in order to better reflect changing needs of the target population (please see below section on recommendations and lessons learned).

Projects visited on site showed that the most efficient housing scheme is the village house project, which, unfortunately is not financed by IPA, due to a provision in the IPA regulation. Advocacy for derogating from the regulation took place, with no success until the time of interviews. Recently, the derogation was approved so that it shall be possible to include such component in potential future IPA projects for refugees and IDPs. The village houses component is being financed by other donors (UNHCR, BPRM), and is included in the RHP, but needs for this type of support are, on the basis of recent needs assessments, constantly increasing. As a matter of fact, the evaluation of CARDS projects had already assessed the village houses project as having an enormous impact on living and psychological conditions, but unfortunately not being able to meet all the needs of those wishing to integrate in Serbia<sup>18</sup>.

With regard to the impact of activities (EQ18), as for CARDS return/cross-boundary activities, the same evaluation stated that “the project related to the continuation of peaceful and sustainable return and reintegration of displaced families into minority areas of Kosovo through organised return and housing assistance had very positive impacts to both the returnees and the local community<sup>19</sup>. Meanwhile, understanding the efficiency/impact of legal aid seems problematic with current monitoring mechanisms. The Kosovo Property Agency is e.g. boasting a 100% success rate of the property disputes under its competence, although several cases formally settled (i.e. with eviction of illegal occupant carried out) required further inputs from the Legal Aid Project. Accountability seems thus to be addressed to donors rather than to beneficiaries. The Social Housing in Protective Environment (SHPE) Project is a good solution for vulnerable cases that cannot live independently; however, more attention should be paid in strictly complying with selection vulnerability criteria in order to ensure effectiveness (EQ15). It was noted that in certain cases, the type of assistance received did not properly match vulnerability, i.e. the social and economic condition of a family. The selection of beneficiaries’ takes place within a formal Commission (composed of representatives of Commissariat for Refugees and Migration, IP, UNHCR, Municipality, CSW) according to agreed and signed Regulations listing all required conditions and criteria to be applied in order to produce a rank list of selected families. A call for applications is posted and families fill in the applications and produce evidences of their social/health, economic status. It is understood that families which are work-capable can also be considered within socially vulnerable category, a matter regulated through the application of regulations to which the Commission for selection of beneficiaries adheres, The beneficiaries of SHPE within IPA programs are exclusively those persons who find themselves in a position of social dependence, with very limited exceptions, made under the constraint of the urgency of closing a CC, which is the main strategic objective of the government.

Buildings are constructed with high quality standards, and several partners underlined the fact that better quality is often ensured, through the tendering process, at very competitive price, thus not losing

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<sup>17</sup> ICCS-NTUA Consortium, *Synthesis Report on EU CARDS and IPA National Projects in Serbia monitored in the period January-August 2010, The European Union’s “2007/145-210” Project for the WBT Region*, September 2010

<sup>18</sup> *Evaluation Report (EU/15/045/06), Evaluation of the Agency’s support to refugees and IDPs*, July 2008.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*.

in efficiency.

In Serbia, the village houses project is the most “comprehensive” type of assistance as it provides both housing and possibilities for generating an income through agricultural activities. Moreover, some income-generation projects have been a turning point in refugees’ lives, both for vulnerable ones and those having already started agricultural activities. Good examples were assessed in both cases:

- Vulnerable families with little knowledge of a particular activity but with great motivation to learn work and become independent. In those cases, the income-generation grant has acted as a “trampoline” for establishing a stable livelihood (opening a tailor workshop for instance) and for being eligible for further support at a later stage in order to expand the business.
- Families with already acquired means which managed to expand their activity in order to sell surplus to the market, going beyond self-sustainment.

A somewhat lesser contribution is evident in the case of capacity building actions, where actual contribution is often undermined by turnover of trained staff, particularly after political elections, and where inadequate criteria for selection of persons receiving assistance can jeopardise the achieving of strategic objectives.

Also, a lack of more tailored solutions for the most vulnerable categories or categories not fitting into available standard schemes was noted. However, efforts have been made recently, within the IPA 2011 Programme, to adjust specific housing components to specific situations: this is the case for the prefabricated houses model, conceived so as to host two or more separated dwellings for singles in certain municipalities that have accepted this new model.

It is to be highlighted that the allocation of resources/infrastructures by municipalities is crucial to the successful implementation of housing programmes. Disparity between municipalities is evident in Serbia. However, it was noted that even small and under-developed municipalities have considerably contributed to the solution of problems of refugees and IDPs considering their limited resources.

## 4 LESSONS LEARNED AND OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROGRAMMING FUTURE EU ASSISTANCE AND IMPROVEMENT OF ONGOING ACTIONS

### 4.1 Recommendations for improvement in the programming and intervention logic

#### 4.1.1 On Effective and Efficient Assistance

Current experiences too often show that the implementation of programmes can suffer of “path dependency”, with activities that are steered by prescriptions originated under different political and factual conditions. “Flexibility” cannot, however, become an absolute imperative, considering that assistance takes place in a defined legal and administrative environment imposing the safeguard of the certainty and transparency of the tendering process. The most relevant example is that of the preferences for housing schemes that can be no longer the most suitable to the actual needs of the targeted communities.

Even if in recent IPA Programmes, changes were introduced at a later stage (Guidelines for Call for Proposals) to reflect actual needs, for the purpose of achieving more effectiveness, it is recommended that during the programming phase, i.e. upon definition of Project Fiche, a certain degree of flexibility is applied when describing results and activities. Going back to the example of the alternative housing solutions, one practicable model could be to outline alternative options in this respect, depending on actual feasibility with regards to compliance with EU Member States requests. Two potential options could be:

- a. Indicate the overall number of housing solutions needed without breaking down into specific housing schemes (i.e. village houses, social housing in protected environment, prefabricated houses) under results and activities. Details and quantities would be further specified upon either design of Guidelines for Call for proposals or upon design of Project Proposals. It is understood that strict coordination is to be maintained between all stakeholders involved in order to avoid overlapping of activities.
- b. Indicate the total number of housing solutions (under specific objective) breaking them down into specific housing schemes (under results and activities), adding a 20-25% margin for possible changes and transfer from one housing scheme to another, or for inserting a tailored housing scheme that do not fall into standard ones. Decision on how to use the 20-25% “reserve” can be made upon design of Guidelines Call for proposals or project proposals themselves.

It appears also that programming process must not consider national assistance contexts as isolated units. Apart from the obvious fact of the mutual links between contexts of the region (e.g. Kosovo/Serbia) based on the structure and roots of the relevant refugees/IDPs communities, it must also be taken into account the existence of specific groups of refugees/IDPs (like certain Roma groups) that evidence cross-border economic activities and social networks.

#### Key recommendations at regional level:

*To the EU:*

- a) *Introduce, upon next programming cycle (IPA II), as much as possible flexibility in the design of project fiches, with optional clauses/reserve quotas or open-ended results/activities*
- b) *Formulate, upon next programming cycle (IPA II), results/activities that take into consideration the presence of communities with cross-border economic activities and social networks*

#### **4.1.2 On Impact and Sustainability**

When it comes to impact and sustainability, expectations imposed on actors of the assistance have been increasing over the years (as evidenced in the performance section) with a much greater level of accountability. The meeting of such expectations is, however, often hampered by shortcomings of the institutional framework, which does not allow controlling the whole chain of the assistance process, with particular regard to the municipal level. It appears also clearly that strict coordination of actions between the EU and other major supranational actors is a crucial aspect in this respect.

In order to achieve more impact and sustainability, both of the return and integration process, it is recommended to plan, in the very beginning of the programming phase, concerted actions aimed at ensuring that economic opportunities benefit both the returning and receiving communities (in the case of return) and both the integrating refugees and the domicile population (in the case of integration).

Moreover, in order to achieve enhanced sustainability of re-integration upon return, it is important to have systematic actions in place ensuring the follow up of returnee families after the return has taken place. The responsibility of such activities is most properly left to local authorities, against proper compensation, in a way that these have sufficient resources available and adequate ownership. These actions and the necessary means must be planned during the programming phase. This kind of sustainability oriented activities and post-intervention monitoring go clearly hand-by-hand, as the actual durability or stability of integration can only be verified at regular intervals after integration (locally or at place of origin) has taken place.

The observation of EU assistance and its impact makes clear that the return and reintegration process is extremely sensitive to external socioeconomic factors, that can strongly increase or reduce the impact of a project or even programme irrespective of the quality of planning and implementation. It is therefore intellectually wise and practically sound to accept such a link, and build objectives and indicators in the light of this, admitting that making the allocation of benefits independent from changes in the context is possible only within very narrow limits. Refugees/IDPs policies shall be merged within general welfare/poverty reduction policies, also in view of reducing the political visibility of the refugees/IDPs issue.

#### Key recommendations at regional level:

*To the EU:*

- a) *Introduce, upon next programming cycle (IPA II), a regular screening of the way in which economic opportunities created by assistance benefit both the returning and receiving communities and both the integrating refugees and the domicile population*

- b) *Introduce, upon next programming cycle (IPA II), a systematic follow up of the return process actively involving the local authorities*

*To the EU and national governments:*

*Ensure that local authorities have sufficient resources and ownership to be active actors in the follow up of the return process also in its socio-economic components*

*To the national governments:*

*Introduce, within the shortest possible timeframe, a regular screening of the interaction between refugees/IDPs policies and general welfare/poverty reduction policies, in principle avoiding to allocate under the former benefits that could also be provided under the latter*

### **4.1.3 On Stronger Links Between Needs and Priorities, Programming Objectives and Project Activities**

In order to ensure the quality of programmes, it is important to diversify the sources of information used in the programming process, so that the evolution of the needs and priorities of refugees/IDPs is ascertained from different perspectives. This applies of course to quantitative data, where government-originated information must be cross-checked with non-governmental sources and sources from the main international organisations, something which is currently done, but also to information of a qualitative nature coming from networks that are not always in contact with the EU administrative structure. This applies, for instance, to the outcomes of research on forced migrations that is now pursued at a very high level in the Western Balkans also by major European research centers and programmes , with special attention to the specific problems of Roma refugees/IDPs<sup>20</sup>.

While preserving the validity of a top-down approach which is crucial for advocating in favour of refugees' problems, a bottom-up approach could also be adopted during the process of gathering information on most pressing needs of refugees and IDPs. Organisation of Thematic Focus Groups at municipal level upon programming (and thereafter at regular intervals) could be an adequate tool. Grass-root level needs assessments have always proved to largely represent the wish of directly concerned groups. The results could well serve the identification of new project activities and therefore adjust programming objectives.

Key recommendations at regional level:

*To the EU:*

*Ensure, upon next programming cycle (IPA II), that a review of the information relevant to understand the context of assistance produced within independent scholarly networks is available during the programming process, also by introducing in the reporting stages an indication to mention the existence of relevant studies*

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<sup>20</sup> An example of respectively center and programme is the Oxford Refugees Studies Center and the Oxford Diasporas Programme (funded by the Leverhulme Trust), within which operate researchers from the International Migration Institute (IMI), the Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS) and the Refugee Studies Centre itself. An example of relevant contribution is the article authored by N.Sigona, "Between Competing Imaginaries of Statehood: Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian (RAE) Leadership in Newly Independent Kosovo", in *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, vol. 38, 2012, pp. 1213 ff. .

*Ensure, upon next programming cycle (IPA II), that Thematic Focus Groups are organized in selected local contexts to ascertain the needs of refugees/IDPs in the perspective of municipalities*

#### **4.1.4 On Stakeholders Involvement**

The findings of the current evaluation confirmed that it is extremely important to have a structured method (“check list”) aimed at ensuring strong participatory features in the programming process, without relying solely on information available within main institutions. The importance of collecting information from independent sources not linked to the current organization network (a need already mentioned above) is important also for increasing the quality of the participatory process, in order to double check information gathered from organizations and correct possible distortions linked to lack of representation of certain groups. The programming process must, therefore, not take the civil society representative structure existing in a given context “for granted”, but also assess whether there can be social components that are not represented by any existing organisation.

In the same respect, it is also crucial to pay attention to the municipal level. Municipal authorities are indeed not only unavoidable administrative actors in the assistance process, but they can also play an important role in mediating between conflicting interests.

Thus, in order to ensure more relevance, the inclusive approach followed in the consultations for the design of project fiches must be strengthened going beyond the consultative process including the EU and, at government level, the NIPAC and relevant Ministry(-ies)/Institution(s). Additional actors to be involved are representatives from the civil society, including non-Governmental stakeholders, and groups directly representing affected interests. The organisation of “workshops” aimed at gathering such components should be the direct responsibility of Government agencies.

##### Key recommendations at regional level:

*To the EU:*

*Design – for use upon next programming cycle (IPA II) - a standard model for ensuring a fully inclusive approach during the design of Project Fiches, particularly with regard to the representation of the interests of marginal or underprivileged groups. The model could for instance foresee the preliminary definition of all the interests affected by the activities, and of how these could be represented in the consultative process, and if any case of underrepresentation exists. An incentive for a more careful definition of the context by the drafters of the programming documents could be to include by default not only a list of “documents consulted” and “organisations/individuals” contacted, but also lists of “existing relevant documents and studies” and “existing relevant organisations”*

*To national governments:*

*Undertake, within the shortest possible timeframe, a review of the interests affected by assistance programmes in order to identify possible cases of underrepresentation*

#### **4.1.5 On Complementarity with National Policies on the Condition of Roma Communities**

Roma are increasingly overrepresented within refugees/IDPs contexts, creating a superposition of different layers of segregation and discrimination that is difficult to deal with in assistance actions. In general terms, attention must be paid to the necessity of avoiding that assistance strengthens forms of isolation, stigmatisation and “assistance dependency”.

In this respect, all actions involving Roma should be screened in order to see whether the same objectives could be pursued with measures not making reference to ethnicity, with a strong preference for actions aimed at fighting discrimination rather than “positive actions”. The transposition and implementation of the antidiscrimination legal framework based on the *acquis* shall be therefore considered as a crucial tool, without the introduction of any “ethnic specific” legal regime.

Along the same lines, it is important to avoid any link between policies aimed at improving the condition of Roma communities and actual or alleged ethnic subdivisions within Roma population. Such subdivisions are indeed extremely fluid, and very difficult to grasp for assistance providers, in a way that can make them difficult to be used for planning, while there is a significant risk of contributing to inner ethnic fragmentation.

An absolute policy priority must be that of facilitating the acquisition of citizenship by Roma, and supporting the abolition of measures that directly or indirectly produced situations of statelessness. In this same perspective, it is important to stress with the concerned governments the importance of minimising the cases where access to public employment is linked to citizenship, to reduce exclusion of members of underprivileged groups.

In terms of direct assistance to Roma communities, in support of policy priorities, one can certainly observe an increased attention by donors. Only in Serbia, large interventions are being undertaken, through the ongoing IPA 2011 Serbia programme targeting Roma families living in settlements, as well as ongoing OSCE/EU-funded intervention in support to the implementation of the National Strategy for the Improvement of the Position of Roma in the Republic of Serbia.

It is extremely important to take into account, in the programming process, the specific national contexts with regard to the structure and political representation of Roma communities, as well as the strategies developed for their integration. This aspect cannot be underestimated. The fragmentation of former Yugoslavia produced a peculiar situation with very different statuses given to Roma communities, according to national institutional frameworks, existence and position of other minorities and so on. Such differences often create paradoxical situations, with individuals who are part of the same social networks, and recognise themselves as part of the same group, finding themselves in very different legal positions, with implications in terms of economic and housing perspectives. Moreover, one can observe that in many local contexts the refugee/IDP issue is increasingly coinciding with the problems of the marginality and segregation of the Roma communities, and making a distinction between Roma specific and “ethnic blind” refugees/IDP assistance brings often far away from the reality on the field.

The programming process must be therefore strictly linked with national and regional (“Roma Integration Decade”) strategies on Roma integration, while studying avenues to reduce the problems experienced by certain Roma groups that live across national borders.

#### Key recommendations at regional level:

*To the EU and national governments:*

*Review, in the shortest possible timeframe, whether assistance addressed to Roma that are relevant also in the refugee/IDPs perspective could not be delivered in “ethnic blind” forms, or in the form of action for the transposition or implementation of antidiscrimination standards. This is not in conflict with the maintenance of projects specifically addressed to social inclusion of Roma, but implies that the focus of such projects should be on social inclusion issues that are strictly linked to ethnic identity.*

*Avoid, in the planning and implementation of assistance actions to give – unless absolutely needed – relevance to ethnic subdivisions within the Roma/RAE categories*

*To national governments:*

*Keep the acquisition of citizenship by stateless people a policy priority. Review, in the shortest possible timeframe, whether national legal systems, directly or indirectly, include citizenship among requirements for access to public employment without a motivation based on specific national interests.*

#### **4.1.6 On Articulation Between National and Regional Level**

All issues must be dealt with in both a national and regional dimension, to the extent that this is allowed by current political and institutional conditions. When coordinated/joint actions are not practicable, the dual national/regional perspective must be taken into account in order to exploit the possibility of comparing practices and tools.

Having assessed that an informal coordination is indeed taking place between the four EU Task Managers, it would be probably appropriate that this becomes formal and systematic, recurring in all stages of the project cycle, but especially during the planning phase. Also replication in other contexts of certain actions/approaches that proved “successful” shall be considered in the context of such coordination.

The exchange of best practices should be formalized in a way that allows a wider participation of actors. Not only this provides an opportunity for mutual programming inspiration but can potentially offer a platform where cross-border issues can be raised and jointly solved. A formal recognition of such venues implies that suggestions are better considered and potentially adopted by the present actors.

In this respect, a coordination cell has been established in Sarajevo in the framework of the Regional Housing Programme, and will, in the near future, facilitate the exchange of best practices, confirming a significant step forward, as long as it involves a wider spectrum of organisations. Similarly, in Montenegro, an implementation unit has been set up, although some experienced implementing partners of EU IDP/refugee programme assistance regretted that they were not consulted during the phase preceding the elaboration of the Regional Housing Programme in the country.

Key recommendations at regional level:

*To the EU:*

*Introduce, upon next programming cycle (IPA II), a structured pattern of coordination between the EU Task Managers in the involved countries, extended to all stages of project cycle and including occasions for identification of best practices potentially replicable at regional, and the discussion of replicability with local actors*

## **4.2 Recommendations for better performance of on-going assistance**

### **4.2.1 On Efficiency and Effectiveness of Assistance**

The efforts for the improvement of the performance of the assistance are most properly to be concentrated on the increasing effectiveness, being the level of efficiency generally good and difficult to be increased any further. For the purpose of increasing effectiveness, it is crucial - as already

mentioned - that task managers in charge of refugees/IDPs issues in the EU Delegations/EUO have a regular structured exchange of information at regional level regarding their programmes. At the same time, at the level of procedure, efforts must be made to identify possible ways to reduce time used in the tendering process, with mechanisms allowing reacting to possible changes in the local context.

In the programming process, a great deal of attention must be paid to the obstacles arising from the difficult cooperation between central and local levels, and to the frequent lack of resources at local level. This particularly if one considers that the reforms of local government undertaken in some of the concerned countries often brought to a discrepancy between functions and resources (typically new functions allocated to municipalities without a corresponding increase in resources).

Project cycle should allow more flexibility in its duration so to stretch over a longer timeframe, in order to reflect that programming is tackling issues of a developmental character, for instance when it comes to improving social and economic conditions.

The envisaged duration should be commensurate to the nature of objectives pursued. When comparing the five year period granted for housing construction under the Regional Housing Programme with the average eighteen months allocated to support Roma integration, the necessity to link time and objectives arises as an important aspect to reflect upon in the programming phase, of course while taking into account the existing administrative or procedural constraints.

#### Key recommendations at regional level:

*To the EU:*

*Undertake, within the shortest possible timeframe, a review of the problems generated to assistance in the refugees/IDPs field by the lack of sufficient resources/capacity in the municipalities. The review should be also based on the comparison of similar activities implemented by municipalities with different socio-economic structures, in order to isolate the factors that actually influence performance, and also assess whether good or poor performance is due to decisions taken in areas where municipalities have discretionary powers in the allocation of resources.*

*Undertake, within the shortest possible timeframe, a review of the duration of projects/programmes in order to detect inconsistencies between the length of interrelated activities in all the countries concerned.*

#### **4.2.2 On Impact and Sustainability of Assistance**

In the first place, it is crucial that the EU keeps and strengthens its efforts to have an active coordination with other supranational actors. Such coordination must be aimed at supporting the transition from a displacement to a social and economic development perspective, in order to integrate the refugees/IDPs issue in the overall welfare policy of the concerned countries. Assistance targeted at refugees/IDPs must indeed be integrated with broader actions aimed at supporting those general public policies that can have a positive impact on those vulnerable groups where refugees/IDPs are overrepresented.

Actions aimed at central administrative levels only, or assuming a proactive approach by local administrations involved are, however, doomed to fail without the introduction of clear incentives for local authorities actively cooperating to the solution of refugees/IDPs issues, as well as of mechanisms ensuring that good practices are capitalised and integrated in local authorities/stakeholders' work.

Proposed options to introduce incentives at the municipality level may include the following initiatives:

1. The municipal assembly could formally recognize the additional responsibilities of its staff dealing

with Refugee/IDP assistance project activities by upgrading their contractual terms of reference. The expected results is that such responsibilities are recognized as additional tasks and that the concerned staff is contractually obligated to perform such duties, not to be any longer considered as “extra-ToR” obligations. 2. An accompanying measure to the above may include some benefits. This may entail financial compensation in the form of salary adjustments. However, given the current overall context of scarce resources at municipal level, when such a measure is deemed not feasible or acceptable, then time-compensation for the relevant activities (attending Refugee/IDP selection commissions, roundtables...) may be granted.

Attention must also be paid to the stabilization of property rights, beyond the simple settlement of disputes on contested property, also through actions aimed at the strengthening of the relevant sectors of the judicial system.

Regarding the need to include adequate economic measures, concretely, in the case of return projects, it would be important to organize workshops or other similar initiatives at local community level in order to gather as much as possible information from all stakeholders in order to propose the most appropriate and feasible “economic project”. Detailed assessments should be conducted to highlight opportunities/constraints and strengths/weaknesses available both within the returnee and receiving community. For instance, in rural areas where cow breeding is a common activity, one “economic” project could be to set up refrigerating facilities for shared use by several families, both returnee and local population.

Analysing the place of the returnee/IDP/refugee production in the value chain of the local market will help determine threats and potential related to the envisaged professional activity. Such actions could be included as EU contribution or as a complementary action by another source of funding, and in both cases, due information would be included in the Project Fiche. As for integration projects, a similar approach as above can be followed, or else, more effort should be made in connecting the integrating community to the receiving one. The assistance must be integration-driven in that it should encourage building bridges between target groups and the resident community. For this type of initiative to be effective and welcomed by both communities, it requires to seek and identify a common interest for participation. It also needs to put forward concrete benefits to all. Gathering together still divided communities must be done around concrete activities and objectives. Proposing incentives on issues affecting all communities should drive the local integration process. In the field of employment, for instance, small enterprises could receive benefits by employing refugees who have recently integrated. Most importantly, it is recommended not only to have recourse to individual income-generation grant but to make a more in-depth business case assessment indicating strong viability. In other cases, economic opportunity development plans targeting a specific and coherent geographic area should be a prerequisite prior to any intervention. If the EU wants to achieve sustainability and impact of its actions in support of refugees and IDPs, it is of the outmost importance to strengthen the economic/employment aspect, otherwise refugee and returnees may very well live in extreme poverty, even if they have a home. Requesting an economic plan from the municipality is expected to have the following benefits: 1. It provides evidence that the Municipal has developed a strategy and a concrete plan to solve the unemployment problem of its local population, 2. It ensure that EU Refugee/IDP economic-development targeted assistance is in line with local priorities and complement its efforts, 3. It increases the ownership of local authorities in implementing EU-funded related assistance.

The documentation review has revealed that IPA projects had not all been subject to impact assessment. Field consultations have confirmed, however, that implementing partners are occasionally conducting impact survey at project level. This is the case, among others, of the Return and Reintegration in Kosovo II project (RRK II - IPA 2008), for which the IP has performed an impact appraisal. The outcome would benefit EU programming, but can prove useful for the local authorities in providing detailed and concrete suggestions for improving their role during project implementation.

Key recommendations at regional level:

To the EU:

*Monitor, within the shortest possible timeframe and together with other supranational actors, the coordination of refugees/IDPs policies with the overall welfare policies of the concerned countries*

*Identify as a clear priority during project implementation the creation of formal or informal incentives for the municipalities giving evidence of a proactive approach in the dealing with refugees/IDPs issues or showing that they integrate best practices developed in the context of EU assistance within their ordinary structure*

*Prior to any EU intervention, request municipal authorities to share their economic development strategy and programme, especially with regards to job creation. In case, insufficient level of information or absence of a clear strategy, consult with international or local stakeholders who have been involved in assisting the municipalities on this issue.*

*Monitor, within the shortest possible timeframe, that property rights are actually stabilized (in terms of capacity of effective enjoyment and economic use) after formal repossession, identifying which legal tools must be strengthened to provide protection for property rights holders*

*Launch, within the shortest possible timeframe, a systematic impact survey all IPA-funded projects*

*Ensure, upon next programming phase (IPA II) that the strengthening of the economic/employment aspects are kept in the focus*

#### **4.2.3 On Access to Adequate Housing**

The developments that refugees/IDPs communities have undergone in recent years (in terms of mobility in certain respects, and of stabilisation in some others) impose a new fresh approach to the issue of property selling bans for reconstructed houses. It is important to acknowledge that the selling of property is to some extent unavoidable, reviewing the long term rationality of current selling bans and the necessity of a flexible and active housing market. Prohibition of selling property is actually considered against respect of fundamental rights according to EU, and selling bans do not have any legal/binding value.

With regard to the comparative value of the different housing models already mentioned, the village houses project is assessed as being the most efficient housing component. It is important that additional funds be secured so as to include all target groups, refugees, IDPs (Roma and non-Roma), living both in collective centres and private accommodations (IDPs in private accommodations are also targeted, albeit in a limited way, within the recent IPA 2011 and 2012 Grants to municipalities in Serbia). In this perspective, the Regional Housing Programme could review all housing models implemented in the countries under the present evaluation and consult past and current IPA implementing partners so as to ensure that best practices related to housing, its maintenance and underlying approaches are made available to the benefit of this programme.

#### Key recommendations at regional level:

*To the EU:*

*Analyse, within the shortest possible timeframe, the legal problems and practical sustainability of property selling bans for reconstructed houses, in order to assess the long-term cost/benefits of their application in the refugees/IDPs sector*

*To the EU and national governments:*

*Ensure, within the shortest possible timeframe, that the application of the village house model is extended so to include all target groups*

*Ensure, within the shortest possible timeframe, that within the Regional Housing Programme a comparative review is undertaken in order to have best practices with regard to housing identified and prioritized whenever possible*

#### **4.2.4 On Creating the Economic and Social Conditions Necessary For Sustainable Return**

Here also, the transformations that took place in the social and economic context of the return process impose to move to a development approach, setting aside the purely displacement one. The absolute focus should be on integrating as much as possible refugees/IDPs policies into local welfare actions, even with the aim of avoiding the targeting of refugees/IDPs groups as “privileged” by the majority population.

The weaknesses related to IDP/Refugee economic support interventions, stated in various section of this report have helped understand the following:

1. An individual-centric approach is only applicable in a minority of situations where a small grant enable the start-up of a business assessed as viable. In most other cases, a pure in-kind support to a business idea will hardly survive in a depressed market.
2. A livelihood is more likely to be economically viable and contributing to social integration if it is economically integrated, and not conducted in isolation from the resident community. Consultations with public and private sector actors should provide information on existing economic development and investment plans. Focus group meetings with local companies are e.g. an efficient way to getting realistic advices on project investments with immediate employment potential as well as indications about the type of incentives local companies would have an interest in, when offering jobs to IDPs, refugee and the local population to some extent. Additionally, economic stakeholders could suggest professional skills and experiences sought after. Potential employment opportunities identified in the relevant professional area should preserve situations where domicile and non-domicile selected beneficiaries are jointly engaged.

#### Key recommendations at regional level

*To the EU and national governments:*

*Ensure, within the shortest possible timeframe, that assistance derives from an assessment of the local economic environment. In the project design phase, applicants to funds should be required to establish an economic profile of the targeted place(s) of return or displacement. (economy strengths/potentials – weaknesses/threats, as well potential sectors offering livelihoods opportunities)*

*When exploiting the local economic profile developed in the design phase, identified opportunities should be reviewed and converted into livelihood support initiatives submitted for approval by the EU-funded project. Ideally, municipal authorities and institutions (vocational training centres, employment bureau, public/private companies...) are to be involved with an implementation or monitoring role. For individual or collective (such as cooperatives) small business support, an appropriate level of start-up support should be envisioned. This may embrace: Set-up of a business plan, including detailed needs (vocational training, market survey, value chain analysis...). The involvement of local economic actors is expected to create linkages with targeted IDPs/refugees and entrepreneurs. The employment bureau may contribute with job placement counseling.*

#### **4.2.5 On Relevance of EU Policy**

Notwithstanding the huge diversity of the national contexts, some general lessons equally applicable over the region can be drawn from the experience of EU assistance in the last years.

In terms of *understanding of the assistance contexts*, the primary lesson is certainly that of the difficulty to assess in purely quantitative terms actions aimed at improving the situation of refugees/IDPs, with the parallel difficulty of distinguishing, within the condition of refugees/IDPs, factors linked to their status from factors of different origin (poverty/ethnicity).

In terms of *action priorities*, the main lesson is certainly that of the importance of good economic conditions and income perspectives on the ground as “pull factor” for return.

In terms of *facilitating intervention*, the main lesson is certainly that of creating incentives for a proactive role of the “last segment” of the assistance chain (local authorities and local branches of the central administration).

### **4.3 Recommendations for future programming and improved performance of on-going assistance in the beneficiary countries**

#### **1. Bosnia and Herzegovina**

Assumptions in terms of sustainability underlying early CARDS years suffered constraints linked to urgency of needs, with less conditionality from donors, but programming has been definitely improving later on in this respect. The initial approach, shared by the donor community in the early CARDS years, concentrated on supporting so-called “spontaneous returns”. This implied that most of the assistance efforts were placed at the individual level, thus tending to underestimate the importance of the local political context. While comprehensive estimates are lacking, most information sources report a significance ratio of spontaneous return failures. Unfortunately, no structured planning for transition from direct assistance to community development programming was pursued, while IPA 2008 assumed advancements in the Bosnian central institutions that did not take place. The recent UN BiH Policy Paper on displacement (backed by the EU), drafted in response to weak implementation of Revised Annex 7 plan is a valuable effort of coordinated programming policy.

When programming future funds in support of the return process, a case-by-case approach should be followed, where feasible, rather than a return location based one. It is important to consolidate resettlement where massive return has already taken place (Zvornik, Bugojno, Prijedor), or support individual families who have spontaneously chosen to return, wherever in BiH, regardless of the fact

that return did not occur so far (Derventa).

With regard to entity level in BiH, local stakeholders suggest that attention should be paid to coordination between EU procedures and administrative procedures within the entities. In the case of the RS, the involvement of the Ministry of Refugees and Displaced Persons is perceived as satisfying, and the ministry has a valuable network of implementing structures.

The mechanisms for channeling resources need to be revised by the Government. Authorities should be given a clear mandate to properly manage funds, so as to avoid bureaucratic blockages. Equally important is the need to redefine the role of the Return Funds and State Commission for Return, where a review of the existing mechanisms should be commissioned. Even if the EU alone is not in a position to change the mechanisms for channeling resources at the national level, the RHP CEB Feasibility Report has addressed this issue. Also, the new Guidelines for the Selection of the beneficiaries were being prepared in cooperation with UNHCR and OSCE for RHP.

As mentioned above, a revision of the procedures/scoring system for selection of beneficiaries in reconstruction programmes is therefore crucial, as already planned within the new RHP. The scoring system gives priority to ethnicity (belonging to a minority group), number of family members, so that certain vulnerable families are directly excluded, and others with no real willingness to return are supported. A more appropriate way of selecting beneficiaries would be to put ethnicity aside of the scoring exercise, and focus on assessing/scoring the social and economic status, in order to assist most vulnerable families who have no other prospects in place of displacement than return home.

It is recommended as well to make return a viable solution for young families, hence, as of today, too many obstacles are still hampering return to villages where secondary school and health facilities are hardly accessible. If conditions are not met for the return of young families, their houses shall not be reconstructed, or else, the EU should be aware that only one part of the family may return under these conditions and not the family as a whole.

According to views gathered from stakeholders at entity level, implementation should pay more attention the specificity of respectively rural areas and urban or quasi-urban areas. According to RS authorities, rural contexts represent easier areas for the implementation of assistance to return (easier self-employment, availability of land). All assistance should include measures for starting small enterprises.

In terms of best practices/lessons learned, a very good example is represented by the exchange between the UNDP office in Kosovo and the good practices established by SUTRA PLOD. As indicated in the Final Report of CARDS SUTRA PLOD III Project "A delegation from Kosovo came to BiH, and SUTRA PLOD team members went to Kosovo twice – with the aim of transferring the BiH experience to Kosovo, and especially with regard to capacity building of local actors such as Ministry for Communities and Returns and Kosovo municipalities. Due to wider recognition of the achieved results in Bosnia, UNDP Kosovo initiated the process of project development very similar to the SUTRA project. The project in Kosovo will draw on best practices of SUTRA not least the multi-sectoral partnership between local authorities, civil society and business sector, decentralized approach to beneficiary selection, coordination of the return processes at the central level and enabling environment for local development and capacity building"<sup>21</sup>. As a matter of fact, the RRP Programmes in Kosovo build upon lessons learned in the SUTRA PLOD Project in BiH.

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

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<sup>21</sup> UNDP, *SUTRA PLOD Final Report January 2006-December 2008*, June 2009

*For the EU:*

*Assess, within next programming cycle, the feasibility of funding partly made on a case-by-case basis, rather than on a pure return location based one.*

*Stressing, within next programming cycle, the need of coordination between EU procedures and administrative procedures within the entities*

*For the EU and national government levels:*

*Revising, within the shortest possible timeframe, the procedures/scoring system for the selection of beneficiaries in reconstruction, strongly reducing the importance given to ethnicity (\*)*

*Introducing, within next programming cycle, incentives specifically oriented to making return a viable solution for young families*

*Taking into greater account, within next programming cycle, the specificity of respectively rural areas and urban or quasi-urban areas*

*For the national government:*

*Revising, within the shortest possible timeframe, the mechanisms for channeling resources at national level, giving to the relevant authorities a clear mandate to properly manage funds, in order to avoid bureaucratic blockages, possibly redefining the role of the Return Funds and State Commission for Return*

*(\*) This approach can be already observed within RHP, which is out of the scope of the present evaluation.*

## **2. Kosovo**

In the case of the Return and Reintegration in Kosovo III project (RRK III - IPA 2010), the involvement of municipalities from the project design stage brought to marked consultative and participatory features in the building of a return-friendly environment.

One of the most complex components in the Kosovo context is certainly the Roma issue. It must indeed be constantly remembered that RAE returnees face additional re-integration challenges (as compared to other ethnic groups/minority communities) due to a combination of factors (higher level of discrimination, limited access to socio-economic opportunities, etc.). The recent ECORYS report indeed identifies as key recommendation - amongst those pertaining to other sectors - to continue support for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians and returnees, working through NGOs and specialised institutions<sup>22</sup>. The National Roma Integration Strategy was adopted in 2008 after a two-year long consultative process, subsequently followed by the approval of a National Action Plan. However, in 2013, some municipalities have not yet made available sufficient resources to fund the priorities identified in the Municipal-level Roma Integration Action Plan. The difficult availability of land is one of the issues Roma returnees are more likely to face compared to the overall IDP population. This

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<sup>22</sup> ECORYS, IPA - *Interim evaluation and meta-evaluation of IPA assistance, Country Report Kosovo*, June 2013

constitutes an additional obstacle, and generates situations of further marginality and segregation. Access to property rights on land (or land use rights) for Roma is an issue that needs to be, if not directly addressed, at least taken into consideration during the programming phase. Several Roma communities before the war occupied areas without any property title, but in a de facto situation that was largely accepted by local authorities, and with a sound network of social and economic relations with the inhabitants of the neighborhood. The impossibility to move back to those areas because of the lack of property titles, or the fact that the areas are now under special protection regimes (like those around religious sites), implies the necessity to accept relocation to other places where they are often the targets of intolerance and rejection by local communities. EU programming of return assistance should, therefore, take into account the specific situation and needs of RAE as identified and reflected in the government Roma Integration Strategy and its implementing acts, while assessing precisely how the refugee/IDP status interacts with RAE identity in the different municipalities. The programming process should include a joint revision of this issue between municipal authorities and tendering implementing partners in order for practical solutions to be identified in project proposals, including the possible ad hoc allocation of land parcels.

A more general lesson that can be drawn is that the programming of such assistance should require implementing partners to verify the existence of funds available in the municipalities to complement and strengthen the impact of EU-funded projects. The monitoring of local level's actual commitment, accompanied with a more coordinated follow-up from the international community, could also be useful in verifying whether resources should be redistributed locally. Upon future programming, it is recommended to reserve a part of the budget for individual returns in other municipalities than those primarily targeted until now. On the other hand, being aware of the difficulties encountered on the field, it is advisable that the EU and other influential donors/organizations negotiate a way of opening return processes in "difficult" municipalities (e.g. Djakovica) where interest for return is high especially amongst Roma community residing in Konik Camp II.

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

*For the EU and the national government:*

*Constantly keeping a high level of attention, upon next programming phase, to the additional re-integration challenges faced by RAE 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 RAE communities to access property rights on land (or land use rights) even studying ad hoc solutions*

*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*

### 3. Montenegro

The Konik I and II Roma IDP camps remain a subject of political sensitivity. Despite the assistance provided Montenegro wide since the IDP population's arrival from Kosovo, the integration of IDPs in socio-economic terms is still far from being achieved in Konik, although infrastructural improvements with the construction of solid housing, income-generating grants with short-lasting benefits among various activities may have maintained a certain minimal wellbeing of the Roma population.

A positive step forward is represented by the IPA 2011 programme, which is currently ongoing, and includes activities aimed at facilitating access to education, health and employment services. Moreover, the future IPA 2012 mainly focuses on social inclusion of Konik camps residents. The recent initiative to appoint Roma Health Mediators within the current IPA project aiming at facilitating access of the Roma community to public health services should be the object of much attention. If proved beneficial, its extension to other sectors such as employment could be recommended. Roma Mediators are also to be taken into account as resource persons, to inform needs assessments in the future. Considering that the government's main strategic priority will be achieved through ongoing and future IPA assistance (Konik camps), and that needs of refugees and IDPs will be met thanks to the Regional Housing Programme (in Montenegro, the RHP targets IDPs as well), most of the outstanding needs in Montenegro should find better defined answers.

Both persons of Roma ethnic identity living in Konik and those living in the rest of the country are, however, part of the same social/ethnic dilemma that must be dealt with comprehensively. While status and relocation must be the pillars of any sustainable action, it is important that implementation does not cause undesired side effects. The satisfaction of basic needs within Roma communities' in the most underprivileged areas is often strongly relying on informal "grey economy" that (when not blatantly illegal or infringing fundamental rights) must be progressively integrated in the mainstream economy without depriving families of means of subsistence. The future programme focusing on social integration measures, in parallel with housing construction throughout Montenegro, is expected to have a great impact on livelihoods.

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

*For the EU and the national government:*

*Monitoring, within the shortest possible timeframe, the outcomes of the recent initiative to appoint Roma Health Mediators within the current IPA, assessing the possibility to extend its underlying approach to other sectors than health*

*Keeping, upon next programming phase, a comprehensive approach to the social/ethnic dilemma of Roma in Montenegro, even beyond the situation of Konik camps*

*Assessing, upon next programming phase, whether any initiative dealing with status and relocation does not bring as side effect to the losing of immediate means of subsistence based on "grey economy" without the availability of alternative resources*

#### 4. Serbia

A lack of coordination amongst the variety of stakeholders was noted in recent years. For the purpose of achieving more efficiency and effectiveness, it is recommended that the information flow be increased and rationalized between stakeholders that are funding refugee/IDPs project, taking into account all sources of funding: national government budget, municipal budgets, EU, non-EU, UN, etc. Besides ad-hoc coordination meetings, an efficient tool could be found in the mapping of all available/potential opportunities by municipality. Such exercise shall be compensated and be the responsibility of Central Government agencies in strict coordination with local ones. Collaboration and support from all donors is of course essential in order to feed the database. Information shall be updated and disseminated on a regular basis.

As already mentioned in the general sections of this report, it is recommended to introduce more flexibility during the programming process, within the limits available, in order to achieve more effectiveness upon implementation of housing schemes. Project Fiches were designed in a very detailed manner when it comes to breakdown of housing components (see IPA Serbia PFs). This level of detail was requested by the former government structure dealing with donors coordination located in the Ministry of Finance (DACU -Donor Aid Coordination Unit; SEIO took over the role of coordinator and functions as NIPAC services) that was in charge of the delivery of trainings and on-the-job support during the programming phase to meet Member States requirements. Hence it aims at justifying precisely how funding requirements would meet very specific types of needs. Thus both the results and budget breakdown gives a very detailed picture of how many SHPE, prefabricated houses are to be provided. However, especially in the case of IPA 2009 and 2011 targeting exclusively CC residents, it would have been advisable to leave room for changes or to foresee a percentage to be used as a reserve to implement changes. This particularly taking into account the fluctuating situation and condition of refugees and IDPs living in CCs.

The need for more flexibility at the time of project fiches design is advisable, notwithstanding the fact that in recent Grants, changes have been introduced in the Guidelines to reflect actual needs of CC residents based on latest surveys. As a matter of fact, the options of including a reserve or having less detailed breakdown of activities may allow for more efficiency upon tendering and implementation without jeopardizing realistic programming objectives.

The fact that programmes are implemented 1,5-2 years after the Project Fiche is designed is an element of concern for the majority of stakeholders interviewed. For example, the Project Fiche for IPA 2009 was designed in mid-2009 according to ISDACON (Intersectoral Development Assistance Coordination Network) <sup>23</sup>, and projects implementation started only end of 2010 according to the EU Serbia Delegation Database of Awarded Contracts<sup>24</sup>. Specific housing needs have very often changed during this large amount of time, be it because some families have in the meanwhile found another solution, or because the desired solution is not adequate anymore for economic, social or health conditions, or due to a combination of such factors. Household composition also may vary through time. Last but not least, the political context in a municipality interested to participate with its own resources in a given project may change, if elections have taken place in the meanwhile.

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<sup>23</sup> <http://www.evropa.gov.rs/Evropa/PublicSite/index.aspx>

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.europa.rs/en/kakoDoFondova/dodeljeni-ugovori.html>

The Social Housing in Protective Environment project gives also adequate housing to the vulnerable category of refugees and IDPs who are socially dependent. However, stricter compliance with vulnerability criteria ) must be applied, notwithstanding the need for immediate closure of one collective centre. It is also advisable that the benefits received by the host families are made uniform Serbia-wide, considering the crucial role these families play not only in the adaptation and socialization process but also in assisting refugees with medical and administrative issues.

The inclusion of a portion of the budget for tailored individualized solutions should also be considered so as to support those families that do not match the conditions set for standard housing solutions.

A comprehensive plan in favour of IDPs should be envisaged, as explained in previous sections of this report dealing with Serbia. The majority of stakeholders have agreed on the urgency of launching such a plan, especially for those living in private accommodations, as they are not a target group in the RHP, and despite their inclusion in recently awarded Grants to Municipalities (IPA 2011-2012). Being understood that efforts have been focused on tackling the refugee issue and having considered that the implementation of the RHP has now started, attention could be devoted now to programming further support to IDPs. On one hand, recent progress on the dialogue Belgrade-Pristina may favour more concrete and consistent action, eventually through the future IPA II, and on the other, recent advocacy through UNHCR and the Government for the organization of a donors conference, are encouraging steps.

Concretely, it is recommended to follow a twin-track approach, to be followed within the shortest possible timeframe:

- 1) Creating the conditions, in the place of displacement and in the place of return, for inclusion of IDPs in all types of support regardless of current status.
- 2) Providing adequate housing and income-generation support to most IDP families in need.

A regulation on the way to prioritize support, similar to the one adopted for refugees could be envisaged (*Regulation for Detailed Conditions and Criteria for Determining the Order of Priority for Addressing the Housing Needs of Refugees*). The recent visit in Serbia (11 October) of the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights of IDPs represents a step forward in that direction. It was indeed agreed that there is a need to organize a Donors Conference in order to meet the need of 97,000 mostly vulnerable IDPs living under the poverty line according to UNHCR survey.

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

*For the EU:*

*Intervening, within the shortest possible timeframe, so that the information between stakeholders that are funding refugee/IDPs projects are increased and rationalized*

*Assessing the potential for introducing, upon next programming phase, more flexibility in the structure of Project Fiches for the implementation of housing schemes, when it comes to breakdown of housing components*

*Striving to reduce as much as possible the time elapsing between the design of project fiches and the implementation of programmes*

*For the EU and the national government:*

*Ensuring stricter application of the vulnerability criteria in the Social Housing in Protective Environment*

*project, together with uniformity of benefits received by the host families Serbia-wide*

*Envisage a comprehensive plan in favour of IDPs, based on a twin-track approach (with strong income-generation support)*

## **4.4 Definition of programming level objectives and related SMART indicators**

### **4.4.1 Introduction**

One specific request in the frame of this thematic evaluation is assistance to make recommendations and express concrete proposals for the definition of objectives and related SMART indicators that shall facilitate the measurement of performance and design of future support to refugees/IDPs.

One weakness commonly observed when it comes to performance is that it is primarily, sometimes exclusively, measured quantitatively. However, this is not any longer satisfying, as EU assistance has constantly evolved to adjust to an increasingly complex objective. The nature of this objective has not changed drastically but its expected impact has incorporated a dimension of growing importance: From delivering solutions to refugees and IDPs to providing durable solutions to the same groups. The notion of durability aims at proposing, as an objective, IDP and refugee's integration to the local environment, whether in its original place or in the place of displacement.

Acknowledging the fact that the stability of the above-mentioned durable solutions can also be affected by a factual or perceived imbalance between the assistance benefits to both the returning and receiving communities, the SMART indicators proposed in the dedicated sections are inclusive of this important dimension. Of course, this only applies to assistance responding to needs shared by both the returning and receiving communities and not to those needs that are specific to the returning communities, as e.g. issues related to citizenship.

Indeed, more than ever, **the provision of durable solutions to IDPs and Refugees whether the place of origin remains a valid objective for EU assistance**. These solutions can only be made durable thanks to the target groups' integration into the socio-economic life in places where they have chosen to live. Participation to local social and economic life is an essential condition for the integration to be considered as achieved and durable.

As mentioned above, there is a challenge to measuring the performance of programmes aiming at achieving durable solutions and sustainable integration. Integration is a complex phenomenon and process which quantitative indicators alone are insufficient to describe. And the rationale behind measuring the performance of external interventions supporting this objective is similarly complex. Performance is therefore composed of quantitative and qualitative indicators, sometimes not always tangible or visible.

The measurement of qualitative performance, especially of a multidimensional process such as the one of integration, constitutes a real challenge and it still at the centre of the debate among experts in this field.

The documentation review and field consultations seem to point at three essential aspects, determining the achievement of durable integration solutions for IDPs and refugees: 1. Improvement of living conditions of IDPs and Refugees, 2. Facilitation of access of rights of IDPs and refugees and 3. Development of Institutions' capacity in dealing with IDPs and refugees issues. These aspects are

in fact, constitutive of the overall strategic objective of providing durable solutions for IDPs and refugees, while they do correspond to programme-level objectives.

Housing and access to physical infrastructure remain another fundamental element to a durable integration. Related indicators are proposed in the section 4.3.4. “Further Potential Indicators”.

Performance indicators have to be selected so they not only verify the effective implementation of programmes (e.g.: number of units of assistance provided) but also measure its expected results (e.g.: measuring the number of vocational trainings delivered does not inform adequately the performance as whether the vocational training has effectively enabled the beneficiary to gain employment as a result of this activity).

While the selection of performance indicators should, in theory, be guided, by its “SMART” ability of measuring performance, the attributes of those gauges have to be confronted to the test of field reality. As a matter of fact, the local institutional context is not always equipped to report using indicators answering the SMART criteria.

Thus, while there is a quantity of indicators to choose from, proposing SMART indicators pose a real challenge as those are indeed faced with issues of availability, sometimes reliability.

Different levels of availability and reliability can be met depending on the national or municipal context, because of varying level of institutional capacities.

The evaluation team is proposing to respond to those challenges with two complementary approaches:

1. In the short term: Provide additional information to help weight each indicator. This includes describing each SMART criteria of each indicator. For instance, the availability of indicators will be rated according to a three levels: 1.Low, 2.Medium, 3.High.

The source of information for each indicator is also indicatively proposed. In order to complement the occasional absence or unavailability of performance indicators-related information, the EU may consider using sources beyond local institutions. This could include CSOs, local NGOs or any existing place or structure with knowledge on relevant and specific IDP/Refugee integration issues.

2. In the long term: The issues of availability and reliability are often rooted in the capacities of local institutions; thus the evaluation team recommends addressing these limitations through the continuation of the institutional development effort. The existence of reliable socio-economic data at the local level is essential to measure the progress and performance of many not only, but included EU-funded interventions. Thus, building the local institutions capacities to produce such data require a necessary level of attention and financial support.

## **4.4.2 Proposals for future programming level objectives**

### **4.4.2.1 Objective no 1: “To improve living conditions of refugees and IDPs”**

Improving refugee and IDP’s living conditions translates into strengthening IDP and refugee’s capacity to engage into sustainable livelihoods and enjoy peaceful relation with the local community. It is looking at supporting the socio-economic integration this target community.

### **4.4.2.2 Objective no 2: “To facilitate access to and realisation of rights of refugees and IDPs”**

The realisation of access to and enjoyment of IDP/Refugee’s rights still have a long way to go. Facilitating access to rights is expected to improve IDP and refugees’ use of essential services,

including health and education, the realisation of property rights and entitlements ensuring a durable integration to the place of living chosen by IDPs and refugees.

**4.4.2.3 Objective no 3: “To further develop the capacity of authorities in managing refugees and IDP issues.”**

The continued development of authorities’ capacity in managing refugees and IDP situations is expected to maximise authorities at central and local level in performing their roles in the provision of durable solutions to these target groups. This entails enhancing capacities in the production of statistical data relevant to IDP & refugee situations (see related indicators under section 4.2.5. SMART indicators related to institutional development).

**4.4.3 SMART indicators related to objective no. 1: “To improve living conditions of refugees and IDPs”**

**Indicators related to economic integration**

Please note that the indicators marked with \* are optional, as they may be linked to indirect results of performance of assistance. The availability of each indicator, scaled from Low to High can only be indicative as it primarily relies on the capacity level of each specific local context. Indeed, the evaluation has highlighted significant differences between municipalities across the countries of interest, making availability of data subject to an overall estimation.

It is further worth noting that while EU project implementing partners are expected to maintain beneficiary data at a highly accurate, updated and exhaustive level, that level may not be ensured after project completion. It is important to draw attention to the fact that the measurement of the performance of assistance to receiving and integrating domicile population must as well verify that the assistance to Refugees/IDPs is not overly imbalanced with the one targeting the local population, although the objectives of assistance clearly remain directed at the refugee/IDP population.

Indicator description/timing of information collection	Potential source	Estimated Availability
<b>Income-generating activities</b>		
a. 1.Share (% of target number) of refugee/IDP family heads enjoying a regular livelihood income covering essential family needs (livelihood stability assessed as offering a reasonable perspective for the income as an outcome of EU assistance programme) / <b>upon programme completion and each 6 to 12 months after completion</b>  2. Same indicator as a.1. above for the nb. of vulnerable receiving community family heads and % of overall assisted families (refugee/IDP + families from receiving community)	- EU implementing partner  - Municipal department for refugees/IDPs/minorities	High (Medium after project completion)

Indicator description/timing of information collection		Potential source	Estimated Availability
b.	<p>1.Share (% of target number) of refugees/IDPs engaged in a sustainable, legal income-generating activity/ <b>upon programme completion and 6 to 12 months after completion</b></p> <p>2.Same indicator as b.1 above for the nb. of vulnerable receiving community members and % of overall assisted families (refugee/IDP + families from receiving community)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- EU implementing partner</li> <li>- Municipal department for refugees/IDPs/minorities</li> </ul>	High (Medium after project completion)
c.*	<p>Share (% of target number) of jobs created as a (unexpected) result of income-generating activity creation or expansion <b>upon programme completion and 6 to 12 months after completion</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- EU implementing partner</li> <li>- Municipal department for refugees/IDPs/minorities</li> </ul>	Medium (Low after project completion)
<b>Employment creation/job placement</b>			
d.	<p>1. Share (% of target number) of refugees/IDPs contractually employed in the private or public sector as results of EU assistance targeting job creation / <b>upon programme completion and 12 months after completion</b></p> <p>2. Same indicator as d.1 above applied to vulnerable receiving community members and % of overall assisted families (refugee/IDP + families from receiving community)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- EU implementing partner</li> <li>- Municipal department for refugees/IDPs/minorities</li> <li>- Employment office</li> </ul>	Medium (Low after project completion)
e.	<p>1. Share (% of target number) of refugees/IDPs contractually placed within a public/private company with possible durable employment perspective / <b>upon programme completion and 12 months after completion</b></p> <p>2.Same indicator as e.1 above for nb. of vulnerable receiving community members and % of overall assisted families (refugee/IDP + families from receiving community)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- EU implementing partner</li> <li>- Municipal department for refugees/IDPs/minorities</li> <li>- Employment office</li> </ul>	Medium (Low after project completion)
f.*	<p>Amount of non-refugee/IDP employment created as a result of EU assistance incentives for job creation (within companies from the public and private sectors/ <b>upon programme completion and 12 months after completion</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- EU implementing partner</li> <li>- Municipal department for refugees/IDPs/minorities</li> <li>- Employment office</li> </ul>	High (Medium after project completion)

Indicator description/timing of information collection	Potential source	Estimated Availability	
<b>Professionalizing-qualifying schemes/vocational training</b>			
g.	<p>1. Share (% of target number) of refugees/IDPs enrolled in vocational training/qualifying scheme in connection with a 6 months minimum professional project/perspective/ <b>upon programme completion and 12 months after completion</b></p> <p>2. Same indicator as g.1 above for the nb. of vulnerable receiving community members and % of overall assisted families (refugee/IDP + families from receiving community)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- EU implementing partner</li> <li>- Municipal department for refugees/IDPs/minorities</li> <li>- Employment office</li> </ul>	High (Medium after project completion)
<b>Access to business development and employment services</b>			
h.	Share (% of target number) of refugee/IDP (1). Enjoying access to (registered at Employment Office), (2). Getting results from (receiving professional orientation counselling, recommended to vocational centre...), (3). Obtaining outcomes (job interview, employment...) / <b>upon programme completion and 6 to 12 months after completion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- EU implementing partner</li> <li>- Municipal department for refugees/IDPs/minorities</li> <li>- Employment office</li> </ul>	Medium
i.	<p>1. Share (% of target number) of refugee/IDP family head/adult member enjoying full employability (equipped with skills appropriate to professional project and access to/informed about livelihood development schemes such as loans, micro-credit... / <b>upon programme completion and 6 to 12 months after completion</b></p> <p><i>4.4.3.1.1.1.1 2. Same indicator as i.1 above for the nb. of vulnerable receiving community members and % of overall assisted families (refugee/IDP + families from receiving community)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- EU implementing partner</li> <li>- Centre for Social Welfare</li> <li>- Municipal department for refugees/IDPs/minorities</li> <li>- Employment office</li> </ul>	High (Low after project completion)
<b>Economic vulnerability/special needs</b>			
j.	Share (% of target number) of refugee/IDP families living under the national poverty line enrolled in livelihoods support scheme and removed from the social cases caseload	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- EU implementing partner</li> <li>- Center for Social Welfare</li> <li>- Municipal department for refugees/IDPs/minorities</li> </ul>	High

Indicator description/timing of information collection		Potential source	Estimated Availability
k.	Share (% of target number) of domicile families living under the national poverty line enrolled in livelihoods support scheme and removed from the social cases caseload	- EU implementing partner - Center for Social Welfare	High
l.	1. Share (% of target number) of refugee/IDPs of working age with special needs enrolled in professionalizing schemes (vocational training, job placement.) / <b>upon programme completion and 12 months after completion</b>	- EU implementing partner - Center for Social Welfare	High
	2. Same indicator as l.1 above for the nb. of vulnerable receiving community members and % of overall assisted families (refugee/IDP + families from receiving community)	- Municipal department for refugees/IDPs/minorities - Employment office	

#### Indicators related to social integration

Indicator description/timing of information collection		Potential source	Estimated Availability
a.	Share (% of target number) of refugee/IDP family members getting treated through public health services/ <b>each 6 months during programme implementation and each 6 months after completion</b>	- Health centre	High
b.	Share (% of target number) of returnee/refugee/IDP families with children and whose children are regularly attending public school / <b>each 6 months during programme implementation and each 3 months after completion</b>	-Municipal education department	High
c.	Share (% of target number) of families with members with special needs (disabled...) enjoying access and services adjusted to those needs. / <b>each 6 months during programme implementation and each 6 months after completion</b>	- Center for social welfare	High
d.	Share (% of target number) of families entitled to social benefits (pension, unemployment...) actually receiving benefits <b>each 6 months during programme implementation and each 6 months after completion</b>	- Center for social welfare	High

#### 4.4.4 SMART indicators related to objective no 2: “To facilitate access to and realisation of rights of refugees, IDPs and returnees”

Indicator description/timing of information collection		Potential source	Estimated Availability
<b>Property rights</b>			
a.	1. Share (% of target number) of refugees/IDPs and returnees property-related claims obtaining a final favorable decision on the merits/ <b>during programme implementation with regular follow-up until case is closed</b>	- EU implementing partner  -Municipal department for refugees/IDPs/minorities	Medium/High
b.	2. Number of the above decisions enforced or spontaneously implemented reaching actual property repossession	- EU implementing partner  - Local court or competent administrative authority	High
<b>Citizenship/national identification documentation</b>			
c.	Share (% of target number) of refugees/IDPs and returnees citizenship/national identification documentation cases obtaining a final favorable judicial or administrative decision on the merits / <b>during programme implementation with regular follow-up until case is closed</b>	- EU implementing partner  -Municipal department for refugees/IDPs/minorities	High
<b>Other essential rights</b>			
d.	Share (% of target beneficiaries) of refugees/IDPs and returnees obtaining a favorable final judicial or administrative decision on the merits concerning other legal entitlements (right to pension, etc.) / <b>during programme implementation with regular follow-up until case is closed</b>	- EU implementing partner  - Local court or competent administrative authority	High
e.	Share (% of target beneficiaries) of refugees/IDPs and returnees successfully obtaining redress or protection by administrative (including police) and judicial authorities in case of actual or potential infringements to their rights to personal integrity and security	Local court or competent administrative authority	

Indicator description/timing of information collection	Potential source	Estimated Availability
(including right to non –discrimination)		

The timing of performance also has to be carefully determined. A (re-) integration solution can only be qualified as durable or sustainable if it proves to achieve this objective over a certain period of time and with a certain frequency. In this case, the measurement should be scheduled towards the end of actual project implementation in order to verify all the conditions are created to allow for a stable installation of a beneficiary family. Further, the sustainability dimension goes gauged on a regular basis in the years following programme/project completion.

The fact that measurement becomes a repetitive and time-consuming activity calls for a sustainable approach. This needs to become a responsibility and a capacity (as is already partly the case as some of the indicators correspond to quantitative data reporting obligation of state institutions) fulfilled locally, rather than externally contracted. Ultimately, state institutions will be required to have the capacity to report on socio-economic integration progress on communities with specific integration challenges. It is, therefore, recommended that EU assistance consider the opportunity of IDP/Refugee assistance programmes to include a performance measurement capacity-building component.

The support to institutions in reporting on performance measurement should take into account a certain number of current limitations to producing relevant information. The indicators listed above may have a variable value, as the information supposed to feed them may only be partially available for a variety of reasons, such as the capacity or willingness of institutions to provide reliable, update or detailed data. When reviewing the availability of information, the following steps should be considered:

- Identify project-level integration-related indicators informing on participation (to civil society, public life, joint social activities, business exchanges...) and use of services (public: employment, health, education... and private)
- Assess and select indicators for which data/information availability and access is sufficient to confer acceptable validity. Also seek availability/possibility of segregated data (by gender, age, ethnic community)
- For each indicator, develop a three-stage integration indicators corresponding to Access, Result, Success (e.g.: Access to employment services, Result: getting employment, Success: revenue-level not under average for an equal position)
- Raise awareness, train institutions and NGOs on reporting on such indicators and on success stories and important events (laws, etc. ) relevant to integration.

#### 4.4.5 SMART indicators related to Objective no 3: “To further develop the capacity of authorities in managing refugees and IDP issues.”

Indicator description/timing of information collection	Potential source	Estimated Availability
<b>Monitoring capacity</b>		

a.	Share (% of target number) of refugee/IDP cases subject to regular monitoring / <b>each 6 months during programme implementation and each 6 months after completion</b>	- Municipal department for IDPs/Refugees/minority issues	Medium
b.	Share (% of target number) of refugees/IDPs for whom updated, quality (relevant to specific needs/profile) data is available / <b>each 6 months during programme implementation and 12 months after completion</b>	- Municipal department for IDPs/Refugees/minority issues	Medium
<b>Project development capacity</b>			
c.	Number of refugee/IDPs assistance projects submitted to calls for proposals / <b>each time a proposal is developed.</b>	- Municipal department for IDPs/Refugees/minority issues	High
d.	Number of refugee/IDPs assistance projects proposals approved	- Municipal department for IDPs/Refugees/minority issues	High
e.	Progress on implementation of local refugee/IDPs action plan (allocation of municipal funds...) / <b>each 12 months</b>	- Municipal department for IDPs/Refugees/minority issues	High
<b>Coordination and information sharing</b>			
e.	Frequency of updated information sharing (frequency of coordinating meetings, frequency of relevant data available online: IDP/Refugee issues municipal budget allocation) / <b>each 6 months</b>	-Municipal education department	High
f.	Share (% of target number) of families with members with special needs (disabled...) enjoying access and services adjusted to those needs / <b>each 6 months</b>	- Center for social welfare	High
g.	Share (% of target number) of families entitled to social benefits (pension, unemployment...) actually receiving benefits / <b>each 6 months</b>	- Center for social welfare	High

#### 4.4.6 Further potential indicators

Together with the afore-mentioned objectives, quality housing and connection to physical infrastructure form the indispensable elements ensuring durable solutions to IDPs and refugees. Thus, additional indicators reflecting on housing and rural infrastructure programme performance may also be considered.

This may include the following:

- Share (% of target number) of refugees/IDPs connected to essential rural and urban infrastructure (water, electricity, telephone/internet, road, public transportation)
- Share (% of target number) of refugees/IDP living in housing meeting existing minimum quality standards as per EU housing assistance standards.

#### **4.5 Corrective Measures to Improve the Implementation and Monitoring of on-going Actions**

The above findings and recommendations can, to some extent, also provide suggestions for simpler actions improving the quality of the assistance that is currently provided under existing instruments, and indeed several among the recommendations are presented as practicable without waiting for the next programming cycle. It is, however, fair to say that such “corrective measures” cannot imply radical changes in the present quality of the assistance, which is now implemented by actors (EU delegations, national governments, implementing organisations) with a high degree of technical competence, local knowledge, and cumulated experience.

It is, however, possible to formulate some general remarks that can contribute to give a partially new perspective on work in the field.

The above findings and recommendations altogether suggest, in order to induce immediate improvements in the quality of the actions, to:

- During monitoring and evaluation of ongoing actions, constantly focus on local contexts, e.g. using comparison between (comparable) municipalities as a tool for assessing the quality of actions according to the standard evaluation criteria
- During the implementation of actions, avoid uncritically relying on the representation (from stakeholders, groups of beneficiaries, local authorities) of specific IDPs/refugees problems as solely linked to ethnicity, double checking the information with objective sources not linked to the ethnic identity of the involved parties
- Realise a detailed empirical study of the current development of property rights in the countries, in terms of state of property repossession, but also of practices of land use/land selling in areas inhabited by refugees/IDPs

## 5 GENERAL CONCLUSIONS: KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Key Findings

The overall impression given by the *findings* referring to EU assistance to IDPs/refugees in the time range covered by the present evaluation is that of an action clear in its objectives, and based on needs assessments reasonably sound, progressively improved in quality and adapted to changed circumstances over time, notwithstanding the necessity of interacting with a highly fragmented civil society, significant problems of representation of the underlying grassroots interests and an economic scenario that increased social distress in the region.

The magnitude of the objectives and expected results has been such that an increasingly complex administrative machinery has been put into place, involving the EU and the main international organisations, the (plural) government levels in the countries concerned and important sections of civil society. Notwithstanding the dimension of the structures created and resources allocated, the overall efficiency of the machine has not been below the standards that can be expected with such a challenge, also thanks to a programming phase that paid attention to consistency and synergy with the different national strategies and policies and assistance from other donors, with satisfying participatory features, and a good level of stakeholders' involvement. The administrative machinery had to deal with a constant necessity to strike difficult balances between the necessity to keep certainty, predictability and transparency while swiftly completing the required interventions.

Such a very general view can be considered as corroborated by both documentary evidence and stakeholders'/beneficiaries perception, within the limits imposed by the uneven distribution of previous studies and assessment in the field and the difficulty of ascertaining the actual impact on final beneficiaries that often have to face multiple, equally crucial, needs

The overall positive impression in terms of intervention logic and planning/programming is only marginally qualified by the observation that there is no well-structured regional approach in terms of learning from experiences of other countries, and the current programming process allows a limited degree of flexibility, and keeps a focus still not sufficiently oriented towards socio-economic measures, although a positive trend can be observed.

The complexity of the material and institutional context is such that the critical aspects emerge primarily in the implementation phase. Resources – before reaching the beneficiaries – must unavoidably be channeled through administrative structures that often have bottlenecks and weaknesses. In the assistance chain, the most vulnerable section is certainly represented by municipalities, where staff, competence and resources often do not reach the same levels available within central administrations, and are more easily under the pressure of grassroots political blockages. All findings are consistent in indicating municipalities as the place where the crucial moves in the return/integration struggle are made.

Beyond the problem of the level of cooperation and implementation capacity in the municipalities, the key findings of the evaluation mostly turn around 1) the importance of socio-economic measures going beyond the simple housing support and 2) the increasing confusion between social issues specific to refugees/IDPs and overall problems concerning gaps in the welfare system and effects of the economic crisis. As a further theme cross-cutting these issues, one finds again the condition of Roma communities, that in all the countries concerned show, with different local nuances, to be invariably among the least successful in completing return/integration processes, sometimes also as

effects of unsolved statelessness or “undocumented” status. Although there is an increasing political attention and a focus in planning/programming, the condition of Roma remains a dilemma with unclear policy alternatives.

## 5.2 5.2 Key Lessons Learned & Recommendations

Such key findings, brings to a set of *lessons learned and recommendations*, that are in the first place oriented – when it comes to planning/programming – towards the flexibility of project design (in terms of capacity of adapting project implementation to changes in the conditions), the need to create “shared benefits” between returning and receiving communities integrating refugees and the domicile population and the empowerment/ownership of municipalities, also in terms of incentives for the more proactive ones. In terms of priorities of assistance, a strong recommendation/lesson learned is certainly linked to the importance of good economic conditions and income perspectives on the ground as “pull factor” for return, with all related operational implications, linked to the difficulty of distinguishing, within the condition of refugees/IDPs, factors linked to their status from factors of different origin (poverty/ethnicity).

Also with regard to the implementation level, the key lessons learned/recommendations refer to the screening of the obstacles generating at the municipal level, in order to avoid losses of efficiency effectiveness, and the coordination of refugees/IDPs policies with the overall welfare policies of the concerned countries, together with the fine-tuning of the housing solutions provided until now.

At the implementation level also, the Roma issue deserves a great deal of attention, suggesting innovative solutions in terms of representation and overcoming of an excessive “ethnic focus” in the allocation of resources. In this last respect, the Western Balkans countries seem to experience problems that are currently at the center of the agenda also within major EU countries, with a huge potential for a mutual exchange of – good or bad - “lessons learned”

## 6 ANNEXES

- 6.1. *Terms of Reference*
- 6.2. *Inception Report*
- 6.3. *List of Stakeholders Interviewed*
- 6.4. *List of Sources and Documents*

### Annex 1 Terms of Reference

[Omissis]

### Annex 2 Inception Report

[Omissis]

### Annex 3 List of Stakeholders Interviewed

LIST OF STAKEHOLDERS INTERVIEWED		
Organisation	Name	Position
<b>SERBIA</b>		
EU Delegation	Marzia Palotta	Programme Manager Refugees
NIPAC/SEIO	Milena Radomirovic	Refugees and IDPs Expert, Sector for planning, programming, monitoring and reporting on EU funds and development aid
Commissariat for Refugees	Vladimir Cucic	Commissioner
Commissariat for Refugees	Svetlana Velimirovic	Deputy Commissioner
Commissariat for Refugees	Danijela Popovic	Assistant to Commissioner
Office for KiM	Zoran Lazic	Assistant Director
	Jelena Milicic	Assistant

<b>Ministry for Labour, Employment and Social Policy</b>	Branko Puzic Biserka Terzic	Programming Unit
<b>UNHCR</b>	Eduardo Arboleda	Representative
<b>UNHCR</b>	Milos Terzan	Senior Programme Officer
<b>UNHCR</b>	Davor Rako	Associate Protection Officer
<b>OSCE</b>	Paula Thiede	Deputy Head of Mission
<b>OSCE</b>	Jan Lueneberg	Head of Democratization Dept
<b>OSCE</b>	Radmila Todosijevic	Coordination Project officer
<b>OSCE</b>	Ruzica Banda	Human Rights Programme Officer
<b>IOM</b>	Lidija Markovic	Acting Head of Mission
<b>ASB</b>	Ivan Marin Jelena Rapo Sinisa Colovic	Head of Mission Project coordinator Social Worker/Return Project
<b>DRC</b>	Marina Cremonese Verica Recevic Miroslava Smiljanic	Representative Project Coordinator Project Coordinator
<b>Intersos</b>	Guido Pietrosanti	Head of Mission
<b>Vizija</b>	Zdravka Damjanic Dragana Marinkovic	President Social Coordinator
<b>Grupa 484</b>	Vladimir Petronijevic	Executive Director
<b>Housing Centar</b>	Branislava Zarkovic	President
<b>DIADIKASIA</b>	Massimo Moratti Rastko Brajkovic	Team Leader IPA Legal Aid 2011 Senior Legal Adviser

<b>HELP</b>	Ana Molnar Milka Djurdjevic Aleksandra Brkic	Deputy Programme Coordinator Project Coordinator Finance Officer/Head of Office
<b>EPTISA</b>	Sinisa Bralic	Project Manager IPA 2009/Head of Socio-Economic Department
<b>EPTISA</b>	Christian Weltzien	Team Leader TA RHP CEB
<b>ENECA</b>	Marija Stankovic	Director
<b>Municipality of Vranje</b>	Zorica Peric Svetlana Taskovic	Trustee for Refugees Director Centre Social Welfare
<b>Municipality of Kraljevo</b>	Slobodan Stanisic	Trustee for Refugees
<b>Municipality of Smederevo</b>	Jasna Avramovic Vesna Jeremic Ana Mitic	Mayor Deputy Mayor (Social Affairs) Trustee for Refugees
<b>Municipality of Pancevo</b>	Suzana Jovanovic Zoran Graovac	Director Centre Social Welfare Trustee for Refugees
<b>Municipality of Kovin</b>	Olivera Stojakov	Trustee for Refugees
<b>KOSOVO</b>		
<b>EU Office</b>	Samir Selimi	Task Manager –Operations/Social Development
<b>NIPAC</b>	Demush Shasha	Secretary general, MEI
<b>Ministry of Communities and Return</b>	Dalibor Jevtic	Minister

<b>Ministry of Communities and Return</b>	Srecko Bogajcevic	Ministry Head of Cabinet
<b>UNHCR</b>	Jo Hegenauer Jr.	Chief of Mission
<b>UNHCR</b>	Malika Floor	Senior Regional Durable solutions Officer
<b>IOM</b>	Jorge Baca	Chief of Mission
<b>IOM</b>	Agron Ajazi	IPA 2010 Program Manager
<b>UNDP</b>	Osnat Lubrani	Resident Representative
<b>UNDP</b>	Steliana Nedera	Deputy Resident Representative
<b>UNDP</b>	Anton Selitaj	Senior Program Associate
<b>DRC</b>	Kristen Stec	Representative
	Fatos Karagjyzi	Field Officer
<b>Municipality of Klina</b>	Milorad Sarkovic	MCR
<b>Municipality of Novo Brdo</b>	Jasmina Denic	MCR
<b>MONTENEGRO</b>		
<b>EU Delegation</b>	Dawn ADIE-BAIRD	Deputy Head of Operations Section
<b>DG for Coordination of the EU Assistance Programmes</b>	Arta Lika Kristina Perazic	First and Second Secretary, MFA and EU Integration
<b>Bureau for Care of Refugees</b>	Zeljko Sofranac Zeljka Ratkovic	Director Advisor for international cooperation
<b>UNHCR</b>	Indumathi Mohandas Aleksandar Cadjenovic Dejan Obradovic Jovica Zaric	Representative Protection Officer Associate Programme Officer Field Officer

<b>OSCE</b>	Lloyd Tudyk	Head of Democratization
	Ivana Vujovic	Progr Officer Democratization
<b>IOM</b>	Dusica Zivkovic	Officer in Charge
<b>HELP</b>	Nebojsa Bulatovic	Deputy Representative
	Neda Sindik	Social Coordinator
	Boban Jokic	Field Officer
	Dzenan Demic	Field Officer
<b>DRC</b>	Sezam Avdulaj	Coordinator/Information Officer
<b>BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA</b>		
<b>EU Delegation</b>	Holger Schroeder	Head Of Operations
<b>EU Delegation</b>	Normela Hodzic-Zijadic	Task Manager
<b>EU Delegation</b>	Sanja Tica	Project Manager (Return)
<b>NIPAC</b>	Nevenka Savic	Director of DEI
<b>Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees</b>	Damir Ljubic	Minister
<b>Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees</b>	Radmila Mitrovic	Deputy Minister
<b>Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees</b>	Mario Nenadic	Assistant Minister
<b>RS – Ministry for Refugees and Displaced Persons</b>	Nenad Djokic	Assistant Minister
<b>Federal Ministry for Displaced Persons and Refugees</b>	Sulejman Alijagic	Assistant Minister
<b>Federal Ministry for Displaced Persons and Refugees</b>	Ševka Palo	Head, Department for Return
<b>UNHCR</b>	Lejla Ridjanovic	Programme Officer

<b>OSCE</b>	Fermin Cordoba	Head of Human Rights Section
<b>IOM</b>	Gianluca Rocco	Head of Mission
<b>ASB</b>	Elmir Bojadzic	Regional Representative SEE
<b>UNDP</b>	Yuri Afanasiev	Resident Representative
<b>UNDP</b>	Slobodan Tadic	Senior Programme Specialist
<b>Municipality of Kotor Varos</b>	Dalibor Vucanovic	Mayor
	Senad Zahirovic	Project Manager
<b>Municipality of Gorazde</b>	Enver Adzem	Urban, Social, Refugee/IDP Unit
	Temima Ducica	
<b>Municipality of Zvornik</b>	Hariz Mehidic	Technical Expert Returns
	Zeljko Smiljanic	Municipal coordinator Local Communities

## **Annex 4 LIST OF SOURCES AND DOCUMENTS**

### **EU legislation**

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