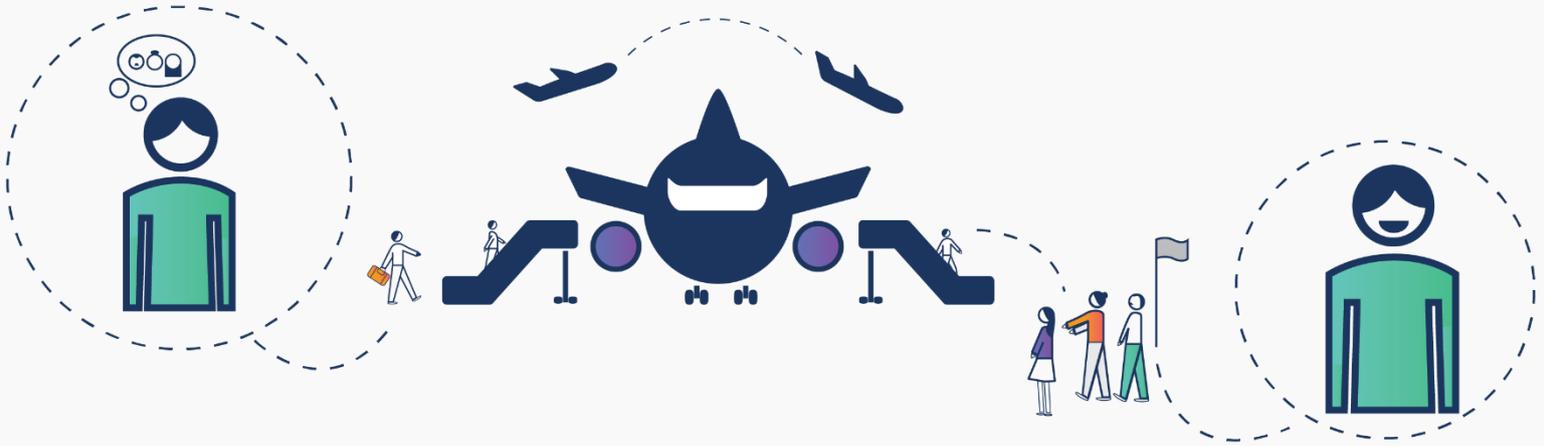




ReNet  
Return  
Network



# ‘Δίκτυο Επιστροφής Υπηκόων Τρίτων Χωρών - ReNet’

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# Enhancing the Sustainability of AVR Programmes:

## The case of Social Entrepreneurship

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### Introduction

The rapid influx of migrant population into EU the last few years re-enhanced the pressure to initiate programmes and policies for effective migration policies and migration management. Cyprus has been characterised by relatively high irregular migrant population during the last 10-15 years, taking under consideration the number of non-Cypriot and non-European citizens who have been registered to Cyprus either to work and/or to become long-term or permanent citizens (Cystat, 2012). The foreign population rose by 8.8 per cent to 21.59 per cent, out of which 37.63 per cent are non-European citizens (Cystat, 2012). In pure numbers, foreign workers increased from 545 in 1990 to 68,000 in 2011 (CyStat, 2012). The numbers in the last few years have been fueled as a result of the geopolitical developments in the region since the Arab spring in 2011 and particularly the conflict in Syria. Apart from that population thousands of migrant workers have been registered to the Republic of Cyprus as temporary workers, usually for a period of 2-4 years. Most of these workers are employed in the areas of domestic labour and the service sector (including tourism), as well as in agriculture and the construction industry.

The pressure from European Union (EU) institutions in combination with the better migration management in relation to the actual needs of the society led the Republic of Cyprus to adopt a systematic effort to tackle the issue of migration, by developing processes to effectively manage legal and illegal migration (Solidarity Funds, 2010). To this adoption of policy also led the recent economic crisis (2013)<sup>1</sup>. The rapid increase of unemployment along to other social problems which came to the surface, increased the negative portrait for migrants as competitive labour group and recipients of social welfare beneficiaries.

It is argued that those socio-political and economic conditions led the Cypriot government to adopt measures to facilitate unprecedented inflows of mixed migration (MIPEX, 2014<sup>2</sup>). In particular regarding illegal migration, the decision was taken to implement relevant national legislation more systematically; deporting irregular migrants. More than 10,000 irregular migrants returned to their countries of origins following forced returned procedures. It was the time which also Cyprus fully adopted the EU Directive 2008/115/EC on the return of irregular migrants (Cyprus Ombudsman Office, 2013) in the national legislation, and decided to begin to develop and implement Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR) actions as an alternative to forced returns.

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<sup>1</sup> On 16 March and 25 March 2013, the Eurogroup reached a political agreement with the Cypriot authorities on the key elements of a programme, which included the restructuring and substantial downsizing of the banking sector, combined with extensive bail-in of uninsured depositors, as well as the reinforcement of efforts on fiscal consolidation, structural reforms and privatisation

<sup>2</sup> Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX), 2014'Key Findings: Cyprus 2014', pubd online 2014: <http://www.mipex.eu/cyprus>, (accessed 30 Jan 2020)

It is critical at this point to define the basic terms that will be used on this article. Return is interpreted as the movement of a person who is returning to his/her country of origin, after spending an extended period of time in another country (EMN, 2017)<sup>3</sup>. Return is organised and implemented in absolute respect for human rights, dignity and security and in conformity with international law and practice (UNHCR, 2011a; UNHCR, 1996: p.7)<sup>4</sup>, however it may or may not be voluntary (EMN, 2014). Voluntary Departure derives from the Directive 2008/115/EC and ‘means compliance with the obligation to Return within the time-limit fixed for that purpose in a Return Decision’. Assisted Voluntary Return refers specifically to the provision of (logistical, financial and/or other material) assistance for the Voluntary Return of a returnee (EMN, 2014), when they are unable or unwilling to remain in their host countries, but do not have the means to return to their countries of origin (IOM, 2008)<sup>5</sup>.

Initially, this policy paper explores the potentials of utilizing social entrepreneurship as a tool to increase the sustainability of AVR programme and in particular the re-integration process for the case of Cyprus. The idea is consisted on preparing potential returnee migrants to become entrepreneurs and setup their own startup business when they will return to their countries of origins. It will discuss and illustrate the opportunity of developing a tailored curriculum on business and entrepreneurship skills training program for future returnee migrants.

### **Understanding Re-integration**

Reintegration is a fundamental though challenging aspect in return migration. It refers to the process of re-entering and re-engagement into the country of origin, from where there were away for a long time. The overall effort is to empower returnee migrants to participate in social, cultural, economic and political life, which potentially will lead to the maximization of a sustainable return (IOM, 2018). It is crucial at this point to define what sustainable re-integration is considered for the author; it is the level of economic self-sufficiency, along to the psychosocial well-being of a returnee migrant which will allow him/her to cope with daily issues and decide to stay in the country as a preference and not because of necessity. Safety is another important parameter for someone to return back along to the provision of humanitarian assistance, which may begin with financial allowance and support and be extended to psychosocial support for a specific period; the latter needs to be interpreted as having someone to discuss and understand the pressure they feel from the family and the local environment. Furthermore, characteristics such as age, gender, length of time abroad and physical disabilities or any other chronic health problem can influence the return decision (Soto

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<sup>3</sup> European Migration Network (EMN) 2018 Annual Report on Migration and Asylum 2017 Pubd online: [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/00\\_arm2017\\_synthesis\\_report\\_final\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/00_arm2017_synthesis_report_final_en.pdf) , (accessed 11 September 2018)

<sup>4</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) 1996 *Handbook, Voluntary Repatriation: International Protection*, Geneva, pubd online 1996: <<http://www.unhcr.org/publ/PUBL/3bfe68d32.pdf> >, (accessed 10 October 2016)

<sup>5</sup> International Organisation For Migration (IOM), 2008 *Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR)*, pubd online 2008: <<http://publications.iom.int/books/assisted-voluntary-return-avr>>, (accessed 10/10/2016).

et al., 2019). Returning migrants with physical disabilities or serious health issues are at a disadvantage in the labour market, as they may have limited opportunities to be employed and be able to support themselves economically. Similar situations may occur for families with young children and/or disabled persons who may need regular medical attention. However, a systematic plan along to the indication of available medical care and possibility of easy access may allow to attempt to return (IOM, 2017).

Lastly another parameter, quite often related to the safety, is the political liberty and establishment of democratic procedures. Many migrants are afraid of returning back due a fear of being imprisoned and/or killed as a result of previous expression of opposition to those who govern the community and/or the country. It is an section, where particular interest should be given, at the pre-departure stage, in order to secure that such possibility will not occur.

**Table 1: Indicators of sustainable migrant return**

Sustainability	Indicators
Socio-economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment (all household members)</li> <li>• Income sources</li> <li>• Access to education</li> <li>• Access to health care</li> <li>• Family/Social Network</li> </ul>
Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safety</li> <li>• Receipt of humanitarian assistance</li> </ul>
Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Human rights</li> </ul>

Furthermore, reintegration should be seen under the lens of successful sustainable development. The European Commission, through its Global Approach to Migration, encourages the return of migrants who are able to contribute to the development of their origin country (Sinatti, 2015). The relocation of migrant in the country of origin may have a positive impact on the development of their communities. They can bring new ideas, new skills and techniques, which, in case they will be adapted into the local conditions, will result to new knowledge and entrepreneurship opportunities. It is then important for local communities in the countries of origin to also perceive return positively, and a allow migrants to return without the risk of being stigmatized, enabling them to reestablish social ties and facilitating reinsertion into society (IOM, 2018).

To achieve those goals, it is vital to focus on and separate the entire process into two stages; pre –departure and post-return stage. The first stage refers to the preparation of migrant to return, while the latter discusses several parallel activities that need to setup to assist a successful personalise reintegration plan. The main components that have been identified for a successful reintegration are (EPRS, 2017):

**Table 1: Components of a successful reintegration**

	Pre-departure stage	Post-return stage
<b>Individual</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Voluntary and/or chosen character of return.</li> <li>• Legal possibility to re-immigrate (in form of circular migration)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stable political and socioeconomic situation in the countries of origin.</li> <li>• Strategy on skills training and financial support to develop a livelihood.</li> </ul>

	<p>makes decision to return voluntarily easier.<sup>4</sup></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social and economic success in host countries.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support for re-establishment of social network.</li> <li>• Income generated activity</li> </ul>
<b>Structural</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of diaspora experience to design policies.</li> <li>• Policy dialogue between countries of origin and host countries to establish coherent policy approaches, with civil society implication.</li> <li>• Returnee involvement in the decision-making concerning in-kind assistance allocations,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Country of origin effective anti-discrimination and equal access policies.</li> <li>• Education and vocational training opportunities for returning migrants.</li> <li>• Placing reintegration assistance into existing development initiatives to avoid duplication of structure, resentment against returnees, and to respond to local needs.</li> <li>• Collective reintegration projects to (re)build social networks</li> </ul>

The policy paper focuses on the pre-departure stage and suggest durable solutions than can assist towards successful re-integration plans. It accepts and encompass the notion that for a migrant who spend many years away of his/her country in a third, however developed country, to return and remain in the country, a number of conditions may exist or additional working and living opportunities need to be created. It also adopts the statement that in the mind of migrant, return is the last option to consider about. For them, the journey may have cost them a fortune, it was seen as a journey to a dream land, or staying in the host country, even if their conditions are not the best, they will have a better future for them and/or their children. It is then suggested a blended approach between the knowledge and modern practice of host country, and the traditional/local conditions that need to be taken into account when preparing migrants to return into it.

It is therefore **suggested the creation of advisory centres** which their main effort will be the training of potential returnee migrants to increase their capacity building in setting up small businesses, in enacting into collaborative activities, in engaging into local community synergies and setup join initiatives and social networks. However, as not all migrants are entrepreneurs or can be done, it is introduced the idea of social entrepreneurship. The next section discusses about the term and points to its advantages.

## Social Entrepreneurship

Social entrepreneurship is a business model and/or an approach for both legal entities and/or entrepreneurs in an effort to develop, fund and implement solutions to social, cultural, or environmental issues. The concept may be applied to a wide range of organizations, which vary in size, aims, and beliefs. However the common issue is that they are non-profit, or blend for-profit goals with generating a positive 'return to society'. This is the reason, for which it is common to meet such entity in the voluntary sector, in particular in areas such as health care, poverty and community development.

The Social Business Initiative (European Commission, 2015) incorporates three key dimensions to describe an enterprise as social. The first one refers to the entrepreneurial dimension; there is a continuous economic activity, which differentiates the social enterprises from traditional non-profit organisations/ social economy entities. The social dimension distinguishes social enterprises from mainstream (for-profit) enterprises, i.e. a

social enterprise is created for an explicit social purpose. The third dimension points to the governance; it is the model that is followed for the enterprise to function and operate on daily basis.

By appreciating the above parameters, it is easier for someone to understand why social entrepreneurs work for the less privileged people in society; many of them have been assisting in the integration of disadvantaged people, often providing services which are socially necessary and contribute to job creation. In addition, they combine social with economic activities, thus helping economic development, which is desperately needed in developing countries; often the countries of origin of the returnees. According to Ashoka, the leading network of social entrepreneurs:

*'Social entrepreneurs are individuals with innovative solutions to society's most pressing social problems...they are ambitious and persistent, tackling major social issues and offering new ideas for wide-scale change'. (www.ashoka.org)*

As a world known example for social entrepreneurship and mobilization of marginalized groups is the one of Indian Mr. Bunker Roy who founded the Barefoot College. It is an organization that teaches illiterate women from poor villages how to become architects, doctors, and engineers. What is significant is that each campus is solar powered and often built and designed by its students. In establishing the college, Roy's aim was not to make a profit for himself but to improve the economic and quality of life of women in his native India. A total of 45,000 houses in 1,024 villages have been solar electrified by nearly 300 illiterate rural grandmothers. His college has trained more than 3 million people in skills including solar engineers, teachers, midwives, weavers, architects and doctors (Mortenson, 2010).

Social entrepreneurship has been gaining attention in the last few years, as a way for addressing social challenges. The view that social entrepreneurship is and can be a force for social and global change has been supported by a number of organisations working to further develop the field, such as Ashoka, Skoll Foundation, Schwab, but also by thousands of social entrepreneurs around the world. (Isaias & Kaufman, 2011). In an attempt to illustrate how social entrepreneurship as a perception of sustainable development could play a significant role in the reintegration process, it is first presented the Ashoka network at the beginning, while afterwards a discussion about micro-finance policy will follow.

### **The Ashoka Network**

Ashoka is the largest network of social entrepreneurs worldwide. It was founded by Bill Drayton in 1980, while has since identified nearly 3,000 social entrepreneurs who are leading the charge, whose new solutions are challenging conventional ideas and changing the world for the better (Matolay et al., 2015, Ashoka, 2011). The organisation provides start-up financing, professional support services and connections to a global network across the business and social sectors, and a platform for people dedicated to changing the world. It is the reason for which authors point that it is not a network but a worldwide organisation, but there are very strong networking elements though – both locally and internationally, both internally (among the fellows) and externally (with a large pool of private individuals and business organisations that provide a wide variety of resources from expertise and pro bono work to financial support) (Matolay et al., 2015). It operates a multi-sector partner network across the world looking at entrepreneurial talent and new ideas to solve social problems. It has with nearly 3,000 fellows in 70 countries and operational offices in most of the countries which where AVR programmes are implemented such as Egypt, Kenya, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Philippines, and Pakistan (www.ashoka.org).

## *Microfinance*

Microfinance is a well-known instrument that social entrepreneurs utilise for economic empowerment, particularly in the AVR countries. Microfinance describes financial services to low-income individuals or to those who do not have access to typical banking services, including entrepreneurs and small businesses (Christen, Rosenberg, & Jayadeva, 2004). In the last decades, microfinance has witnessed tremendous success, forcing economists to rethink assumptions how poor people save and build assets, and how institutions can overcome market failures (Armendáriz & Morduch, 2010).

In developing countries, Micro Finance Institutions (MFIs) have emerged as major actors in savings and credit disbursement to less fortunate people. The success in mobilization of savings and collateral free credit delivery system and door-to-door services through contacts at the grassroots level, increase their potential for savings and investments. Bank finance and credit facilities definitely expand their initiatives along with their own collateral and equity in investment (Islam, 2010).

In a study undertaken by the Helsinki office of the IOM on the issue of reintegration of migrants from Iraq, access to finance was considered as a major problem. Even though the financial sector in the country is growing, cultural limitations, high interest rates and guarantor requirement pose serious barriers to loans, while demand for such loans is high (IOM, Helsinki Office, 2012).

In Bangladesh, the major chunk of returnee migrants and their family members are interested to engage in small business, agro-based farming like poultry, cow rearing, and fish production, improved cultivation, small transport vehicle, setting up shops, etc. What they need is proper counselling in regard to appropriate place of investment and to attain the small entrepreneurship quality in addition to the microfinance facility (Islam, 2010).

## *Engaging Social Entrepreneurs in the Reintegration Process*

Reflecting on the conditions that influence the decision of a migrant to return to the country of origin it could be argued that return is more sustainable when it is approached in a comprehensive manner that takes into account all different factors, which are often socio-economic, physical and political. Socio-economic factors include among others, the ability to work in the country of origin and/or have an income, access to education and health care. European Union has adopted this perspective, as the majority of assisted voluntary programmes include assistance measures such as grants for small business start-ups, vocational training or other forms of education, career advising and reinstallation grants.

However, a missing link is the sustainability of return programmes along to the combat of unemployment. Many of them face several difficulties to enter the labour market and therefore remain, for a long period of time, unemployed. Further to that, they appear to have no prospect whatsoever.

Social entrepreneurship may be proved as an alternative durable solution; either by increasing the number of social enterprises or the number of social entrepreneurs to help the returnees with the overall reintegration process. During the last decade, attention has been paid to the potential of return migrants to start up enterprises in their home countries. Hence, migrants may learn while away from their home country or region, as well as gather savings and build foreign networks, all of which may alleviate constraints on starting a new enterprise upon return (Marchetta 2012). The experience they have gained in relation to any skills they may have developed, can help to innovate and grow markets. The new knowledge, ideas and

approaches to problem-solving, can have a value for the country of origin, as people with different experiences, ways of thinking and social contacts can contribute thus helping to introduce new products and processes and grow markets through entrepreneurship. It could be also be argued that the returnee migrants and have a relatively high propensity to create new businesses, as are those who left any traits of home security in their countries of origin to build a new life abroad; they have a greater tolerance for risk and hard work.

Apart from the financial aspect, social entrepreneurship should be understood as an alternative employment strategy that can support psychological well-being as well as economic well-being. Social entrepreneurship can help them to match their skills and abilities to relevant sectors, to avoid dependency on any welfare benefits as well as an alternative solution not to be seen as competitors to the local workers.

It is therefore that a number of recommendations for the Cypriot government and policy makers are suggested:

Policy Areas	Recommendations
Formulate a strategy on social entrepreneurship for returnee migrants and refugees	<p>Map the state of migrant and refugee (social) entrepreneurship in the country of origin, considering the differences within each group;</p> <p>Profile migrant and refugee skills, capabilities and experience, to understand the potential for (social) entrepreneurship;</p> <p>Identify sectors that provide potential opportunities for (social) entrepreneurship in the country of origin;</p> <p>Identify local stakeholders (e.g. private sector, co-working spaces, community centres and incubators) that could support migrant and refugee (social) entrepreneurship;</p> <p>Develop specific goals and clear performance metrics for migrant and refugee entrepreneurship initiatives.</p>
Regulate the effort	<p>Examine and clarify the regulatory requirements for irregular potential returnee migrant and refugee to be trained to setup start-ups business in the countries of origin;</p> <p>Review and simplify additional administrative processes that need to be modified for potential returnee migrants and refugees to attend specific training;</p> <p>Assist irregular refugees and migrants in meeting regulatory requirements by providing guidance, facilitation and interpretation services.</p>
Enhance social entrepreneurial education and skill development	Encourage social entrepreneurship education as a complement to vocational education, and align

	<p>entrepreneurship education with traineeship and internships with local entrepreneurs, small to medium-size enterprises and other relevant enterprises;</p> <p>Setup educational initiatives to include returnee migrants and refugees in existing entrepreneurship training programmes, vocational education and training;</p> <p>Target entrepreneurship education on the basis of specific local contexts (e.g. community settlements, urban or rural settings);</p> <p>Provide education on financial literacy to migrant and refugee entrepreneurs;</p> <p>Target entrepreneurship education for specific groups of potential returnee migrants and refugees (e.g. youth, women, specific language groups, socioeconomic status, countries of origin, time in host country, professional skills);</p> <p>Support programmes that provide a mix of content (e.g. technical, financial, basic business, entrepreneurial skills) and mix of delivery modes (e.g. blended training – partially online, partially in classrooms);</p> <p>Support programmes that provide longer-term, tailored, one-to-one support;</p> <p>Support programmes that involve experiential and practical pedagogy that encourage learning by doing;</p> <p>Link migrants with specific knowledge of regulatory environments in countries of origin with businesses in the country of destination that wish to expand into the origin-country market (and vice versa).</p>
Facilitate technology exchange	<p>Develop market linkages and income streams for returned migrant and refugee entrepreneurs in local startup ecosystems;</p> <p>Support platforms that connect migrant and refugee entrepreneurs with national and global entrepreneurship ecosystems and consumers;</p> <p>Encourage university-based entrepreneurship centres and vocational training institutions to support returnee migrant and refugee entrepreneurs;</p> <p>Support e-commerce platforms for migrant and refugee businesses with planned cross-border operations;</p>

	Support the development of digital “bazaars”, e-malls, and e-marketplaces that support small local producers in exporting products by creating shared infrastructure and shared resources needed to ensure regulatory compliance.
Setup/Improve access to finance	<p>Setup and promote access to alternative and innovative sources of funding for returned refugee and migrant entrepreneurs in collaboration with EU and private investors;</p> <p>Support platforms that allow migrants and diaspora members to identify businesses in countries of origin seeking start up or growth capital, and invest in facilities that match diaspora (angel) investors to enterprises;</p> <p>Promote access to traditional sources of funding for refugee and migrant entrepreneurs, including microfinance</p> <p>Support initiatives that provide access to finance for migrant and refugee entrepreneurs without sufficient capital or credit histories (e.g. loan guarantees).</p>
Promote awareness and networking	<p>Raise awareness of social entrepreneurship support and initiatives among potential returnee migrants and refugees;</p> <p>Build online match-making portals to link aspiring migrant and refugee entrepreneurs with potential mentors, collaborators and investors;</p> <p>Encourage migrant and refugee entrepreneurs to consider nostalgia trade and cultural heritage goods from countries of origin</p>

### Conclusion

The Valletta summit, held in November 2015 between the EU, African countries, and international and regional institutions, resulted in the establishment of the EU Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing the root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa. The fund supports an ambitious action plan, marrying traditional external migration instruments related to international protection, asylum, and human trafficking, with measures addressing the root causes by investing in development and poverty eradication. Strengthening the reintegration process in partner countries is included in the fifth priority on 'return, readmission and reintegration'. To complement the EU comprehensive approach to addressing migration set up in the European agenda on migration in May 2015,

the European Commission launched a new partnership framework with third countries on 7 June 2016. An increase in rates of return to countries of origin and transit is one of the main objectives of this new approach. In order to achieve this, and dissuade people from taking the dangerous journey to Europe, the EU aims to enhance cooperation with partner countries on migration management, mixing positive and negative incentives into EU development and trade policies. The partnership framework for cooperation with partner countries on migration management envisages a parallel scaling up of development assistance and capacity building to address the root causes of migration, in exchange for intensified cooperation on readmission with a preference for voluntary return and focus on reintegration.

Successful reintegration of migrants in their countries of origin is an essential element contributing to the sustainability of the return, which is considered achieved in a narrow sense when the returnee does not re-emigrate. A recurrent recommendation to policy-makers found in the literature is to question the effectiveness of such narrowly understood sustainability and the emphasis on increasing return rates. Social entrepreneurship is not yet considered as a vital element towards establishing self-sufficiency and a meaningful impact on the economic and social development of communities of origin.

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