



ALBANIAN RETURNED MIGRANTS: A CHILD FOCUSED OVERVIEW OF DATA MANAGEMENT

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Albanian returned migrants: a child focused overview of data management

This report refers to the information collected from Observatory for the Children's Rights among local and central governmental institutions in Albania, recognized along the publication.

The data collection initiative and the preparation of the investigation report takes places in the framework of the programme *"Observatory for Children's Rights supports evidence-based child-sensitive policy planning, with focus on decentralized action"*, realized in partnership with UNICEF in Albania during 2015-2016.

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In the past three years (2014-2016), Albania has experienced massive migration of its citizens to European Union (EU) countries. In 2015, the Observatory for the Children's Rights (hereafter, Observatory) attempted to investigate the impact of this phenomenon in at least four Albanian regions¹.

According to Eurostat data, the highest numbers of asylum seeking requests in the EU are recorded over the years 2014 and 2015 – respectively 69,165 and 65,935. Data for 2016 (January – July) show a drop by 63% of the cases compared with data from the same period of time in 2015². Germany, clearly represents the preferred country of destination (e.g. for 2016 it shares 63% of all cases recorded). It is important to note that children represent 34% of the asylum seeking requests for year 2015 (20% belonging to the age group 0-13 years old).

Although Eurostat data provide a helpful overview of the situation, it fails to cover with accurate information the extent/profile of the problem in all countries, which is subject to different legal classification/definition of the cases. For example, the database does not present any information on the (unaccompanied) children that are in Italy, who – according to local legislation – are entitled to receive asylum as they enter the national territory.

Moreover, Eurostat data cannot portray the movement of families and children in different EU countries, thus leading to possible double counting of cases. Also, a number of challenges remain in identifying children, once they returned in their countries.

Observatory, as part of the project entitled *“Child Rights Observatory supports evidence-based child-sensitive policy planning, with focus on decentralized action”*, implemented in partnership with UNICEF in Albania, commissioned this investigation through its network of local collaborators in the 12 regions of Albania. During the third quarter of 2016, several meetings with managers and specialists from different expertise/sectors were

¹ Child Rights Observatory Website: <http://observator.org.al/case-investigation-massive-emigration/>

² EuroStat (2016), Asylum Statistics, Data extracted on August 2016, Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Asylum_statistics15

conducted countrywide to document issues related to the identification and collection of data concerning Albanian returned migrants (families and children).

The information in this report is arranged to present the situation of different relevant sectors in contact with this category of population. Where information has been possible to assemble, the report also highlights challenges beyond data management, including those in respect to service provision.



Health sector: Data/records on Albanian returned migrants are gathered from Regional Public Health Directories of Berat, Diber, Gjirokaster, Tirana, Durres, Vlore (the latter not reported yet) for the year 2015 and 2016. The information is based on the self-declaration of individuals who needed to re-enter in the healthcare system (i.e. renew the health insurance scheme and identify their family physician). Even in the case of children eligible to receive services free of charge, the health booklet needs to be renewed. Immunization of children brings families close to the health care services.

To date, health central authorities have not provided clear guidance to subnational directorates regarding the identification, registration, facilitation or prioritization in terms of access to services for this category of population.



Social Protection Sector: Similarly to health sector, there is no uniformity in terms of collecting the information from the social protection sector. The social administrators of the 'Ndihma Ekonomike' aid scheme (situated at the local governmental units (LGUs) level) are in contact with the families in need requesting to become part of the scheme. Currently, disaggregated information (number and age of children) from this source is available for Diber, Elbasan, Korce and Vlore. Data are recorded locally and manually and is not reported at central authority level, since the General Directory of State Social Services has not requested LGUs to do so. Specific guidelines/orientation on the format/scope/details of the information to be recorded are missing, hence the modality of its reporting varies greatly from region to region.



Pre-university Education: Families with children approach the education institutions to register children at school. However, in contrast to all the other sectors, in education sector concrete measures by the national authorities have been undertaken to collect data, and integrate children in the system.

A dedicated guideline³ was released by the Ministry of Education and Sports for execution by the subnational authorities (Regional Directors and Education offices) to take the necessary measures to register with priority children that are returned in the country (status of migrants). This Guideline institutes the recording of cases, the establishment of an admission commission and development of intervention plans, including psycho-social support. Besides this positive frame, the investigation undertaken by Observatory flagged the inadequate capacities at local level to address the different dimensions of children's needs. For example, the psycho-social support at individual level is barely offered, due to scarcity of dedicated staff.

As other example, some families facing financial constraints may have difficulties in submitting all translated documentation necessary for school registration, thus delaying the reintegration process.

In the framework of this investigation, it was not possible to assemble data from all Regional Directories of Education, since a number of them requested central level's endorsement before reporting data.



Migration Counters⁴: The 36 district based migration counters (information desks) have not resulted very resourceful in providing information for the scope of this exercise. The Strategy of Integration of Albanian Returned Citizens 2010-2015" considers these counters as strategically in the position to register the returnees. Indeed, this function was planned to be realized by the establishment of the returned Albanian migrant's database⁵. Yet,

³ Ministry of Education and Sports, Guideline no. 9242, dated 10.11.2015 "For the registration and treatment of the children that are returned" no. 9242, dated 10.11.2015,

⁴ Structure of the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth

⁵ Amendment to the Order No. 2086, dated 13.11.2007 "On the Form and Content of Migrant's Register and the Registration Procedure in conformity with Article 104(4) of the Constitution of Albania and Article 12 of the Law No. 9668/2006 on the establishment of a database on Returnees Registered at Migration Counters"

neither the strengthening of the migrant counters capacities, nor the establishment of the database has taken place⁶.



Border and Migration Police: The Directorate manages data on forced returns of Albanian migrants at the borders, including information on child population share. The latest information has become public through a recent publication, providing a profile on this category⁷. At subnational level, the information is mostly collected at the Tirana Airport, where most of the readmission procedures are undertaken.



Employment service: Only data from Shkodra and Berat regions were collected by the employment offices. However, this source does not provide information on children, since the working opportunities are offered for adults only.



Civil registration: No information is recorded at these offices, however it is reported that services are provided mainly to register children born outside the country. The problematics do not differ from those of the rest of population accessing this service.

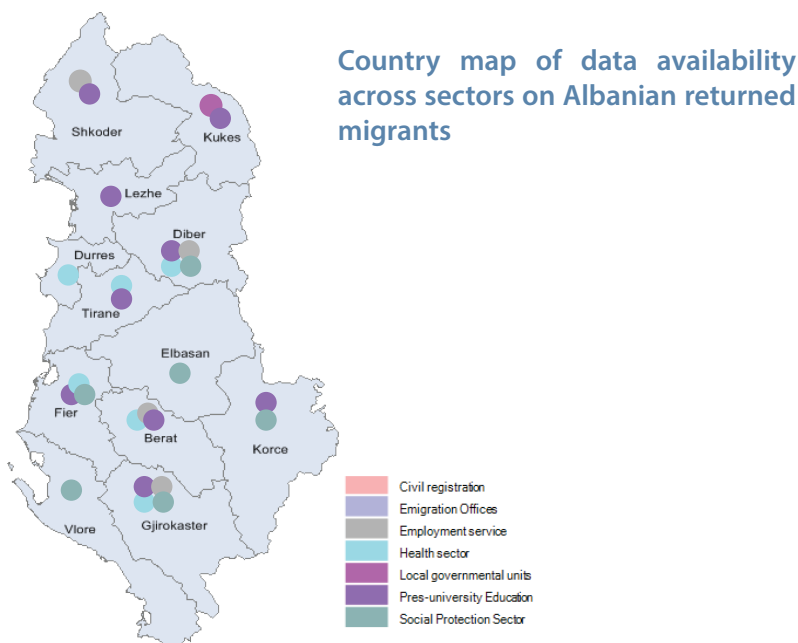


Local governmental units (LGUs): There are no records reported by the LGUs. It is to be noted the initiative of Kukes municipality in 2015, attempting to collect information among rural households, engaging the elected heads of the communities/units (kryepleqte). Only a limited number of units were able to report figures; and the challenge to ensure accurate reporting remained relevant.

⁶ Gjokutaj E. & Hroni E. 2013. "Stories Behind Visa Liberalisation: Asylum Seekers and Irregular Migration". European Fund for the Balkans.

⁷ Albania: Extended Profile of Migration 2012-2014, accessed at http://www.albania.iom.int/publications/reports/Profili_i_zgjeruar_i_migracionit_ENG_web.pdf

The below map displays the pattern of data reporting by different institutions at local level on returnees⁸.



Concluding remarks: This case investigation illustrates a preliminary assessment of the situation on data management regarding Albanian returnees, with focus on children. It does not attempt to deeply explore the actual number of reported cases, nor to denounce the overlapping of data reported by various institutions.

The report reveals that efforts undertaken so far country wide to rigorously collect and report information on the topic have been fragmented and sporadic. It is therefore strongly recommended to invest in designing and planning efforts at national, subnational and local levels to gather more accurate data on the phenomena. While strengthening data management information systems remains a priority, coordination and data exchange mechanisms should be established to ensure multi-sectorial interventions to better address the needs of this category of the population.

⁸This map is for illustrative purposes and does not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of UNICEF/Observatory, concerning the legal status of any country or territory or concerning the delimitation of frontiers or boundaries