

Introduction

Background

Military conflicts and power struggles during the breakdown and change of political systems have contributed to increasing migration flows in a multitude of countries from the Third World and from East and South-East Europe. Especially noticeable, as drawn upon here, are migratory movements in recent history of population groups that have been identified or brand marked as a minority in the process of these conflicts, whether ethnic, religious, political or in any other respect. They are under an especially high migratory pressure for the protection of their security. These processes of displacement and identification have had an especially serious molding on the situation in the collapsed Yugoslavia. These tendencies are at the same time effectual in current crisis areas such as Iraq, Afghanistan or in Sudan. Upon the refugees' arrival in the host country or receiving country, their origin, according to the nation state from which they come, is defined and statistically recorded. A separate registration that goes beyond the ethnic and religious affiliation does not as a rule follow, or as the case may be, it only becomes effective if reasons are to be stated or checked for migratory causes or residency status rights in acknowledgement procedures. As a rule the refugees in their host countries belong to a new minority group. They have become migrants. Migrants are representative of up to 15 % as a percentage of the total population of a host country from the EU and for this reason are always in the minority. This minority status leads for other reasons to exclusion or at least in many cases to a non-equitable integration into the society of the host country. Language and cultural problems, limited access to education, training and the job market, as well as a cut in political rights and duties are characteristic for this status.

The "trauma" of a minority that tries to articulate or establish itself against the majority tends as a rule to remain in place, keeping long-term effects of the unwanted consequences of disintegration within the existing social structure. If relations in the countries of origin (CoO) change and stabilize in the course of time then the return and reintegration of minorities living in European host countries is brought into discussion. In some countries of origin new states have been formed which in some cases put minority groups in the majority such as in East Timor. While the official status of minorities may change in some countries of origin, tendencies of discrimination and marginalisation remain in the majority of cases like the Roma in East European countries, the Hazara in Afghanistan or the Christians in Iraq.

Aim of this project

In the project introduced here, the participating organizations AGEF Berlin (Association of Experts in the Fields of Migration and Development Cooperation), INDE (Intercooperação e Desenvolvimento) from Portugal as well as Flüchtlingshilfe Hamburg have attempted to more strongly approach the specific group of minorities who are living or who have lived in Europe as refugees. All of these organisations have gained profound experience in the fields of return counselling and the implementation of reintegration supporting programs in countries of origin.

While there are a lot of scientific publications about minority rights and development aid policies, the project offers new insights from the point of view of practitioners and sheds light on the problems faced by organisations working with returning members of minority communities. Scientific publications often claim a stronger accent on minority rights in the field of development cooperation, while problems of social or economic reintegration are only marginally discussed. In this context the situation of the minorities in the countries of origin as well as the situation in the host countries has to be thoroughly analysed.

As a matter of fact several aspects play a crucial role with regard to success or failure of a return and reintegration process of minorities. At first the situation before the flight in the country of origin has to be taken in account, especially the extent to which this target group was integrated in the society before tensions between ethnic groups emerged or broke out. Secondly the genesis of the flight of minorities has to be borne in mind and, more specifically, the roots and underlying causes of the ethnic tensions that occurred. The different reasons leading to the flight of minority group affiliates from certain regions are an unavoidable issue when later on the conditions for a safe return within the framework of a sustainable reintegration policy of EU member states are checked.

Third, the residency in a European host country, that is temporary in the majority of cases, also has to be taken in account. Special emphasis is laid on the socio-economic conditions of the minorities. Mostly the residence in the EU is a crucial break for example in the vocational biography of the returnee. If he is permitted to work in the EU this job mostly does not suit to his or her former qualification in the country of origin. Therefore it is undeniable that the recent migration history of the target group affects or even determines the return and reintegration process significantly.

Moreover, in this study not only the target group of minorities will be considered: The political level in the European host countries is principally open-minded to the return of minorities as long as there is no longer threatening danger in the host country. However, unfortunately the responsibility at the political level seems to end mostly with the border crossing of the refugee back into his or her country of origin. UNHCR and various NGOs may partly fill this gap by assisting with means for reconstructing houses, salary subsidies and business start-up initiatives. However, it has to be borne in mind that the reintegration of minorities is not a permanent task, but rather a process with peaks in the first years after pacification where external funding can be expected to be taken over by the international community. These financial means related to the return process cannot be compared with long term development initiatives that are required if the above mentioned problems of returning vulnerable groups are to be solved in a sustainable way. All in all a clear concept on how to jointly develop programs and projects on the EU level for the long term development of minority communities is still missing. The results of the expert journeys within this project and especially the case studies published in this report can be seen as first steps to tackle this problem.

Methodology

As a first step thorough research has been conducted by the project partners on identifying conditions, best-practice models and projects aiming at the reintegration of minorities in their return countries. The case studies were realised by AGEF (Germany, Great Britain, Netherlands, Kosovo and Iraq), by INDE (Spain, France, Portugal, East Timor) and Flüchtlingshilfe Arbeiterwohlfahrt Caritas gGmbH (Germany, Serbia and Bosnia and Hercegovina).

Selected interview partners of organisations developing and implementing projects, institutions dealing with questions of minorities as well as the target group itself, namely members of different minority groups were contacted. Different guidelines for a structured interview were developed, discussed and completed for organisations, institutions and the target group. Finally, interviews were realized in Germany, the Netherlands, Great Britain, France, Portugal and Spain as well as in Iraq, Kosovo, East Timor, Serbia, and Bosnia Hercegovina. With this approach a huge variety of actors were included in the discussion and valuable information for the elaboration of the journey reports, the code of conduct and the checklist for further project planning was gathered. Especially in countries where only a limited number of interviews could be realised, additional information was gathered through papers of Think Tanks or reports from different organizations.

A midterm and a final conferences were implemented at the mid-point and at the end of the assessment in order to discuss the preliminary and final results with international experts in the fields of migration and development cooperation from the EU and from various countries of origin.

Principle Findings

In the implementation of the project, in the interviews and analysis that took place in the host countries and the countries of origin, it proved harder to come to a comparable perception of the theme than thought beforehand. The reality of the minority status is obviously bedded differently in the countries of origin than in the host countries. In the countries of origin there is no general agreement prevailing on the conditions to be created for a development and support of the integration or reintegration of these minorities. In the host countries preconditions are seen as supporting the creation of binding normal rights for the protection of minorities and the acceptance of these minority rights based on the understanding of western democracy. In the countries of origin, which in many cases are transforming their societies and establishing new legal systems anyway, these demands are multiply accommodated. Formally then the preconditions e.g. for the political representation of minorities are created. However, the real indicator of a change in perspective is the degree of concrete change in social life.

As a matter of fact, the situation and the conditions in post-conflict situations are differing from country to country and from region to region (Balkan region, East Timor and Iraq). Therefore the project partners give general recommendations on the design of reintegration programmes in developing and transformation countries as it is done in the code of conduct, the checklist for project planning and the general recommendations in the conclusion (Chapter IV).

The aim of formulating a code of conduct is to outline terms and conditions that should give direction to the conceptualization, implementation and control of the effects of programs and measures for the return and reintegration of members of minority groups. The intention will be the specification of principles, aims and priorities which are mandatory in such programs for actors on a national and EU level. Fields of activity will be defined, encompassing the role of the host countries as well as the countries of return.

The points in the form of a checklist are put together for the use by organisations, whether national, international or non-governmental, who plan, prepare and implement the return and reintegration of individuals to their country of origin, including members of minority groups. The checklist points named here result from the experience of the organisations involved at different phases with projects and programs of return and reintegration as well as relevant statements from interviews and the study results of the presented report respectively.