

Institution: Edge Hill University		
Unit of Assessment: C20 – Social Work and Social Policy		
Title of case study: Migration in the Western Balkans: impact on migrants, third sector activity and migration policy		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2013-2019		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Dr. Zana Vathi	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Reader in Social Sciences	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: August 2012 - present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2016-2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Dr Zana Vathi's research into migration in the Western Balkans and regional patterns of migration has had significant impact on migration management and overall social and child protection policymaking in the Western Balkans region. Throughout several research projects, an evidence base has been developed to inform policy and decision making on key issues including children's rights in the context of migration and reintegration. The research findings have been adopted by international agencies, cited by leading decision-making organisations and individuals, and informed policy decisions across the EU. The research has also directly influenced the work of international agencies and practitioners in the region and placed social protection and children's rights at the heart of the migration and social policy agenda at national, regional, and international levels.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Migration in the Western Balkans has recorded some of the highest relative records worldwide. Western Balkan countries have been listed among countries with highest percentage of emigration (e.g. Albania, 25%), including high rates of irregular migration. They are also major senders of refugees to the EU, major recipients of remittances, and more recently, main countries from where most EU returnees originate (EUROSTAT 2017). Literature on migration in the Western Balkans at regional level is limited and inconsistent, due to the very dynamic migratory profiles of countries in the region, the differences across the region and the particularities of migratory profiles of different countries, and also due to the lack of systematic data collection.</p> <p>Dr Vathi's academic research has shed light on some of the least researched aspects of migration in the Western Balkans, such as: child migration, regional migration of the Roma families and street work patterns, and more recently, return migration and reintegration of children and families, including minorities such as the Roma communities. Her research has been multi-country (Western Balkan countries) delineating regional patterns, multi-sited (exploring differences within one particular country (e.g., Albania)), cross-generational and cross-sectional, involving children, adult migrants, policy makers and practitioners.</p> <p>Alongside commissioned research on the regional migration patterns in the Western Balkans, in 2013 Vathi launched a project on return and reintegration to Albania, titled 'The Return and (Re)integration of Albanian Migration and Their Children to Albania: Implications for Policy-making', funded by Edge Hill University.</p>		
<p>Migration in the Western Balkans and Return.</p> <p>Vathi's work has looked at both regional patterns as well as migration from and into specific countries (e.g. Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia). Specific aspects of different forms of migration and settlement in Western Balkan countries have been explored; e.g. child migration and child protection policies and systems in Albania [RO6] and more distinctly, the return process. In this latter strand of her research Vathi's work has highlighted innovative aspects of migration, such as the psychosocial wellbeing and vulnerability of returnees [RO2 and RO5]; the positionality of returnees towards the formal and informal social protection actors in the country of origin [RO4, 5]; regional similarities and differences on social protection and vulnerability of returnees [RO5] and reintegration from a socio-cultural and institutional perspective [RO1, 2, 5, 6]. Her key work on the psychosocial wellbeing of return migrants was first published in the format of an article in the reputable journal <i>Childhood</i> [RO2]. This paper was also included in the study pack and invited as a lecture for the <i>Master of Advanced Studies in Children's Rights (MCR)</i>, University of Geneva,</p>		

Switzerland, 10 June 2016. The course attracts practitioners or aspiring practitioners from around the world. Following this output, she also edited a volume titled *Return Migration and Psychosocial Wellbeing: Discourses, Policy Making and Outcomes for Migrants and their Families*, edited by Vathi and Prof Russell King (U. of Sussex), for Routledge (2017) [RO5].

Regional patterns of migration and mobilities of minorities (Roma, Ashkalie and Egyptians).

Through a project funded by Terre Des Hommes in South Eastern Europe, part of a larger pan-European Project (MARIO), Vathi led the work on Roma Ashkalie Egyptians' (RAE) migration and mobility from Albania, Kosovo, and North Macedonia. RAE migration was a key topic at the time as the decade of Roma (2005-15) was taking place in Europe aiming to address issues of discrimination and marginalisation of this minority at international level. However, seasonal and regional patterns of RAE migration in the Western Balkans remain understudied. In this regard, Vathi's work [RO3] looked at circular migration and street work and the child protection issues linked to it. More recently, she was also invited to work on a further research commission for the World Bank on a project that looks at the specificities of return migration of RAE minorities and the response of the Western Balkan countries to the issues of their reintegration [RO6].

3. References to the research

[RO1]: Vathi, Z., Duci, V. and Dhembo, E. (2016). Homeland (dis)integration: Educational experience, children and return migration to Albania. *International Migration* 54 (3): 159-172. doi: 10.1111/imig.12230

[RO2]: Vathi, Z. and Duci, V. (2016). Making other dreams: The impact of migration on the psychosocial wellbeing of Albanian-origin children upon their families' return to Albania. *Childhood* 23 (1): 53-68. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0907568214566078>

[RO3]: Vathi, Z. (2014). Children and Adolescents engaged in street work in North Macedonia: Mobilities, Vulnerabilities and Resiliencies. Research report. Budapest: Terre Des Hommes. doi: 10.13140/RG.2.1.2585.4887

[RO4]: Vathi, Z., Dhembo, E. and Duci, V. (2018). Social protection and return migration: the role of transnational and transtemporal developmental gaps in the Albania-Greece migration corridor. *Migration and Development* 8 (2): 243-263. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21632324.2018.1534377>

[RO5]: Vathi, Z. and King, R. (Eds.) (2017). *Return Migration and Psychosocial Wellbeing: Discourses, Policy Making and Outcomes for Migrants and their Families*. London: Routledge.

[RO6]: Vathi, Z. (2019). Barriers to re-integration: the return of the Roma to the Western Balkans. SCMR Working Paper Series. Nr. 95. <https://research.edgehill.ac.uk/en/publications/barriers-to-reintegration-the-roma-return-to-the-western-balkans>

RO 1,2 and 4 are published in rigorously peer-reviewed journals of international standing. RO3 and 6 are research reports resulting from major international agency research commissions. RO5 is an edited book published by Routledge.

4. Details of the impact

The research has had impact on policy, decision makers and international organisations supporting and managing migration. Vathi has worked with a number of international actors, via directly commissioned research and policy consultation and invited keynotes. The results of these projects have been a series of impacts across the Western Balkans and more broadly across the EU.

Impacts on policy-oriented research, advocacy and practice at national, regional and EU level

The findings and recommendations put forward by Vathi in reports on regional patterns of migration and street work in Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia served as the basis for advocacy by Terre Des Hommes on children and adolescents' rights in the subregion; new trainings were designed in Albania on the basis of the research's findings, and the anti-trafficking authorities in Macedonia considered the possibility of joining the multilateral agreement frameworks outlined above [S5].

Vathi has delivered training informed by this research to practitioners and service providers. She has acted as a keynote speaker in 2 country policy events (Kosovo 2017, S6 and S3; North Macedonia 2018, S1). In the first policy event in Kosovo (2017) she was invited to give a keynote speech drawing on research on the inclusion of the returned children in the Kosovan education system, with a focus on the Roma children, in a national stakeholders conference organised by Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (German corporation for international

development) GIZ, which brought together representatives of the international organizations, various ministries and INGOs as well as practitioners working at local level.

The focus on returnee children in the Western Balkans context is in line with the agendas of major stakeholders working in this field, which aim to train local practitioners as part of their mission in the region. As confirmed by GIZ [S6], the recommendations offered from the policy event relating to Vathi's research, particularly those on the inclusion of child migration in the framework for child protection, facilitation of bilingual schools and other services that recognise children's double identities and promoting education as a community-focused system and process, have been very insightful and have stimulated development work to further shape policies and programmes in this area. *'The psychosocial well-being of children and the challenging process of reintegration in the society and in the educational system were of particular interest for the audience; hence, the major insights given from Dr. Vathi, have contributed to stressing the needs of children.... Her recommendations on good practices, particularly those on the inclusion of child migration in the framework for child protection, facilitation of bilingual schools and other services that recognise children's double identities and promoting education as a community-focused system and process have been very insightful and have stimulated some debate and consideration to further pursue and accommodate these activities within the framework of assistance to these categories.'* GIZ Programme Manager [S6].

Vathi was also subsequently invited to speak in a policy event organised by the European Policy Institute (EPI) in Skopje, North Macedonia in April 2018 on Roma migration and reintegration after the visa liberalisation. The event prompted the EPI to incorporate the findings into the new Strategy for Reintegration to be used to underpin the reintegration of returning citizens, [S1]. *'The conference....discussion and the presentation gave food for thought to the representatives of the institutions in the audience, especially those coming from the three key institutions: MLSP, MOI, MFA. Most importantly Dr Vathi's valuable input given during the conference did not only reach the representatives in the audience but will also be used to upgrade the findings which will be further disseminated to the highest political level, namely the Prime Minister' Executive Director of the European Institute of Skopje [S8]*

Further work on the reintegration of returned children to Albania was conducted by Terre des Hommes on the basis of Vathi's recommendation outlined in a report she was commissioned to write in 2016, which led to the appointment of additional social workers in regional and municipality offices in Albania linked to her recommendation for the focus to shift onto the local service level [S11].

The policy events in Albania (2015) and Kosovo (2017) where Vathi presented as a keynote speaker were covered by the national medias, raising awareness among members of the public. As part of her engagement in GIZ's work in Kosovo, in November 2017 Vathi gave an interview for the national TV channel in Kosovo RTK Morning Show on the issue of reintegration into schools of returned children. The policy event organised by GIZ was covered by seven different media pieces in Kosovo. *'The public event was widely quoted in several newspapers. Moreover, feedback from public institutions and civil society organizations showed that the speech helped to increase the awareness on the relevance and the severity of the issues. Among other things it was reinstated that it is of crucial importance that there is ongoing cross-sector collaboration between central and local level as well as civil society in achieving the successful integration of returnee children and ethnic minorities.'* Head of component on Educational Inclusion of Returnees and Ethnic Minorities, GIZ, [S6]

Impacts on the policy framework and policymaking at national, regional and EU level

Vathi's academic work and consultancy research have had significant impact on migration management and overall social and child protection policymaking in the Western Balkans region and at international level. Her report on transnational migration and street work in Albania and Kosovo (Vathi 2014) was cited in the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings in Albania, second evaluation round adopted on 11 March 2016. [S11] The same work led to concrete policy outcomes such as a *multilateral treaty and subsequent Standard Operating Procedures that were signed and ratified by three countries in the region (Albania, Montenegro and Kosovo)*. This research and advocacy changed the way the EU institutions and governments in the region approach the issue of European migration of children and youth and also impacted on the situation of children at national level. *A new law on child protection in Kosovo*

was adopted, taking into account the findings and recommendations outlined in her research. Terre des Hommes, an international humanitarian children's rights organisation, utilised the research findings of the research in Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia [RO3] to lobby the European institutions on these issues. Among the different initiatives that Terre des Hommes launched informed by Vathi's research, 2 international conferences at the European Economic and Social Committee in 2015 and in TDHIF headquarters in 2016 have led to the changes in policy and practice within the European Commission: *'More importantly, we utilised the research findings to lobby the European Institutions on these issues. Among the different initiatives that we launched and which were informed by the research conducted by Dr Vathi, 2 international conferences at the European Economic and Social Committee in 2015 and in TDHIF headquarters in 2016 led to the inclusion of the specific needs of European migrant children in the European Commission's work agenda as well as the opening of EU funding instruments to EU migrant children.'* Regional Child Rights Advisor – Europe Terre des Hommes [S5].

A more recent consultancy report (Vathi and Zajmi 2017) is starting to affect policy making in the fields of child migration and social protection. According to Terre des Hommes (2017): *'The study can serve as a basis for further improvements to the legal, policy and institutional framework concerning migration management, which should include the provision of services for those vulnerable groups who take difficult journeys in the hope of finding a better life'* [S9].

In particular, the focus on psychosocial wellbeing in the context of return appears to be an innovative approach, which is attracting a significant interest from policymakers. The focus in the context of return migration has, for a long time, been on the *sustainability of returns*, and very explicitly so in the context of Western Balkans. However, the EU Commission and major stakeholders, such as the World Bank, are starting to shift the attention onto a more individualised needs-based approach and look at the *sustainability of reintegration*, considering the vulnerabilities of returnees.

Vathi's research on this topic [RO1, 2, 4, 5] was at the basis of an invitation to work as an international expert on the project 'Supporting the Effective Reintegration of Roma Returnees In The Western Balkans' commissioned by the EU Commission and managed by the World Bank. In 2017 the European Commission's (EC) Directorate General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) approached the World Bank to develop an evidence base and policy advice for supporting the effective reintegration of Roma returnees in the Western Balkans. The European Commission works closely with Western Balkan countries under the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA – the instrument that guides the process of EU membership for the countries of the Western Balkans) to support Roma inclusion programs at the national, regional and municipal levels. The objective of this project, therefore, is *to identify relevant policy responses and implementation pathways for the effective reintegration of returnees in the Western Balkans – with a particular focus on Roma returnees - based on the evidence of reintegration experiences* [S7].

The project started in Dec 2017 and its findings have influenced the EU agenda for the EU enlargement in the Western Balkans. Participants of the workshop included representatives of DG NEAR of the European Commission, World Bank senior managers and advisors, academics and international research consultants. The research Dr Vathi has undertaken has been invaluable in different stages of this project, starting with her review of the key issues related to migration in the Western Balkans and the situation of the Roma, which then fed into the World Bank's overall survey and other work in the region. The project integrated an inception workshop in Vienna [S2] where Vathi presented on the topic of vulnerabilities of returnees in the Western Balkans region. Furthermore, Dr Vathi's input in the methodology of the project ensured that a more robust data set was generated from World Bank's survey with Roma and non-Roma returnees in 6 Western Balkan countries. [S7]

Based on this material, Dr Vathi produced a research report [RO6], which the World Bank relied on to prepare policy papers containing recommendations to the European Commission/DG Near on policy responses and implementation pathways for the reintegration of the Roma in the Balkans. *'Dr Vathi's research has directly informed a number of recommendations, which have been considered for further action by EC DG Near and form a key part of its policy on re-integration in the region and inevitably affect the implementation of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) – the foundation document that regulates Western Balkan countries' accession in the EU. Therefore, the outcomes of this research have a broad and significant bearing on the region's present and future*

status and relations with the EU, alongside the impact on migrants, national policy makers and international organizations in the Western Balkans. The recommendations will also help inform the technical assistance to Western Balkans by preparing the six countries for their accession negotiations.’ Senior Policy Advisor, World Bank Group, Washington DC [S7]. Subsequently the European Commission have formally incorporated the research evidence and recommendations from the World Bank report into an instrument for pre-accession assistance (IPA) for the Western Balkans. Specifically, component 2 ‘enhance the ability of Western Balkan’s authorities at central and local level to implement effective reintegration policies and respond effectively to the needs of vulnerable returnees...’ is underpinned by Vathi’s recommendations within the report [S13].

Based on her expertise in migration and integration, Vathi was invited to co-author a chapter on migrants’ integration in the United Nations World Migration Report 2020. The World Migration Report is published every two years; it is a key resource for academics and practitioners globally, it is digitally published and easily accessible and widely used by practitioners, policy makers and journalists worldwide.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

S1 Vathi, Z. (2018). Return and reintegration: policies and practices. Invited talk for policy event ‘Roma migration and reintegration after the visa liberalisation’. European Policy Institute, Skopje, North Macedonia. 4 April 2018.

S2 Vathi, Z. (2018). How can we address the vulnerability of returnees? Paper presented at the workshop ‘Supporting the Effective Reintegration of (Roma) Returnees’. Inception Workshop, January 15, 2018. World Bank Office, Vienna.

S3 Vathi, Z. (2017). Migrants in Homeland: The (Re)integration of Children Returning from Migration and Ethnic Minorities in the Education System and their Psychosocial Wellbeing. Conference ‘Inclusive education of returnees and ethnic minorities in Kosovo’ GIZ (The German Agency for Development, programme ‘Capacity Development in the Basic Education Sector in Kosovo (CDBE)’.

S4 Vathi, Z. (2016). The impact of migration on children’s psychosocial wellbeing. Invited lecture for the *Master of Advanced Studies in Children’s Rights (MCR)*, University of Geneva, Switzerland, 10 June.

S5 Terre des Hommes – Factual Statement - Regional Coordinator for Terre Des Hommes.

S6 GIZ Pristina Factual Statement - Programme Manager at GIZ Kosovo.

S7 World Bank group – Factual Statement – World Bank Group, Washington DC.

S8 European Policy Institute, Skopje – Factual Statement - EPI Executive Director, Skopje

S9 Terre des Hommes – announcement on follow up study to the project I led on in 2016.

Available at: <https://childhub.org/en/child-protection-news/reintegration-returned-children-and-families-albania>

S10 Bregu, E. and Delaney, S. (2016) Multi-agency working in child protection a review of South East Europe. http://childhub.org/en/system/tdf/library/attachments/multi-agency_working_in_child_protection_2016_08_09.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=20987

accessed 20 December 2016

S11 2016 GRETA group of experts on action against trafficking in human beings GRETA (2016). <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168065bf87>

S12 Announcement on follow up research based on commissioned report for Terre des Hommes: <http://tdh-europe.org/library/children-and-migration-in-albania-latest-trends-and-protection-measures-available/7270>

S13 European Commission Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA II) https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/ipa_ii_2019-040-826.17_roma_action.pdf