

Budapest Process

Thematic Working Group Meeting on Return and Reintegration: Fostering Sustainable, Rights-Based Reintegration in the Silk Routes Region

Date: 15 May 2025

Location: Istanbul, Türkiye

Summary (draft)

1. Budapest Process representatives from all participating and observer states were invited to attend the second in-person meeting of the **Thematic Working Group on Return and Reintegration** since its establishment in 2023. The meeting gathered **75 participants** from **28 countries** and **5 organisations** – Albania, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Bulgaria, Canada, Denmark, Georgia, Hungary, Iraq, Italy, Kyrgyzstan, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Pakistan, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Sweden, Switzerland, Türkiye, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, as well as the EU – including representatives of the Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME) and Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA) of the European Commission, the EU Delegation in Pakistan of the European External Action Service (EEAS), and Frontex, IOM Türkiye, and the Bali Process. Civil society organisations BRAC (Bangladesh), ETTC (Iraq), Rwanga Foundation (Iraq) and WELDO (Pakistan) also took part.

2. Meeting background and objectives:

The Thematic Working Group on Return and Reintegration was established to deepen cooperation among Budapest Process partners and promote operational, rights-based approaches to return and reintegration, with a particular focus on the Silk Routes region. In line with the 2024 Ministerial Declaration and the Return and Reintegration Roadmap (2023), this meeting aimed to:

- Review initiatives in the Silk Routes region that foster conditions for sustainable, rights-based reintegration;
- Develop common understanding of the importance of coordinated development cooperation and civil society engagement in delivering reintegration support;
- Generate practical, forward-looking recommendations for the future work of the Thematic Working Group.

3. This was the **third meeting of the Thematic Working Group on Return and Reintegration**, co-chaired by Türkiye and Bangladesh and supported by ICMPD as the Budapest Process Secretariat. Welcoming remarks were delivered by Fehmi Hacıoğlu from the Presidency of Migration Management, Ministry of Interior, representing Türkiye as Chair of the Budapest Process and Co-Chair of the Thematic Working Group; Md Shahidul Islam Chowdhury from the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment, representing Bangladesh as Co-Chair of the Thematic Working Group; Laszlo Balasz from the Ministry of Interior, representing Hungary as Co-Chair of the Budapest Process Dialogue; Geoffrey

Devin from DG HOME, representing the European Commission; and Marija Raus, newly appointed Head of the Budapest Process Secretariat at ICMPD.

4. Speakers reaffirmed the Budapest Process as a **key platform for inter-regional dialogue and collaboration on return and reintegration**, highlighting the continued importance of human-centred, rights-based and operational approaches in the Silk Routes region. They called for coordinated, government-led efforts aligned with national programmes and supported by development-oriented partnerships, building on the renewed momentum of the 2024 Ministerial Declaration.

5. The meeting continued with **national-level presentations from Türkiye and Bangladesh**, outlining their frameworks and priorities in the area of return and reintegration. This was followed by an update from the **Secretariat on the Budapest Process Return and Reintegration Framework** and its relevance to the 2024 Ministerial Declaration and Call for Action.

6. The rest of the meeting was structured around three topical panel discussions:

- **Panel 1: NORAQ – A Partnership for Sustainable Reintegration in Iraq**
Speakers from Iraq’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Denmark, and the Baghdad Migrant Resource Centre showcased how Nordic cooperation (Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland) is supporting Iraq through institutional coordination, capacity building, and post-arrival assistance.
- **Panel 2: Fostering Sustainable Reintegration in Pakistan**
This panel focused on policy developments and international support enabling reintegration in Pakistan. Speakers from the Pakistani authorities, the EU Delegation, and ICMPD highlighted policy coordination, project implementation, and inclusive service models for returnees.
- **Panel 3: Bridging Gaps in Reintegration – The Role of Civil Society**
Representatives from BRAC, ETTIC, Rwanga Foundation, and WELDO discussed the essential role of civil society in profiling returnees, delivering livelihood support, and promoting community-level reintegration. The session echoed the Ministerial Roadmap’s call for multi-stakeholder approaches.

7. In the concluding Plenary Discussion, participants reflected on how the Thematic Working Group can contribute to implementing the 2024 Ministerial Declaration and Call for Action. Key points raised included:

- Aligning reintegration with sectoral investments and national development plans;
- Mainstreaming returnee needs into national education, employment, and social protection systems;
- Enhancing the evidence base for reintegration policies through research and impact assessment.
- Delegates emphasized that reintegration strategies must remain flexible and tailored to national contexts.

8. As a result of the interventions and discussions, the following key messages and recommendations for future action were made:

Key messages and main conclusions

- **Multi-stakeholder engagement:** Effective reintegration depends on collaboration across governments, civil society, and international actors.
- **Evidence-based programming:** Reintegration initiatives must be informed by reliable data, impact analysis, and community-level insights.
- **Sustainability through inclusion:** Reintegration frameworks should align with national development goals, ensuring long-term inclusion of returnees.
- **Civil society's role:** NGOs are critical in local delivery, profiling, and community support mechanisms that reinforce sustainable reintegration.

Recommendations on the way forward for the Thematic Working Group on Return and Reintegration

- **Update the Return and Reintegration Roadmap** to reflect lessons learned and emerging priorities.
- **Promote operational cooperation** to ensure comprehensive reintegration support to returnees.
- **Support civil society engagement** as a core component of reintegration programmes and service delivery.
- **Draw on evidence and research** to tailor reintegration interventions to specific country contexts and the needs of returning populations.
- **Explore how artificial intelligence and other innovative technologies can support the advancement of Priority 3** of the Ministerial Declaration and its accompanying Call for Action.