

About the GAPS Project:

GAPs is a comprehensive study on the drivers of return policies and barriers/enablers in international cooperation on returns. The project examines the disconnects between expectations of return policies and their actual outcomes by de-centering the dominant, one-sided understanding of “return policymaking.”

GAPs will: a) scrutinize the shortcomings of the EU’s governance of returns with both its internal and external dimensions; b) analyse enablers and barriers of international cooperation c) shed light on the perspectives of migrants themselves to understand their knowledge of return policies, aspirations and experiences. By taking a close look at governance, cooperation and actor’s agency, the project is able to suggest new avenues for international cooperation, develop recommendations for stakeholders and explore alternative pathways to returning migrants.

The project combines its decentering approach with three innovative concepts: a focus on return migration infrastructures that enable GAPs to analyze governance fissures; an analysis of return migration diplomacy to understand how relations among EU MSs and with third countries hinder cooperation on returns; and a trajectory approach that uses a socio-spatial and temporal lens to understand migrant agency.

The project achieves its aims via multi-disciplinary, qualitative and quantitative comparative research in 11 countries in Europe, Africa and the broader Middle East (including Afghanistan). The project involves wide-ranging and innovative impacts, including the creation of interactive data repository on returns, a return cooperation index, return governance indicators, policy briefs and workshops, the formation of stakeholder expert panels, a digital storytelling and video series, the launching of Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) as well as open access policy and scholarly publications.