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Return and (Re)Integration for Children in Migrant Families

Return and (Re)Integration of Children in Migrant Families

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Delmi's preface

This literature review in the Delmi report series is a joint initiative with Strömsund Municipality. The aim is to provide a knowledge base for more sustainable returns by examining national and international conditions for asylum-seeking children in families. The literature review has undergone the usual peer review process and has been found to meet Delmi's quality requirements.

The author of the report is Pinar Aslan Akay, research coordinator at Delmi, who has a PhD in social work from Umeå University. An earlier version of the report was reviewed by sociologist Mehek Muftee, a lecturer at the Thomas Coram Research Unit (TCRU) at UCL. The literature review was supervised by Delmi committee member Annika Sundén. In the Delmi secretariat, Anna Hammarstedt, Alice Hertzberg and Daniel Silberstein commented on drafts of the review. As usual, the author is responsible for the content, conclusions and recommendations of the report.

Stockholm, December 2023

Joakim Palme
Chair, Delmi

Agneta Carlberger Kundoori
Head of Secretariat, Delmi

Strömsund Municipality's preface

Since 2013, the Resource Centre in Strömsund Municipality has been working on issues related to the asylum and return process, focusing on the situation of unaccompanied children and young people in this process. After several departures, five children with refusal notices and many age upgrades, we experienced a situation that was difficult to deal with, both for the child itself and for those around the child.

The Resource Centre decided to develop an approach to increase knowledge and understanding of children refused or at risk of being refused asylum, as well as those around them, through more structured initiatives to provide information and support. In the ten years since, the most important lesson we have learned is that every child counts and matters. We need to demonstrate this through empathic encounters, where safe adults interact with children and provide accurate information.

This knowledge and experience is a starting point for the Children in Families project, supported by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund. There is evidence that interviews during an asylum procedure focus too much on informing only the guardians. Therefore, the project works to ensure a clearer child perspective for asylum-seeking children in families and to strengthen children's rights in the process. Children should be given the same conditions as their guardians to manage their asylum and return process.

As we have felt over the years that the area of return, especially for children, has not been sufficiently researched, we want to use this literature review to confirm whether our knowledge and experience is supported by research and to see if the review shows a need for further studies.

This report is part of a knowledge production that will form the basis of future support material for the child, the carer and the professionals who meet them. It will also strengthen the link between theory and practice. We hope our work will help to raise awareness at all levels of children's needs and professionals' responsibilities.

The Resource Centre wishes to thank all the professionals, volunteers and, not least, the children and young people we have met over the years who have participated in our development work.

Stockholm, December 2023

Elisabeth Lindholm
Head of Resource Center, Strömsund Municipality

Summary

The overall aim of this literature review is to summarise and synthesise research on the return and (re)integration of children in migrant families, focusing on their education, integration and health, as well as the opportunities and obstacles for a successful return and (re)integration process. The ultimate goal of the review is to contribute with knowledge to the creation of more tools for public officials involved in this process, thereby providing children in migrant families with better opportunities to prepare and mobilise resources prior to return. This could also facilitate their long-term adjustment in the country of return.

Maintaining regular migration and increasing the return of migrants who are denied residence in the host country is a high priority for many European countries, including Sweden. However, it is also crucial that the asylum and return process is permeated by a child rights approach, which many authorities in Sweden have recognised and worked towards. In this respect, children in migrant families are considered to be a particularly vulnerable group. Research shows that they often feel uninformed and their level of participation in the return process is described as low. This can lead to feelings of shock and uprootedness upon return, which can affect children's psychosocial health.

Research also highlights the challenges of integrating children from migrant families into new education systems upon return. Difficulties in speaking and writing their mother tongue, a new and unfamiliar educational context, lack of competence of school staff, as well as administrative and economic barriers can all contribute to limiting children's educational opportunities. In addition, children in families returning to their country of origin are often subject to bullying and social exclusion due to their status as returnees, lack of socio-cultural knowledge or language difficulties. In this context, social networks can be important resources and peer relatives can act as guides and facilitators of integration.

The review identified several knowledge gaps. For example, there is a lack of studies using longitudinal data to show how children's situations develop over time. The few studies that do exist suggest that some initial problems, such as a lack of socio-cultural belonging and social integration, tend to disappear or diminish over time. However, it is not possible to deduce how other factors, such as living conditions and access to resources, might affect their

adjustment over time. There is also a lack of studies that examine the impact of other background factors relevant to children, such as age, gender and socio-economic background. The few studies that do examine these factors suggest that some groups, such as girls and adolescents, may be more vulnerable than others.

Based on the findings of this review, a number of recommendations are made. One suggestion is that there should be a clearer and more developed division of responsibilities between the public agencies involved in the return process. It should also be considered whether a single agency could be given a more holistic role for children in migrant families during this process. In addition, there is a need for more qualitative guidelines and methods for public officials who are involved in the return process of migrant families or who regularly meet with children in migrant families prior to return. Information and participatory work on children in migrant families during the return process needs to be developed in a more child-friendly and individualised way, as a child's situation may differ depending on factors such as length of stay in the host country, gender, age and socio-economic background.

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1. Introduction

Increasing the return rate of migrants who have been denied residence in the host country is now a priority issue in most European countries, including Sweden. In recent years, Swedish asylum policy has been characterised by an increased focus on return in various government constellations. With the Tidö Agreement (Samarbetspartierna, 2022), the agreement that forms the basis for the current government formation and budget cooperation, a clearer and more reinforced focus on return was announced. The Tidö Agreement mentions, among other things, increased collaboration between authorities to streamline the return of migrants, an obligation for authority personnel to report undocumented migrants, and enhanced opportunities for internal immigration controls. Several authorities are tasked with expanding and streamlining the work on return, including the Swedish Migration Agency (see Letter of Regulation for 2023 in Government Decision II:2, 2023-06-22), the Swedish Police Authority (see Letter of Regulation for 2023 in Government Decision I:1, 2023-08-03) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) (see Letter of Regulation for 2023 in Government Decision II:1, 2023-09-07).

In parallel with the increased focus on streamlining the return work, Swedish authorities have for a long time also placed emphasis on strengthening and maintaining a child perspective in the asylum process (see, for example, Swedish Migration Agency, n.d. a.). According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, authorities and public institutions must, in every decision or measure where children are concerned, primarily consider the best interests of the child. This means that children have a special legal protection in the asylum process, and thus also in the return process (Dane, 2019).

After the Tidö Agreement was announced, Save the Children (2022) presented an analysis of the agreement, and noted, among other things, that while some proposals are positive from a child rights perspective (e.g. the focus on young people's mental health), the agreement as a whole risks undermining the rights of particularly vulnerable groups of children, such as asylum-seeking children. Authorities are, nevertheless, obliged to consider such policy directives for more effective return work, while also complying with laws and conventions that ensure the legal protection of children.

Despite the fact that nearly half of the world's refugees are children (UNHCR, 2022a; Holmes & Lowe, 2023), relatively little attention has been paid to children in families, i.e., children seeking residence permits together with

their care givers. Recently, some attention has been given to unaccompanied minors in the return process. This has generated important lessons on how authorities can develop more sustainable ways of working with this group (see e.g. Ghazinour et al., 2014a; Ghazinour et al., 2014b; Backlund et al., 2014). Among practitioners, there have been some initiatives directed towards unaccompanied children and young people in an asylum- and return process. One example is the so-called "Strömsund model", which Strömsund Municipality in Jämtland developed together with the Swedish Migration Agency in 2017-2020. The model aims to give unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people more tools to understand their own asylum process, whilst also developing collaboration between actors around the child, such as foster homes, residential care homes, schools, guardians and social services (Strömsund Municipality, 2020).

Compared to unaccompanied minors, there is a lack of knowledge about children in families in the return process, which may have several explanations. Ní Laoire (2011) argues that in many ways children in families are still seen as 'baggage' in the asylum process rather than as migrants in their own right. One reason for the 'invisibility' of children in families may be that they are seen as 'protected' in a way that unaccompanied minors are not, and it is assumed that parents or other carers take responsibility for these children. This is reflected, for example, in the fact that in Sweden there is no formal actor with overall responsibility for the child (cf. Hökeberg, 2019), in the same way that municipalities are responsible for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

According to data from the Swedish Migration Agency (see Appendix 7), 12,589 persons belonging to the category of children in families (see section 2.1. for a definition of the term) received an expulsion decision in Sweden between January 2020 and June 2023. During the same period, 5,934 of these children had their expulsion decision enforced, indicating that many of them may remain in the host country for several years after the decision. However, the Migration Agency figures in Appendix 7 do not include children in families who decide to return to their country of origin before an expulsion decision has been made, so the number of children in families who return may be higher than the table indicates.

The issue of time is important in this context, as returning to the country from which children and/or parents migrated can be a traumatic experience for children who have spent most of their childhood in the host country (see, for example, Grosa & King, 2022; Zevulun et al., 2021). For many children in families, return is a matter of migration rather than actual return. At present,

there is no formal way of studying the situation of people who have returned from Sweden to their countries of origin, which means that there is a lack of knowledge about the living conditions of children in families after their return.

Research based on Swedish data on the return and reintegration of children in families is also limited. In recent years, however, a body of international literature on the subject has emerged. Many of these studies are also relevant to the Swedish context, but there has been no review of the research, which makes it difficult to determine the state of knowledge. A literature review on the experiences, conditions and circumstances of these children can contribute to more informed decisions and practices for children in families in a return process. This review will also help to identify gaps in knowledge and thus provide directions for future research.

The focus of the review is on the experiences of children, parents and officials. The literature focuses mainly on the situation of children after the return has taken place, although many studies also report on circumstances during a pre-return period. Many lessons can be learnt from respondents' retrospective accounts of the return process and (re)integration in the country of return. It gives us knowledge about what social actors in Sweden and other receiving countries could have done differently, how they could have contributed to a successful return and (re)integration, and what obstacles and challenges children face after return. This, in turn, can help to develop more informed approaches and methods when working with children in families facing a return to their parents' home country.

1.1 Aim and research questions

The overall aim of this systematic literature review is to summarise and synthesise studies on the return and (re)integration of children in families. This is expected to increase the knowledge base for the development of tools needed when encountering and working with children in families in the return process. The research questions are:

1. How are children in families affected by return in terms of education, socio-cultural (re)integration and health?
2. What opportunities and obstacles do previous studies identify for a successful return and (re)integration process for children in families?

The literature review is organised as follows. The next section deals with key concepts used in the review and background information relevant to the Swedish context. Next, I briefly describe the method and materials of the review, with the possibility to read more about this in Appendices 1-6. This is

followed by a summary and synthesis of the included studies. The next section presents the conclusions that can be drawn in relation to the return process in Sweden. This is followed by gaps in knowledge and suggestions for further research. The final section contains policy recommendations based on the findings and conclusions of the review.

2. Background

2.1 Key concepts

Children in family

In this review, 'children in a family' refers to individuals under the age of 18 who apply for a residence permit together with one or two guardians. This is the same definition of child as in the Aliens Act (2005:716, Chapter 1), §2) and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which states that a child is "every human being below the age of 18 years, unless he or she reaches the age of majority earlier under the law applicable to the child".

The review also refers to the age group of the child. Research in this area uses different age classifications, and the studies on which this review is based do not use the same age categories for children, adolescents, and older adolescents. Therefore, a general categorisation is used in this review to present results for different age groups: younger children, children in younger adolescence and children in older adolescence.

Refusal of entry and Expulsion

The Aliens Act (2005:716, Chapter 8) stipulates that a decision may be taken to deport or expel a person if, for various reasons, the person does not have the right to stay in Sweden. A refusal of entry decision cannot be issued later than three months after the first application for a residence permit was made upon arrival in the country. After three months, only an expulsion decision can be taken. In some cases, there is an obstacle to enforcement, i.e., a person receives a refusal of entry or expulsion decision, but there is an obstacle to the actual enforcement of the decision.

Families living in such conditions for a long time may be particularly negatively affected (see, for example, Rasmussen, Guillén Åkerlind & Hagan, 2019), and a long period in the host country without stable conditions may also affect children's psychological health and (re)integration in the country of return (see, for example, Zevulun et al., 2018). Although the review was not able to consider such conditions prior to return (due to a lack of results in the included studies), it is important to highlight that there may be different circumstances around the child in the context of a removal decision.

Return and (re)integration

Return can be described as the process by which a person who no longer has a legal right to stay in a country must travel back to the country from which he or she migrated. The report uses the terms 'pre-return' and 'post-return'. Prereturn refers to the period between the receipt of a refusal decision and the execution of the decision. Post-return refers to the period after the child has arrived in the country of return.

Return can be voluntary or involuntary, although some studies highlight the lack of voluntariness even of what is theoretically termed 'voluntary return'. Some migrants who have received a deportation order decide to cooperate in order to avoid sanctions or negative consequences such as a re-entry ban (Aliens Act, Chapter 8, §23) or to prevent their children from witnessing police intervention (Hagan, 2021).

It is important to emphasise the limitation of the review not to focus on people who avoid the enforcement of the refusal order, although respondents in the studies included in this review may be people who belonged to this category before the return took place.

In the case of children, the concept of return is particularly problematic because in many cases children in families are not actually returning, but are migrating to a country they have never been to or left at a very young age (see Grosa & King, 2022). There may be even stronger reasons to question the degree of voluntariness of a child's 'return'. Voluntary (even genuine) return by parents does not necessarily mean voluntary return by children, who are rarely consulted in decision-making (Vathi, 2016; De Bree, Davids & De Haas, 2010).

The review also included some studies that looked at voluntary repatriation, i.e., a voluntary decision to return when the family has a legal right to stay. These studies were considered relevant because, in practice, voluntary repatriation by parents can have the same negative consequences for children who are deported if the children are not involved and/or oppose the decision to return (Zúñiga & Hamann, 2015).

The concept of 'reintegration' is problematic in the case of children for reasons similar to return. For children born and/or raised in the country of destination, returning to the country from which their parents migrated may be a matter of integration rather than reintegration. This is referred to further in the findings section of this report, where issues of integration for children in families after return are presented.

Nevertheless, the terms 'return' and 'reintegration' will be used throughout this review, as these are the terms used in the research field as a whole. Sometimes the word reintegration appears in brackets as '(re)integration'. This is to make it clear that both integration and reintegration may be involved in the particular context.

The findings of the review should be read and interpreted in the context of this conceptual discussion.

Country of destination and country of return

The terms 'country of destination' and 'country of return' are used throughout the review. 'Country of destination' refers to the country where the family migrated and applied for residence. "Country of return' is defined as the country to which the family returns following their own decision or an official decision of refusal of entry or expulsion. Usually, but not always, this is the country where the children and/or parents were born. In some cases, they may be returning to a country where they have not lived, but are still considered to belong based on citizenship.

2.2 Child rights in Sweden

Children's rights have long been recognised in international law, for example in the 1924 Geneva Declaration on the Rights of the Child and the 1959 Declaration on the Rights of the Child. The UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights also contains passages with a specific focus on children. However, the most important milestone for children's rights in international law is the introduction of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which recognises children as active subjects and actors in their own right. The Convention was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1989 and has since been ratified by almost all UN member states. Sweden has been a party to the CRC since 1990 and has therefore been committed to complying with its provisions for some time. For more than three decades, Swedish legislation has been undergoing a process of transformation, in which the provisions of the CRC have gradually been introduced. When the CRC was adopted as Swedish law in January 2020, with the aim of strengthening the application of the Convention, most of its provisions had already been incorporated into Swedish law.

The CRC sets out the rights of the child and the obligations of the state in 54 articles, four of which (articles 2, 3, 6 and 12) have been defined as core principles by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. These basic principles are protection from discrimination, taking into account their best interests in matters or policies affecting them, recognising their right to life and development, and their right to express themselves without retaliation.

It is also clear from the Convention that refugee children are considered to be in need of special protection. Such protection is provided for in Article 22, which clarifies the obligations of States Parties with respect to refugee children. It states that States Parties shall protect and assist a child, regardless of whether the child arrives alone or not, in accordance with the rights set forth in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international human rights instruments to which States Parties are bound. In each case, the principle of the best interests of the child is weighed against other interests, such as maintaining regulated migration (cf. Dane, 2019). This is highlighted in a policy brief published by Delmi (2020:5), which discusses and clarifies the principle of the best interests of the child, emphasising that there is an obligation to give sufficient weight to the best interests of the child, together with other factors, but that various rights can still be restricted if there are legitimate reasons for doing so, such as maintaining regular migration in the country. This balancing of interests has sometimes led to criticism that the CRC does not have a strong enough influence on decisions and measures affecting children.

In the recent review of Sweden by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC/C/SWE/CO/6-7), Sweden was called upon to take urgent measures to ensure the rights of refugee and migrant children. Among other things, the Committee mentioned the importance of strengthening measures to ensure that the best interests of asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant children are a primary consideration in all asylum procedures and that their views are heard, taken into account and given due weight.

An important detail that emerges from the Committee on the Rights of the Child's call is that all asylum claims must be considered individually from a child rights perspective, meaning that children's asylum claims should be assessed separately and not together with those of their parents. The Committee also stresses the need to take measures to prevent children who have been subjected to violence or abuse by their parents from being deported with them. It also recommends that consideration be given to including child-specific provisions on persecution[1] and the principle of the best interests of the child in Swedish migration legislation.

[1] Child-specific forms of persecution can include forced labour, female genital mutilation, child marriage and recruitment as child soldiers. Child-specific provisions on persecution are currently not explicitly included in the Aliens Act.

2.3 The role of Swedish authorities

The Migration Agency

The return process begins when a family with children receives a deportation order. The first step is an invitation by the immigration authorities to one or more meetings at the immigration office. The child's participation in these meetings is not a matter of course, but will take place if the parents and the child take the initiative (Swedish Migration Agency, n.d., b.). The Migration Agency's Handbook for the Asylum-Return Process states that in cases where children participate in the interview, the best interests of the child must be taken into account throughout the interview, for example by giving the child the opportunity to express his/her views. There are no specific measures regarding children in families during the return process, but it is assumed that parents take responsibility for the child's health, well-being and mental, social and practical preparation for return (ibid.).

The Swedish Migration Agency has been working for some time on introducing the principle of the best interests of the child in the processing of cases involving children, and has intensified this work since the Convention on the Rights of the Child was introduced into Swedish legislation in 2020. In an analysis report from 2022 (Dnr: 1.3.4-2022-26331), the Swedish Migration Agency focuses on the legal and procedural quality of cases involving children in families. The report states that decisions concerning children must be preceded by an assessment of the best interests of the child, i.e., it must be clearly stated what the best interests of the child are in the individual case. The decision must also be clearly justified so that it is possible to understand how different interests have been weighed against each other. The Swedish Migration Agency has produced an important support document to help staff carry out best interests' assessments (Swedish Migration Agency, 2021). The analysis report (Swedish Migration Agency, 2022) highlights that there is more work to be done in relation to the assessment of the best interests of children in families and that this is an important area of development in the Agency's ongoing legal and procedural work.

The Swedish Police Authority

In cases where the family does not co-operate with the return or is deemed to have absconded, the case is passed to the police, who are then responsible for enforcing the removal or expulsion order. The Migration Agency has specific procedures for when and how the case is handed over to the police. For example, motivational interviews with information about reintegration support should have taken place beforehand. Enforcement by the police can take different forms; most often it results in the person concerned travelling back

on their own, but at other times it may be necessary for the police or Prison and Probation Service staff to accompany the deportee to the airport or to the country of return (Swedish Police Authority, n.d.).

The police can also place persons (including children) in detention, i.e., in a locked space, pending refusal of entry or expulsion. According to the Aliens Act (2005: 716, Chapter 10, Section 5), children may be held in detention for a maximum of 72 hours, or for a further 72 hours if there are special reasons. Between January 2020 and June 2023, 16 children were placed in family detention in Sweden (see Appendix 7).

Swedish Municipalities

Although municipalities do not currently have overall responsibility for children in asylum-seeking families, in contrast to their responsibility for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (National Board of Health and Welfare, n.d.), they do have some room for manoeuvre and some obligations and responsibilities to consider. There is a role for municipalities (mainly schools, including student health services, but also social services and other municipal activities) to work with children's health, development and education during the return process. Municipalities are currently obliged to provide schooling for asylum-seeking children, including during the return process. However, this does not mean that these children are obliged to attend school, but rather that they have the right to attend school during the asylum and return process. While at school, these children also have access to the school health service, which is responsible for prevention and health promotion for children.

According to the Social Services Act (2001: 453), everyone in the municipality has the right to support and assistance. The Social Welfare Committee is also obliged to consider whether there is a need to investigate the child's situation if it comes to the committee's attention that there are children in the municipality who are being harmed or are at risk of being harmed (SKR, n.d.). This responsibility exists whether the child has a legal right to be in the country or not.

On the other hand, according to the Supreme Court (HFD 2017 ref. 33), the municipality is not obliged to provide financial assistance to asylum seekers or their children (according to chapter 4, section 1 of the SoL), even to avoid an emergency, if the person seeking assistance has had his or her asylum application rejected and is in hiding to avoid refusal of entry or expulsion. It is possible, but not obligatory, for municipalities to provide financial support to families (with the support of chapter 4, section 1 of the SoL).

2.4 Return and reintegration support services

Authorities and organisations offer a range of support measures, both before and after return, to facilitate reintegration in the country of return. These measures can take the form of financial, practical, medical, psychosocial, educational and vocational support. The assistance provided by the Swedish Migration Agency (see Swedish Migration Agency, n.d., c.) is within the framework of the European cooperation programme Joint Reintegration Service (JRS) and is aimed at both adults and children returning to certain selected countries, such as Armenia, Somalia, Iraq and Morocco. The application for support is made in Sweden after an asylum application has been rejected, while the support measures themselves are administered in the country of return. The financial assistance amounts to €2,500 for voluntary return and €2,000 if the person is handed over to the police for deportation. An arrival allowance may also be granted for the first days in the country of return, up to €615 per person (ibid).

The Swedish Migration Agency also cooperates with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) to pay a cash grant to returnees in countries where the security situation makes resettlement difficult (Swedish Migration Agency, n.d.). The resettlement grant is paid to returnees in selected countries, including Afghanistan, Eritrea, Iraq and Somalia. All family members can apply for the grant, which amounts to around €2,600 for adults and €1,300 for children - with a maximum of approximately €6,600 per family (ibid).

There are also non-profit organisations working on the ground in different countries to provide support to families who are returning or have already returned. One example is the Swedish Red Cross (n.d.), which works in Sweden to provide information support, legal and practical assistance prior to return (e.g. translation of certificates). In some countries, the Red Cross is also present on the ground to provide post-return support, such as counselling, airport transfers or food parcels.

3. Method and materials

The literature review followed the principles of the systematic review method (see e.g. SBU, 2020; Newman & Gough, 2020), with the exception of certain adaptations that were necessary given the content and timeframe of the review. Any adaptations made are reported in the appendices to the review. The work on the literature review was mainly based on PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta Analyses), the international guidelines for how systematic reviews should be conducted and reported (see further in Page et al., 2021). The aim of using PRISMA is to achieve a more transparent synthesis of evidence. The guidelines emphasise thorough and clear documentation of the search process, inclusion/exclusion of studies and quality assessment of full-text studies.

Appendix 1 contains a description of the search process and the search strategy used for the literature search. Appendix 2 describes the criteria used to include and exclude studies. Anppendix 3 provides an overview of the included studies, including the author(s), year of publication, title, country of origin and country of return, aim and research question(s), research design and sample. Appendix 4 summarises the studies that were read in full but were excluded for various reasons. Appendix 5 provides a flowchart of the entire search process, from database searches to title/abstract reviews and study selection. Appendix 6 presents the quality assessment of the different studies based on the MMAT method (Hong et al., 2018).

3.1 The included studies

As with all literature reviews, the validity of the review depends on the studies included. This means that the nature, content and methods of the available studies largely determine how well this review can contribute to increasing knowledge about children in families in relation to return and (re)integration.

The material in the original studies is largely based on interviews/surveys with the children themselves. They are often combined with interviews with parents and other key sources of information, including school personnel, child welfare professionals and civil society representatives. In some studies, children were not interviewed at all, but only adults around the child were asked to talk about how the child was affected by the return. There are also some studies that focus primarily on adult returnees, but where the findings on children are a 'by-catch' - these studies were also included if they were considered to answer one of the review's research questions.

Of the 29 studies included in the review, 25 have a qualitative research design (mainly semi-structured interviews, but also participant observation and focus group interviews), 2 have a quantitative approach (based on surveys) and the remaining 2 use mixed methods (both qualitative and quantitative) to collect data. The research in this area therefore consists mainly of qualitative research, which has advantages and disadvantages. Qualitative research offers great opportunities for developing theories and hypotheses about a range of research questions. At the same time, it offers limited opportunities for drawing general conclusions.

The few existing quantitative studies focus on (re)integration in school and access to healthcare, but with low external validity as they are conducted in specific contexts, which limits the possibility to generalise results. Nevertheless, the results of these studies are considered relevant to the review as they provide insight into the challenges and opportunities that may exist in relation to the return and (re)integration of children in families. Moreover, the results of the quantitative survey studies are in line with the findings reported in the qualitative interview studies, suggesting that certain phenomena, such as school-related challenges after return, may be relevant regardless of time and place. This, however, is a matter for further research.

Although the majority of studies use similar methods, there are still differences between them that make meta-synthesis[2] difficult (see, for example, Finfgeld-Connett, 2018). These mainly concern the composition of the study groups and the selection of respondents, but also the follow-up of longitudinal data. In addition, results are reported from different countries, and different national contexts make a meta-synthesis of results difficult.

Recipient countries are not specified in all studies (sometimes only information on the most common recipient countries is available). Also, information on the number of respondents from each country is not always available, and some studies lump together groups from different countries. This is a clear disadvantage as it reduces the possibility of assessing contextual relevance and thus reduces the comparability of studies. For more information on the host and return countries from which the studies report data, see Appendix 3. In this context, it should be noted that Sweden is included as a receiving country in 5 of the included studies. As these studies focus on different topics, it was not considered useful to analyse the results based on Swedish data separately.

[2] Metasynthesis is a qualitative analysis method used to combine and analyse the findings of several different qualitative data sets. It is most appropriate when the studies are similar in terms of approach, sample and context.

As the included studies differ in terms of research design, sampling and analysis methods, the results of the studies are presented in different ways in the review. Quantitative studies tend to present results numerically, for example by focusing on percentages and figures. Qualitative studies, which do not attempt to generalise, focus instead on the themes that emerge from the data. This is because the sample is limited and a numerical presentation of results is both inconclusive and irrelevant. Instead, it is common for authors of qualitative studies to express findings in terms of 'most', 'many' or 'some' respondents holding a particular view, to indicate the prominence of the theme in question.

Given the differences in the material, it was considered more meaningful to treat the included studies as separate entities. A narrative synthesis was therefore carried out (see, for example, Popay et al., 2006 or Public Health Agency of Sweden, 2017), which means that the results are not integrated into a composite data source, but are described in narrative form. In this narrative synthesis, the results are presented in an unbounded manner (cf. Public Health Agency of Sweden, 2017), using both words and numbers, depending on how the results are presented in the original studies. The results extracted are only those that answer the research questions of the review.

It is worth noting that only few of the studies have a comparison group of children in the country of return without a migrant background. The usual approach is to compare the child's experiences and situation with the time before the return or refusal decision. There is also a lack of knowledge about how factors such as gender, age and different migration backgrounds may affect children in the return and (re)integration process. There are studies that address these issues, but not to a sufficient extent or in a way that allows general conclusions to be drawn. There is also a lack of studies focusing on the health of children in families after return to the country of origin. The majority of studies focus on children's psychosocial health, while only a few report findings related to physical health.

It is therefore clear that there is a need for further research in this area. Nevertheless, the existing studies are important and give us a tentative insight into how children in families may be affected in terms of social integration, education, development and physical and mental health after return. Such evidence points the way forward, both for the research field and for practitioners in the field who can use this review to make use of the available knowledge.

4. Findings

The results have been grouped under the following themes: 1) participation and preparation during the return process, 2) schooling and education, 3) social integration and sense of belonging, 4) living conditions after return, and 5) health and access to health care. Where age, gender, class or geographical context were found to be important for the results, these are reported under the relevant theme. Although the literature review did not make such a distinction, the results focus mainly on the post-return period rather than the pre-return period. This is because the majority of the research that was available and met the inclusion criteria for the review had this focus. However, there are also findings on prereturn events and processes that have been shown to be important for the child's return and (re)integration process, which are presented here.

Many of the issues discussed here are interrelated and interact with each other. For example, language difficulties affect not only the child's schooling and education (section 4.2.), but also social integration, which in turn affects psychosocial health. The family situation after return and the ability of parents to provide support have an impact on children's schooling and education, social integration and children's psychosocial health. These are just a few examples of how different categories interact. Therefore, the issues presented below should be read as part of a holistic understanding of the child's situation.

References to the original studies are given throughout. In cases where a high proportion of the included literature reports the same findings, a selection of these studies are cited as references in the body of the text. The country of destination/return to which the results refer is only given in the running text when this is considered to improve the understanding of the results. Continuous repetition of the country of destination/country of return has been deemed superfluous, as detailed information on this can be found in Appendix 3.

4.1 Participation and preparation before return

A recurring theme in the research is that children experience the decision to return as abrupt and their own level of involvement is seen as low (see e.g. Vathi & Duci, 2016; Rasmussen et al., 2019; Hagan, 2021). In the literature included in this review, a total of 10 out of 29 studies report findings on this topic. Experiences of lack of participation seem to occur regardless of whether the return was initiated by the parents themselves or whether it was an

official decision that led to the return. For children, it can still be considered an involuntary return if they are not consulted and included in the decision-making process (see, for example, Zuniga & Hamann, 2015). Riiskjaer and Nielsson (2008) interviewed people over the age of 18 who had returned to Iraq as minors with their parents from Denmark. They describe how some of their interviewees expressed that they would not have followed their parents to Iraq if they had had a choice, highlighting the involuntary nature of child return migration. Participants in this study described a lack of participation in the return process, which the researchers argue contributes to an unsustainable post-return situation, resulting in parents who had the opportunity choosing to re-migrate with the family (ibid).

Studies interviewing children in returning families describe a sense of up-rootedness. Return is described as a life-changing event that is rapid, sudden and extensive (De Bree, Davids & De Haas, 2010; Cena, Heim & Trandafoui, 2017). Focusing on children returning from the Netherlands to Armenia, Zijlstra, et al. (2022) report that the children interviewed often felt unprepared and uninformed, which increased their worry and anxiety during the return process.

In a report by Save the Children (Rasmussen et al., 2019), which focuses on the return of children and young people from Sweden to Afghanistan, teachers and other school staff testify that children often lacked insight into the return process; they did not know what would happen or when, and were poorly prepared for their return. Similar findings are presented in a report published by the Swedish Red Cross (Hagan, 2021), based on interviews with families who had returned from Sweden to Iraq, Albania and Kosovo; some families felt that the time limit for voluntary departure (usually two to four weeks from the date the decision became final) gave them far too little time to prepare their children for return. Riiskjaer & Nielsson (2008) also highlight another problem, namely that parents themselves may lack information about the country of return, which may have undergone major political, institutional and socio-cultural changes since they left. This has an impact on the ability of parents to prepare their children for return.

Children in families are identified as a particularly vulnerable group in terms of information and participation in a report by UNICEF (Hökeberg, 2019), based partly on interviews with practitioners in Sweden. The report emphasises that there is no public authority responsible for them in the return process. It is the parents who decide whether their children should be informed about and/or involved in the process. However, in an effort to protect their children, many parents choose not to inform or involve their children in the return process.

Several researchers highlight the lack of participation of children in families as problematic, as even voluntary return/migration by parents can be perceived as coercive for the child if they have not been informed about or involved in the processes leading to the return (see, for example, Zuniga & Hamann, 2015; Vathi & Duci, 2016; De Bree, Davids & De Haas, 2010).

Vathi and Duci (2016), who studied children in families returning from Greece to Albania, argue that preparation and participation before return is crucial for the development of the child's health after return. A sense of participation during the return process can reduce negative psychosocial impacts on children. While facing a new environment poses difficulties and challenges even for those children who have been involved prior to return (ibid), where children feel informed and involved, the chances of more effective (re)integration in the country of return increase. Grosa and King (2022) present similar findings, highlighting the importance of preparing children for their return, for example by providing language preparation and information about the differences they can expect in the school and education system of the country of return. According to the researchers, this can make children better prepared and able to cope with both practical and psychosocial challenges after return.

4.2 Schooling and education

A significant majority of the studies address the issue of schooling and education, which has a clear and central impact on the child's life situation after return. The findings reported below are based on 24 of the 29 studies included in the review and illustrate that school and education-related issues play an important role in the return and (re)integration process.

Successful schooling has the potential to promote children's (re)integration if support is provided to address the challenges that arise after return. These include language problems, different educational cultures and systems, and practical and financial problems. The findings suggest that educational challenges for children in families after return can be broadly defined as integration difficulties rather than reintegration issues. This is understandable given that many of these children were either born in the host country or were very young when their parents decided to migrate. This distinction between integration and reintegration for children in families is important because the need for support services may vary depending on the length of the initial period of adjustment to a new environment. In the case of reintegration, the initial period can be assumed to be shorter, as the person concerned has already been integrated into that specific context at some earlier stage. But in terms of integration, it is more a matter of adapting to a completely new environment, which may require more long-term and intensive interventions.

Language difficulties

One challenge that can arise when children in families have been in the destination country for a long time (some for their entire lives) is the loss of their mother tongue. This can have a negative impact on their (re)integration when they return to their parents' country of origin (see e.g. Iliško, Badjanova, & Ignatjeva, 2017). Studies show that this applies to children returning from and to several different countries, so it can be interpreted as a general problem, rather than being linked to specific ethnic groups or receiving/returning countries. Vathi and Duci (2016), in a study based on interviews with families returning from Greece to Albania, show that the strong desire of families to integrate into the host country often results in overlooking the language, cultural customs and norms of the country of origin. This may prove to be a problem upon return, as illiteracy and inadequate verbal skills may limit opportunities to benefit from education (see e.g. Herrera, Montoya & Erika, 2019 for USA/Mexico and Kunuroglu, Yagmar, van de Vijver & Kroon, 2015 for Europe/Turkey).

Teachers in the country of return who are interviewed or who respond to surveys identify language difficulties, and in particular difficulties in reading and writing, as a problem for school education. Regarding verbal skills, teachers in Albania (Gëdeshi & King, 2022) and Poland (Szydlowska, Grzymala-Moszczynska & Durlik, 2019) describe that returned children can speak everyday language but lack knowledge of specific terms and linguistic-cultural codes.

Vatha & Duci (2016) highlight that the inability to express themselves freely in their mother tongue becomes a stressor for the child after returning, which can lead to shame and low self-esteem. In the long term, this inability may also cause a loss of motivation and dropping out of school (see e.g. Ziljstra et al., 2022). In a report by the Swedish Red Cross (Hagan, 2021), parents and children often describe language adjustment as the most difficult obstacle to completing school. Several children had repeated or dropped out of school due to inadequate language skills (see De Bree, Davids & De Haas, 2010 for similar findings).

Another interesting finding in this context is presented by Gëdeshi and King (2022), who report that some parents describe linguistic integration in the host country, Germany, as easier than in the country of return, Albania. According to the authors, this may be due to the fact that teachers and other school staff in Germany are more accustomed to having children with a migrant background in the classroom, whereas in Albania this habit and preparation was more often lacking. The inability of school staff to understand and cope with the difficulties children face in the new socio-cultural and academic context of the country of return is also highlighted in studies conducted in other national

contexts, based on interviews with children and parents who have returned (see e.g. Árendás, Durst, Katona, & Messing, 2022 for Hungary and Grosa & King, 2022 for Latvia).

Save the Children (Rasmussen, et al., 2019) write in a report that school staff in Sweden who meet children before they return to Afghanistan express the need for mother tongue education and language support for the children. In line with this, Herrera, Montoya & Erika (2019) show that support measures, including language training, have contributed to a more successful (re)integration of children in families returning to Mexico from the United States. Therefore, language support, both before return in the form of mother tongue teaching and after return in the form of additional language support, can be considered as a possible tool to reduce the challenges of linguistic difficulties after return.

Educational culture and systems

Another barrier to children's education is that the educational context in the country of return may be very different from that in the host country. Differences described include educational culture, teaching styles and socio-cultural norms, but also curricula, style requirements and academic goals for education. Árendás et al. (2022) describe, among other things, that children perceived education in Hungary as 'less playful', more strict and traditionally structured than in the UK. Other studies highlight that the educational culture in the country of return can also be perceived as more competitive, that there is a lack of professional support and that it is taken for granted that children should take more responsibility for catching up (see for example Kunuroglu et al. 2015 for returns from Germany, the Netherlands and France to Turkey; Cena, Heim & Trandafoui, 2017 for returns mainly from Greece to Albania; and Szydlowska, Grzymala-Moszczynska & Durlik, 2019 for returns from various Western countries to Poland).

Herrera, Montoya and Erika (2019), who look at children in families returning to Mexico from the US, show that school staff who had the opportunity to spend extra teaching time with children facilitated their educational (re)integration. Similar findings are reported by Szydlowska, Grzymala-Moszczynska & Durlik (2019), looking at children in families returning to Poland from several different countries. They find that children who received additional support at school were able to catch up with other students. However, such support (private or public) was only available to certain groups and in certain schools.

There are also examples of teaching practices in the country of return that contravene the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international laws. For example, Zijlstra et al. (2022) describe how children returning from

the Netherlands to Armenia stated that teachers used violence in some classes. Similarly, Despagne and Suarez (2019), focusing on children who have returned from the United States to Mexico, describe a case where a teacher physically punished the child when he or she could not speak Spanish. However, such incidents appear to represent more extreme cases. A more common problem is that returning children may feel excluded by teachers and that they are expected to participate in the classroom on the same terms as other students (see, e.g., Árendás et al. (2017) for children returning to Hungary; Grosa & King (2017) for children returning to Latvia).

Vathi, Duci and Dhembo (2016), focusing on children in families who returned to Albania from Greece, further describe how parents are encouraged by teachers to buy private lessons for their children to supplement their education. While such solutions could be effective and help children catch up, few families had the financial means to organise private tuition for their children. Access to education and learning opportunities can to some extent be seen as an economic issue, where the education system may deprive disadvantaged children of the opportunity to complete their education.

Knowledge, skills and attitudes of school staff

The need for more knowledge and skills among school staff working with these children, both before and after their return, is another prominent finding in this area of research. In a study on children in families returning to Poland from different Western countries, it is reported that teachers feel ill-prepared and have difficulties in understanding the behaviour and actions of returning children (Szydlowska, Grzymala-Moszczynska & Durlik, 2019). Grosa and King (2022), focusing on children in families returning to Latvia, argue that teachers often lack experience with migrant children, making it difficult for them to adapt their teaching to children with a migration background.

Some studies describe positive examples in this regard, where teachers developed competent and effective practices to compensate for children's knowledge gaps. For example, Vathi, Duci and Dhembo (2016) describe how some teachers in Albania had specific educational plans for the returning children, and some worked with 'peer mentoring', where newly arrived students were paired with a classmate for learning support. Similar findings are presented by Herrera, Montoya and Erika (2019), who studied children returning to Mexico from the United States. The authors describe a range of strategies used by teachers to reintegrate children into school, including individualised support, peer support and increased collaboration with parents. However, the literature included in this review lacks evidence of formal school

reintegration programmes for returning children. The positive examples cited here are initiatives based on the commitment of individual teachers and other school staff.

Several studies describe a lack of resources, knowledge and skills among teachers and school staff in terms of approaches and methods that can support returning children. Herrera, Montoya and Erika (2019) argue that teachers in Mexico, unlike those in countries with higher immigration rates, lack tools to integrate children with a migrant background. They find that children and parents describe teachers' lack of understanding as a major problem for education after return. Cena, Heim and Trandafoui (2017), focusing on returns from different countries to Albania, report that children often experience unreasonable expectations at school, a lack of understanding of the challenges they face after return, and no personalised solutions to these challenges. Árendás et al. (2022) describe a 'families-resolve-this' approach by schools in Hungary, where parents are expected to help their children fill knowledge gaps.

There also appears to be a need for school staff to increase their knowledge, skills and understanding of the return process during the pre-return period. A report by Save the Children (Rasmussen et al., 2019) shows that a significant majority of school staff who responded to surveys in Sweden expressed a need for increased knowledge and more tools to support children in the return process. In the surveys, which were answered by 140 teachers and other school staff, only one in ten responded that they felt they had sufficient knowledge or skills to support children and young people in a return process.

Administrative and financial barriers

Returning families may also face practical and financial disadvantages that make it difficult or impossible for the child to attend school. A common challenge highlighted in the literature is the lack of official translations of important documents, such as grades, which are required in many countries (Gëdeshi & King, 2022; Zijlstra, et al., 2022; Rasmussen et al., 2019).

Gëdeshi and King (2022), who studied children returning with their families from Germany to Albania, report difficulties in obtaining validated documents as a barrier to children's schooling. Similarly, Amuedo-Dorantes and Juarez (2022), focusing on children in families returning to Mexico from the USA, highlight the need for official documents as a problem for children's schooling after return. Difficulties in having documents recognised by schools can lead to children being placed in lower classes and falling behind in their education by several years, which can have a negative impact on their motivation and educational aspirations (see, for example, Kienzler et al., 2019).

Other practical barriers that can hinder and prevent school attendance are of a financial nature. These include direct costs, such as school fees (Guillaume, Majidi & Samuel Hall, 2018), but also indirect costs, such as the inability to finance private tuition for children who need to catch up with their peers (Szydłowska, Durlik & Grzymała-Moszczyńska, 2019). Such resource constraints may, in turn, lead the child and/or parents to perceive dropping out of school as a better option, and to engage in paid work instead (Gëdeshi & King, 2022; Zijlstra, et al., 2022). Child labour, mentioned in some studies, is discussed further in section 4.4 on the living conditions and life situation of children after return.

4.3 Social integration and sense of belonging

The social and socio-cultural challenges faced by children in families are a common theme in the studies included in this review. More than half of the included studies report findings on the sense of socio-cultural belonging and social integration of children in families after return. Again, these findings show that children in families returning to their parents' country of origin are more likely to be struggling to integrate than to reintegrate. The findings under this theme show that children in families may experience difficulties in feeling a socio-cultural attachment to the country of return and that there are challenges to social integration as children are placed in a completely new and unfamiliar context. The most prominent categories in this theme are 1) bullying, exclusion and stigmatisation, 2) sense of belonging after return and 3) girls' experiences of patriarchal structures. The following section presents findings under these three categories.

Bullying, exclusion and stigmatisation

After return, it is common for children to experience difficulties in adjusting to social contexts. A recurring finding reported across countries is that children tend to be seen as 'different' by both peers and adults in the country of return (Szydlowska, Durlik & Grzymala-Moszczynska, 2019; Vathi & King, 2021; Zijlstra, et al, 2022; Guillaume, Majidi & Samuel Hall, 2018; Rasmussen, et al, 2019; Ni Laoire, 2011; Riiskjaer & Nielsson, 2008). This is partly due to differences in norms, sociocultural rules and ways of life (Szydlowska, Durlik & Grzymala-Moszczynska, 2019) and partly due to language difficulties of returned children (Cena, Heim &Trandafoui, 2017).

Focusing on children returning to Poland from various Western countries, Szydłowska, Durlik & Grzymała-Moszczyńska (2019) describe incidents that could contribute to children being seen as socially deviant, which in turn could negatively affect social integration. Such incidents include returning children

addressing teachers by their first name or shaking hands with the teacher, which led to criticism and ridicule from classmates and teachers. Szydłowska, Durlik & Grzymała-Moszczyńska (2019) interpret the power dynamic between children and adults as more unequal in Poland than, for example, in the host countries of the UK, Germany, Italy, Switzerland and Norway, and therefore actions that are seen as undermining teachers' authority are perceived as more inappropriate in Poland.

Differences in norms, rules and behaviours can lead to a sense of alienation among returned children. However, this can also be a two-way process, as returned children themselves may perceive their majority peers as different. This is demonstrated by Vathi & King (2021) and Cena, Heim & Trandafoui (2017), both of which focus on children who have returned to Albania from Greece. In interviews, returned children repeatedly described the thoughts, behaviours and actions of their peers in the country of return as different. Herrera, Montoya and Erika (2019), looking at returns from the United States to Mexico, describe these experiences in terms of 'culture shock' for the children in the returning families.

The literature also suggests that in some countries or contexts, return from a Western country may itself be a stigma, and returnees may be seen as religiously or culturally corrupt and 'Westernised' (see Zijlstra, et al, 2022 for Armenia; Guillaume, Majidi & Samuel Hall, 2018 for Afghanistan; Rasmussen et al, 2019 for Afghanistan; DRC et al, 2019 for Afghanistan, Syria and Somalia). Research focusing on adult returnees has referred to this as 'returnee stigma' (see, for example, Mueller & Kuschminder, 2022; Galipo, 2018; Wang, 2014). Such stigma can affect children in a number of ways. For some children it leads to feelings of loneliness, isolation and alienation (Zevulun, et al., 2021; Vathi & Duci, 2016), while for others it can also lead to bullying, including physical and verbal abuse by peers (Cena, Heim & Trandafoui, 2017; Szydlowska, Durlik & Grzymala-Moszczynska, 2019; Herrera, Montoya & Erika, 2019; DRC et al., 2019).

Several studies have identified age as an important factor in social integration. According to these studies, children in their early teens seem to have more difficulty integrating socially after return than younger children (see e.g. Vathi, Duci & Dhembo, 2016; Vathi & Duci, 2016; Zevulun, 2018; Szydlowska, Durlik & Grzymala-Moszczynska, 2019). The cut-off age for this varies between studies, but the common pattern is that the older the child is at the time of return, the more difficult it is to integrate socially with peers afterwards. According to Szydlowska, Durlik and Grzymala-Moszczynska (2019), this may be because younger children find it easier to form new friendships than older children. Vathi and Duci (2016) also refer to the fact that younger children do not have the time to form as strong a bond with the host country, and may therefore be more open to forming new friendships after the return of the family.

Sense of belonging after return

The literature repeatedly describes how children in families lack a sense of belonging to the new socio-cultural context, especially in the initial phase after return (Zijlstra et al., 2022; Vathi & King, 2021; Zevulun et al., 2018; Cena, Heim & Trandafoui, 2017; Vathi & Duci, 2016; De Bree, Davids & De Haas, 2010). These studies describe how children still refer to the host country as 'my home country', while emotional ties to the country of return are lacking. Riiskjaer and Nielsson (2008) show that children who grew up in Denmark and return with their families to Iraq experience a clear lack of belonging to the country. This lack of belonging among children is said to be one of the reasons why parents choose to re-migrate to Denmark when given the opportunity (ibid).

Cena, Heim and Trandafoui (2017) describe how children (through drawings) depict their time in Greece, Italy or the US as full of play, for example by depicting playgrounds, houses and trees. The time after returning to Albania is portrayed in a more sombre manner, with no playgrounds and with tall, dense buildings that limit their freedom and ability to play. Access to playgrounds, sports and leisure activities is also highlighted as a problem for children's (re)integration in Gëdeshi and King (2022), based on interviews with psychologists who had treated the returned children.

However, in the few studies that have followed children over a longer period of time, the results show that children begin to identify with the new context. Adults (especially parents) play a central role in encouraging and supporting this acculturation (Cena, Heim & Trandafoui, 2017). Vathi and Duci (2016) argue that, over time, feelings of helplessness and lack of 'diasporic' belonging are replaced by more positive attitudes towards the new environment and living conditions. According to the authors, this adjustment is strongly linked to the degree of social support children receive from their surroundings (ibid).

The age at the time of return may also have an important influence on how early (and if at all) a sense of belonging to the country of return will develop. Children in their teens are going through more critical and sensitive stages of life, making it difficult for them to cope with major changes (see Vathi & King, 2021). Vathi and King (ibid) therefore suggest that younger children are more likely to have a long-term and sustainable adaptation to the new environment after return.

Patriarchal contexts and the experiences of girls

An interesting aspect emerging from the research is that returned girls tend to face significant difficulties in adapting in contexts with more restrictive gender norms and higher levels of gender-based violence and oppression (Vathi & Duci, 2016; Zijlstra, et al., 2022; Hagan, 2021; Guillaume, Majidi &

Samuel Hall, 2018; Rasmussen, et al., 2019; De Bree, Davids & De Haas, 2010; Kienzler et al., 2019; DRC et al., 2019). This is particularly the case in contexts where the host country differs significantly from the country of return in terms of norms, laws and circumstances related to sex, gender and equality. Such social, legal and cultural contrasts can come as a shock to returning girls, as personal freedoms are restricted in ways they are not accustomed to, leading to drastic differences in quality of life (Zijlstra et al., 2022).

Vathi and Duci (2016), who studied children in families returning to Albania from Greece, describe how girls in the family resist the new, stricter lifestyle to which they are forced to adapt, which further limits their ability to feel a sense of belonging and community with the new context. Kienzler et al. (2019) also highlight gender oppression as an obstacle to girls' sense of belonging in the return context. Zijlstra and colleagues (2022) interviewed girls and boys who had returned to Armenia from the Netherlands, and found that patriarchal structures had a negative impact on the psychosocial health of girls in particular. For example, the authors describe an incident where a girl was subjected to gender-based violence by relatives after responding to WhatsApp messages from male friends in the Netherlands. Such gender norms and practices may also vary in intensity according to regional differences; some areas of the country of return may be more patriarchal than others (see Zevulun et al. 2021). The experience and intensity of gender-based oppression after return may therefore vary depending on the area to which the family returns.

A report by the Swedish Red Cross (Hagan, 2021) states that women and children returning to Iraq are particularly vulnerable due to the risk of gender-based violence and oppression. In line with this, Save the Children (Guillaume, Majidi & Samuel Hall, 2018; Rasmussen, et al., 2019) describes that girls during the return process are particularly concerned about gender-based/sexual violence and oppression, being forced into child marriage, and not being able to complete their schooling after return. Other studies show that access to education after return is particularly low for girls - partly because many families prefer to send their sons to school, and partly because social norms prevent girls from attending school (see e.g. De Bree, Davids & De Haas for Morocco, 2010; DRC, et al, 2019 for Afghanistan/Syria/Somalia; and Guillaume, Majidi & Samuel Hall, 2018 for Afghanistan).

4.4 Living conditions after return

This section presents findings on children's living conditions, i.e. the conditions and circumstances in which children live after return. A total of 11 out of 29 studies report findings on children's living conditions after family return, more specifically on aspects related to parental situation and capacity, and

physical and material security. Although the results of the studies that focus on these aspects generally point in the same direction, i.e. that children's living conditions deteriorate after return, there are variations that need to be taken into account.

A prominent finding of the research is that the situation of parents and children after return is intertwined in many ways. Children and young people depend on parents or other caregivers to protect, support and meet their developmental needs, so the situation and capacity of parents after return is important for the living situation of children (cf. Zevulun et al., 2021). For example, Kunuroglu (2017) shows that parents in families returning to Turkey actively reduced their children's emotional stress by taking a number of measures, such as installing television channels from the host country and encouraging and facilitating contact with friends from the host country. Other studies show that parents hire private tutors to meet their children's needs and reduce difficulties at school (see Despagne & Suarez, 2019 for Mexico; and Szydłowska, Durlik, Grzymała-Moszczyńska, 2019 for Poland). However, as mentioned earlier, the ability of parents to take such measures may depend on the availability of financial resources (cf. Árendás et al., 2022).

The economic situation of the family can affect children in a number of ways. Families' financial difficulties may result in children having to participate in paid work to contribute to the household economy, as shown in a study of families returning to Albania (Gëdeshi & King, 2022). In a study of children in families who have returned to Mexico from the USA, researchers show that returnee children are more likely to be in work than in school than Mexican children without a migration background (Amuedo-Dorantes & Juarez, 2022).

Another aspect addressed in the literature is the housing situation of children after return. Zijlstra et al. (2022), looking at children in families returning to Armenia from the Netherlands, find that the quality of housing for children after return varies, with some living in decent accommodation and others in over-crowded accommodation without electricity and running water. In a report by Save the Children (Guillaume, Majidi & Samuel Hall, 2018), which focuses on children returning to Afghanistan from different parts of Europe, the authors highlight that the basic housing needs of children in Afghanistan are met and that the vast majority have access to electricity and water. However, the authors also highlight that this reflects the fact that interviews were conducted with people living in urban areas where housing conditions are better.

The housing situation of children in families also appears to be linked to access to social networks in the country of return. This is illustrated by Zevulun et al. (2021) who show that families returning to Kosovo were assisted by relatives

and friends in finding accommodation. Without a resourceful network, it can be difficult to find and/or maintain housing (ibid), and private landlords may be particularly reluctant to rent to families with children (DRC et al., 2019, focusing on Afghanistan/Syria/Somalia). Social networks can also contribute financially and compensate for parents' lack of livelihood opportunities (see, for example, Hagan, 2021, focusing on Albania/Kosovo/Iraq).

4.5 Health and access to health care

Several of the studies on which this review is based present findings related to child health conditions in families before and after return. In total, 13 out of 29 studies present findings related to health, and the vast majority of these studies look at children's health after return.

However, the relationship between children's health and return is complex. As mentioned earlier, health can be influenced by all the aspects discussed so far (schooling, socio-cultural belonging and social integration, living conditions and life situation), but also by experiences before and during return. In this section I will describe in more detail the findings from the included studies on the health and access to health care of children in families after return. However, as mentioned in section 3.1, it is important to acknowledge the lack of studies, particularly in relation to the physical health of children in families. The few studies that do report findings on physical health do not have this as their main focus, leaving a large gap in knowledge.

Psychological and social health

Several studies have described poor psychological health and well-being among children in returning families, with the greatest deficits reported in the early stages of return (see, for example, Amuedo-Dorantes & Juarez, 2022; Zijlstra, et al., 2022; Vathi & Duci, 2016; Zevulun, et al., 2021; Zevulun et al., 2018; Kunuroglu, et al., 2015). Vathi and Duci (2016), who interviewed children and teenagers returning to Albania from Greece, describe how participants' experiences varied depending on the length of time since their return. For many of the children, the new environment caused confusion, sadness and stress-related symptoms that resolved after some time, while for some, more severe anxiety and depression emerged and persisted in the longer term. These symptoms and conditions were most severe after return, although Vathi and Duci (2016) describe that symptoms tend to emerge from the time the decision to return is communicated to the child.

Waiting for deportation also negatively affects mental health, and the situation of children in families not accepted by the country of return is particularly stressful (Rasmussen, Guillén Åkerlind & Hagan, 2019). In some cases, children may even experience relief upon return, as they no longer have to live with the daily tension and fear of deportation (see e.g. Zijlstra et al., 2022).

In a study of children in families returning from the Netherlands to Armenia, Zijlstra et al. (2022) describe symptoms and conditions such as sadness, depression, emotional distress, fear, sleep disturbance, anxiety and suicidal thoughts in children after return. Similar findings are presented by Herrera et al. (2019), who studied children in families returning to Mexico from the US. Many of the children in their study struggled with depression after their return, which the researchers argue is linked to language and socialisation difficulties, among others.

As shown above, children's mental health can be affected by a number of events and circumstances after return. However, there are also studies that illustrate the impact of pre-return experiences on children's health after return. Zevulun et al (2018) look at the long-term effects of time spent in the host country, arguing that stability and security during the asylum process is fundamental to health outcomes after return. In their study, Zevulun and her colleagues (2018) found that children without a long-term residence permit in the host country lacked stability in their lives, which negatively affected their socio-emotional well-being, regardless of whether their return was 'voluntary' or forced. Compared to children with long-term residence permits and therefore stable lives in the host country, children without such permits had poorer health and well-being after return. Temporary residence permits, which became the rule rather than the exception following changes in Swedish legislation in 2016, can therefore be expected to have a negative impact on children's health conditions in the long term (cf. Rasmussen, Guillén Åkerlind & Hagan, 2019).

Other studies highlight the negative impact of forced removals with police intervention on children's mental health. Forced removal itself can be traumatic for children (Zijlstra et al., 2022; Gëdeshi & King, 2022; Zayas et al., 2023), but the circumstances surrounding the event are particularly important in determining how children experience the intervention. Interviews with children who were forcibly removed from Europe to Afghanistan suggest that the police intervention was perceived as sudden and shocking, and that there was a lack of information about what was happening (Guillaume, Majidi & Samuel Hall, 2018). In line with this, Rasmussen, Guillén Åkerlind and Hagan (2018) found that an overwhelming proportion of children returned from Sweden to Afghanistan felt unsafe at some point during the return process, and several stated that they had experienced some form of coercion or

violence during their return. However, it is unclear at what stage of the return process the experiences of coercion or violence occurred, and whether it was in Sweden, in Afghanistan or during the return journey. It is also not clear from the report what caused these experiences or how they manifested themselves.

The impact of age at the time of return on children's psychological health is another aspect addressed in the research. As mentioned earlier, children in their teenage years may be more sensitive to the effects of the changes associated with return and therefore more likely to experience negative psychosocial outcomes. Older adolescent children have been identified as particularly vulnerable to the development of psychosocial problems and mental illness following return (see, for example, Vathi & King, 2021; Zevulun, et al., 2018; Vathi & Duci, 2016). However, Grosa (2022) shows that young age is not always a protective factor for returning children and that children who returned at a relatively young age may in some cases carry long-term negative memories and experiences. However, evidence on the relationship between age at return and children's mental health is relatively scarce, and there is insufficient understanding of how environmental and contextual factors may influence this relationship. The child's living situation and conditions after return are likely to be important, as are the conditions under which the return process took place.

Physical health

Only two studies in this review report findings on the physical health of children in families after return. These studies report that the physical symptoms that may occur in children after return are often related to deteriorating psychological and social health (so-called psychosomatic symptoms). For example, Vathi and Duci (2016) found that some children developed anorexia after return, which the researchers linked to the children's poor psychological health. Zijlstra et al (2022) describe physical problems such as headaches, stomach aches, eating disorders and nausea in children and suggest that parents related these physical symptoms to their children's emotional distress after return. However, there is no in-depth description or analysis of children's physical health in these studies, and there is a lack of knowledge about how to understand the development of physical symptoms in relation to, for example, gender, age and living situation.

Access to health care

In a study, Amuedi-Dorantes and Juarez (2022) examined access to health care for children in families who had returned to Mexico from the US and found that they had significantly lower access to health care compared to non-migrant children. Similar findings are presented by Zijlstra et al. (2022), who argue that

access to health care for children in families returning from the Netherlands to Armenia was limited for economic reasons, as families were unable to pay for care. This had a negative impact on children's physical, psychological and social health.

A Red Cross report (Hagan, 2021) shows that many of those interviewed after returning to Albania, Iraq and Kosovo reported a lack of access to health care. Zevulun et al. (2021), in a qualitative study of vulnerable children in families returning to Kosovo, describe children with a range of medical conditions as particularly vulnerable upon return because many lack access to health care. A report by Save the Children (Guillaume, Majidi & Samuel Hall, 2018), focusing on children returning to Afghanistan from Europe, identifies access to mental health care in particular as a pressing issue for children after return.

While these studies focus on very different national and institutional contexts, the findings illustrate a commonality: children in families returning to their country of origin from a host country tend to have less access to health care. Whether due to limited rights based on the child's country of birth or due to financial constraints, lack of access to care can have negative consequences for the child's health, both in the short and long term.

5. Conclusions, future research and policy recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

A prominent finding of the review is that children in families returning to their country of origin often experience the decision to return as abrupt. They describe their own participation in the return process as low and perceive a lack of information prior to return. While parents are expected to ensure that their children's needs are met, many parents in the asylum process may be in a psychosocial fragile situation themselves and can be unaware of the importance of involving their children. This is where different social actors can play an important compensatory role and support parents and children in the return process. Such support includes answering children's questions and providing important information, as well as offering psychosocial support and addressing any anxiety that may exist prior to return.

In terms of education, research shows that children in returning families face several post-return challenges in school. This is due, for example, to deficits in their mother tongue, but also to the fact that the educational systems and cultures in many of the return countries are very different from those in the host countries. There may also be practical difficulties, such as a lack of formal translation of important documents, certificates and diplomas. Again, preparation before return can play an important role. For example, mother tongue education while the family is waiting for a final decision in the asylum procedure could address the lack of linguistic skills and thus facilitate schooling in the country of return. Another important intervention in relation to education is to familiarise the child with the school system in the country of return and to help with practical details (such as the translation of important certificates and diplomas) before return.

Children in returning families may also face discrimination, bullying and marginalisation after return, which is also a prominent theme in research on adult returnees. The literature on return often refers to a 'returnee stigma' that exists in some countries or contexts, i.e. a stigma attached to return itself. This may be based on the fact that returnees are labelled as 'different', 'westernised' or even 'culturally depraved' in certain contexts. In the case of children, the

stigmatisation of returnees is most evident at school and in contact with peers. Several studies emphasise the importance of having a social network to counteract such exclusionary processes; for example, having cousins of the same age can protect children from bullying and exclusion. These findings are consistent with research on both adult returnees and unaccompanied child returnees, which has highlighted the risk of exposure to returnee stigma and the protective role of social networks.

Many studies also show that children and parents often experience a lack of support from the school after return, leading to children struggling to catch up and in some cases losing motivation and dropping out. However, there are also examples where school staff in the country of return have created an effective support system around the child, such as additional homework assistance, a classmate as a mentor and good cooperation with parents. Having a classmate as a mentor can also be an important contribution to the child's social integration and counteract feelings of exclusion. Such examples can be highlighted as good practice and be an important part of future working methods, for example for organisations providing local reintegration support to returning families.

The review also shows poor mental and social health among children in returning families, including depression, sleep deprivation, anxiety and social isolation. Some studies also report that mental health problems can lead to psychosomatic symptoms such as headaches, stomach-aches, nausea and sometimes even eating disorders. However, there are very few studies that examine or report the prevalence of physical health problems associated with the return of children, so no real conclusions can be drawn in this area. Findings on mental health problems are more common and are often linked to other aspects such as the level of involvement in the return process, schooling, a sense of belonging, social integration, and living conditions. There is also evidence that children in families, especially from vulnerable and economically disadvantaged groups, are more likely to lack access to health care in the country of return than non-migrant children.

When working with children in returning families, it is important to consider factors such as age, gender and socio-economic situation. The review highlights that such factors can affect how well children adapt to the country of return, but also how the decision to return is perceived. In terms of age, studies suggest that young children adapt more easily to return. Children in their teens are more likely to be negatively affected by the decision in the long term, to have more difficulties adjusting to the country of return and to develop more psychological and social health problems. Several studies also highlight that it can be more difficult for girls to return to a country that is more patriarchal than the host country and where their rights and freedoms may be restricted.

Furthermore, several studies show that the socio-economic situation after return has a strong impact on the child's living conditions, schooling and chances of (re)integration. One important conclusion that can be drawn from this, even if more research is needed in this area, is the need for individualised support for children. A 'one-size-fits-all' approach risks overlooking the specific circumstances of the child, which will affect their opportunities and barriers to successful integration upon return. Therefore, when working with children in families facing return, it is important to take into account the factors that may affect the child's specific situation. This means that the support and information provided to the child should not only be child-friendly, but also age- and gender-appropriate and designed in relation to the child's expected life situation after return.

This review can contribute to knowledge that can help us identify and develop important interventions before return takes place. While return can be a major psychosocial stress for children in families, effective interventions prior to return can contribute to making the consequences of such psychosocial stress temporary rather than long-term or permanent. The findings of this report represent the current 'best available knowledge' and can be used as a basis for working with children in families in the return process. It also provides an important basis for future studies in this area.

5.2 Future research

During the course of this review, several gaps in knowledge were identified in terms of methodology, sampling, research questions and context. Some of these were already discussed in Section 3.1 and are briefly summarised here to provide an overview of the research needed. In terms of methodology, qualitative studies dominate, with semi-structured interviews being the most common data collection method. These studies are a source of important analytical insights and an opportunity for a deeper understanding of a significant range of issues. Unfortunately, no general conclusions can be drawn from them, and there is a need for more large-scale studies with a quantitative design that examine whether the conditions presented in qualitative studies can be generalised.

Further research is needed to examine how different background factors may affect children in families in the return process. Some of the findings from this literature review relate to age, gender, socio-economic background, the specific country of return and access to social networks. More evidence is needed to understand how these factors interact and may affect the health, education and integration of children in returning families. There is also a lack

of studies that examine the return process for children in families before a return takes place, focusing for example on the family situation and interactions with the authorities.

In addition, very few studies look at how children in families adapt to the country of return over time. The few longitudinal studies that have looked at this suggest that some of the problems that initially arise after return, such as a lack of a sense of belonging and social integration, are alleviated or disappear over time. However, there can also be a case for looking at how background factors affect adjustment over time. For example, the stability of the living situation after return, age at the time of return and gender-related conditions are things that could affect the adjustment of children in families, even over a longer period of time.

Another area in need of further research is knowledge of the conditions that exist before a return takes place. In particular, we need to know more about the impact of the working methods and practices of different authorities and officials. More studies focusing on children's own perspectives in meetings and contacts with authorities and social actors prior to return would give us a deeper insight into this issue.

Another knowledge gap is the experience of public officials who come into contact with children in families during the return process, such as social workers, school staff and immigration officials. Although some studies include interviews with representatives of these professional groups, more knowledge is needed based on the experiences and perceptions of these professional groups. In this context, it can also be mentioned that there are relatively few studies that examine the link between the pre-return period and the opportunities for adjustment after return.

Finally, few studies on the return migration of children in families are based on data from Sweden as a host country. There are specific conditions in different countries in terms of institutional, political and social contexts. There is therefore a need for more studies that show how children in families returning from Sweden to different parts of the world are affected in terms of health, education and (re)integration.

5.3 Policy recommendations

Based on the results presented in the review and the conclusions that can be drawn from them, there are a number of policy recommendations that can be made. As mentioned earlier, this review is based on the best available knowledge at present, which may be further developed in the future, leading to more elaborate recommendations.

Develop and clarify the roles and responsibilities of public stakeholders

The first recommendation of this review is to develop and clarify the roles and responsibilities of the different authorities involved in the asylum and return process for children in families. The different stages of the asylum process, including the division of roles and responsibilities for each stage of the process, need clarification for the actors involved, the parents and the child. At present, children in families risk falling between the cracks. It could therefore be considered whether a single authority should be given overall responsibility for children in families when returning. This could lead to a more coherent process and provide a more systematic support system.

Provide qualitative guidelines, methods and support to public officials

In order to provide accurate, consistent and coherent information and support throughout the process, public officials need qualitative guidelines and evidence-based tools at their disposal. Interventions need to be child-sensitive and individualised, as children's situations may differ depending on factors such as length of stay in the host country, gender, age, socio-economic status, family networks and resources upon return. For example, girls in families may be concerned about gender-based violence and oppression in the country of return. Studies show that some girls in families experience such violence and oppression after return because they have been raised with and behave according to gender norms that are different from those in the country of return. While such outcomes are highly context-specific, it is important to address gender-specific concerns during the return process, which is why an individualised approach is important.

Allow and support children and families to prepare before their return

For children in families to be able to prepare for return, it is also important that the family is supported to mobilise resources before the return takes place. One example is bureaucratic support prior to return, such as formal translation of important documents such as grades and school reports. Another example is communicating important information about the return to the child well before the return takes place. Timing is important as sudden changes can lead to feelings of shock, which in turn can negatively affect children's health and (re)integration upon return. Another important aspect is that families who have been refused asylum and are facing return may be in a psychologically fragile situation (Rasmussen, Guillén Åkerlind & Hagan, 2019). Therefore, the receptiveness to receiving support during the return process may vary. With

this in mind, understanding and receptivity to support may increase over time during the return process, so it may be important to reiterate offers of support to children. Such initiatives could ultimately lead to a more sustainable return for the whole family – as the lack of (re)integration of children in the country of return may also affect the parents after return.

Promote knowledge and skills that are important for life after return

As the outcome of the asylum application is uncertain, the child needs to be provided with opportunities for integration in the host country as well as opportunities for (re)integration in the event of return. It is therefore important to promote the knowledge and skills needed in the country of return while the family awaits a final decision on their asylum application. For example, research shows that mother tongue proficiency is particularly important for children in families to be able to (re)integrate educationally, socially and culturally upon return. It is also important for the child to have a basic understanding of and be prepared for differences in educational systems, educational cultures and curricula. This could lead to more accurate expectations and reduce the shock of facing a completely new educational environment.

Strengthen collaboration with local reintegration support providers

Social actors and government officials in the host country can undertake a number of initiatives to increase the readiness of children in families to return. However, even those children who are best prepared face significant challenges in terms of education, health and social and cultural adaptation to the new country. Organisations providing reintegration support have an important role to play in ensuring that children's needs and rights are met. This will contribute to a more sustainable return for the whole family. Increased cooperation with these organisations can lead to more families being effectively reintegrated. It is important that support is provided not only at the individual level but also at the institutional level, for example by working with schools to develop introduction programmes for returning children.

Enhance the participation of children in families in the asylum and return process

Authorities and organisations involved in the asylum and return process for children in families need to consider whether more active measures can be taken to increase children's participation in the process. In some respects, such work may consist of an active 'change of perspective', whereby children in families are not automatically assumed to have their needs met because

their guardians are involved in the process. It may also involve more concrete measures, such as always providing the child with individualised and age-appropriate written or oral information.

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Vathi, Z., Duci, V. & Dhembo, E. (2016). Homeland (Dis) Integrations: Educational Experience, Children and Return Migration to Albania. *Internationel Migration*, 54(3): 159-172.

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Appendix 1

Search strategy

The literature search was mainly conducted in scientific databases, but was also supplemented by the so-called snowball sampling method, i.e. finding relevant research by screening reference lists of key studies. As a final step, the websites of selected organisations were also searched for relevant research.

First, a "test search" was carried out in Scopus and Web of Science using the following search string "children AND return OR reintegration AND refugee OR migra* OR immigra*". The test search was limited to English-language publications, published in 2010 or later for more recent studies, and publications in journals, books and book series. This search term yielded a total of 726 hits, and 10 studies (key studies) were selected as the most relevant to the aim and research questions. These key studies were then used to develop a search strategy with further keywords and search strings for the 'real' searches of the databases.

In April 2023, systematic searches were carried out in five scientific databases: Scopus, Web of Science, Swepub, Google Scholar and DiVA. Scopus and Web of Science are relatively comprehensive in terms of peer-reviewed research, while Swepub, Google Scholar and DiVA were used to capture the 'grey literature' in the field, such as books, book chapters, reports, dissertations and manuscripts produced by public agencies, universities and other organisations. In some of the databases, additional searches were carried out using new search terms because the initial searches did not yield enough relevant hits.

Table 1. Search results

Scopus: 347 hits	Date: April 12th 2023
Search string: TITLE-ABS-KEY (refugee* OR immigrant* OR migrant* AND child* OR adolescent* OR young* OR youth AND return AND migration OR returning AND migrant AND children OR reintegration OR readaptation OR repatriation) AND (EXCLUDE (DOCTYPE, "re") OR EXCLUDE (DOCTYPE, "er") OR EXCLUDE (DOCTYPE, "no"))	
Web of Science: 720 hits	**Date: April 12th 2023**
Search string: returning migrant children OR returning immigrant children OR returning refugee children (Topic) and Book Review or Review Article or Editorial Material or Letter or Note or News Item or Correction or Biographical-Item or Discussion or Fiction, Creative Prose (Exclude – Document Types)	
SwePub: 327 hits (18 hits from supplementary search)	**Date: April 12th 2023**
Search string: return migration OR return* AND refugee* AND child Supplementary search April 12th, 2023: återvändande OCH migration	
Google Scholar: 162 hits	**Date: April 12th 2023**
Search string: "returning migrant children" OR "returning immigrant children" OR "returning refugee children" OR "återvändande flyktingbarn" OR "återvändande barn i familj" OR "återvändande familjer"	
DiVA: 100 hits (30 hits from supplementary search)	**Date: April 12th 2023**
Search string: Återvändande OCH migration Supplementary search April 12th, 2023: Return migration AND child*	

Note: Search hits from these databases were then imported into Endnote for title and abstract screening. Once duplicates and irrelevant studies had been removed, a second screening was carried out, including a full-text reading of those studies that were deemed to meet the inclusion criteria for the review. See the PRISMA flow diagram (Appendix 5) for an overview of this process.
Source: Author's compilation.

Appendix 2

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

The PICO tool was used to narrow and specify the research question, and to facilitate the search process and categorise studies. PICO stands for population, intervention, control/comparison and outcome and is used to describe the focus of the review. The following delimitations were applied in this review:

Table 2. The PICO tool

Population:	Children in family
Intervention:	Return migration
Control/comparison:	If applicable
Outcome:	Health, education, socio-cultural integration

Source: Author's compilation.

The focus of the review is on "children in families", i.e. children who have applied for a residence permit in the country of destination together with one or two caregivers. The intervention in this case, i.e. the phenomenon of interest for the review, is return migration to the country of origin. In practice, this can mean outright migration, i.e. no actual return, as the child is born in the country of destination. However, for the sake of simplicity, the term 'return' will be used throughout the report (see section 2.1 for a discussion of key concepts). In terms of reasons for return, studies on return due to refusal or expulsion decisions as well as self-initiated and voluntary return are included. Some studies include a comparison group of children in the country of return who have not migrated. Other studies do not include such comparisons. For studies that do not report differences from a comparison group, the term 'control/comparison' is not applicable. The term 'outcome' refers to factors that are of interest in terms of how they might be affected by the intervention.

The systematic literature searches were initially not limited by time period, as evidence from older studies was initially considered potentially useful for the purposes of the review. However, most of the studies were published in recent years and the few older studies that emerged were excluded during the full-text screening process as contextual changes over the years made the studies outdated and irrelevant.

No geographical delimitation has been made, although languages have been limited to English, Swedish, Danish and Norwegian, based on the author's language skills. However, an assessment of the relevance of the study to the Swedish context was made, focusing on the institutional, structural or political context.

The review only included empirical studies, i.e. studies based on original data. This excludes, for example, other research reviews, theoretical research, opinion pieces or commentaries.

No distinction was made in terms of study design and method, i.e. both qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods studies were included in the review. This is because the intention was to search the research field for all available knowledge and to develop a deeper understanding of the issue by bringing together and synthesising various forms of knowledge. Nevertheless, the searches produced mainly qualitative research and the majority of this research consisted of material based on interviews (see section 3.1 of the review).

Overall, the following inclusion criteria guided the screening process of the identified literature. All criteria had to be met for a study to be included in the review:

- The study should be based on empirical data.
- The study focuses on the return and reintegration of migrants.
- The study focuses on children in families
- The study should be relevant to the Swedish context
- The study should be written in English, Swedish, Danish or Norwegian.
- The study should meet the quality criteria of the review

Appendix 3

Table 3. Included studies

#	Author(s)/ Year/Title	Country of reception	Country of return	Aim/ Research question(s)	Research design/method	Sample
1	Szydłowska, P., Durlik, J., & Grzymała-Moszczyńska, H. (2019) Returning Children Migrants-Main Challenges in School Environment. *Studia Migracyjne-Przegląd Polonijny*, 45(1), 171-192.	UK, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Belgium, Netherlands, USA, Ireland, Norway, Hungary & Spain	Poland	What are the challenges in terms of schooling and education for children in families who have returned to Poland?	Qualitative research design. Semi-structured interviews.	34 children and adolescents (20 girls and 14 boys), 27 parents and 25 teachers. Children = 7-12 years old. Youth = 12-18 years old. 14 of the children had lived in Poland for more than 5 years before the migration took place, 20 children were born in the receiving country or were younger than 5 years old at the time of migration.

#	Author(s)/ Year/Title	Country of reception	Country of return	Aim/ Research question(s)	Research design/method	Sample
2	Gëdeshi & King (2022) Albanian Returned Asylum-Seekers. Failures, Successes and What Can Be Achieved in a Short Time. *Journal of Balkan and near Eastern Studies*, 24(3), 479-502.	Germany	Albania	Four research questions, of which the third and fourth are relevant to this review: How do returnees describe their experiences in terms of housing, social support, access to employment, education, health care and ability to save? How have they fared since their return and what are their prospects for the future?	Qualitative research design. 12 focus group interviews and a total of 75 semi-structured interviews.	Focus group interviews were conducted with 7-12 participants per group. The groups were mixed in terms of gender, age and socio-economic background. 45 parents were interviewed individually. 30 government officials were interviewed individually. The children's situation is analysed via statements from parents and government officials.

#	Author(s)/ Year/Title	Country of reception	Country of return	Aim/ Research question(s)	Research design/method	Sample
3	Cenaa, Heima & Trandafoiub (2018) Changing places: children of return migrants in Albania and their quest to belong. *Journal of ethnic and migration studies*, 44(7), 1156-1176.	Mainly Greece, but also Italy & USA	Albania	Examines how children in returning families experience belonging in the new context.	Two rounds of interviews, one in May-July 2015, and a follow-up interview in June 2016 to examine how conditions have changed over time.	Children aged 7-12 years, 8 boys and 2 girls. All born in the previous country of residence (Greece n=8; Italy n=1; USA n=1) before the family returned to Albania. The average time spent in Albania at the time of the interview was 2.5 years.

#	Author(s)/ Year/Title	Country of reception	Country of return	Aim/ Research question(s)	Research design/method	Sample
4	Herrera, Montoya & Erika (2019). Child Migrants Returning to Culiacán, Sinaloa, Mexico. A familial, Educational, and Binational Challenge. *Ánfora*, 26(46)	USA	Mexico	Two overall objectives, which are relevant to the review: Examine the challenges faced by returning children in families in relation to the Mexican education system, and measures taken by parents and teachers to support the children in the process.	Semi-structured interviews were conducted between March and July 2016 with returning parents and teachers in Culiacán, Sinaloa.	From 23 March 2015 to 7 December 2015, questionnaires were distributed in 119 schools, of which 48 schools were subsequently sampled. Information collected in schools was intended to quantify the number of children who had returned to Mexico. 534 children were found, and then 21 semi-structured interviews with a parent (mostly with mothers) were conducted. Of the 534 children, 467 were born in the U.S., 57 were born in Mexico, and 10 did not fill in the country of birth. The focus is on children who were born and/or raised in the U.S. and then returned with their families to Mexico. Three interviews were conducted with teachers in schools in Culiacán.

#	Author(s)/ Year/Title	Country of reception	Country of return	Aim/ Research question(s)	Research design/method	Sample
5	Iliško, D., Badjanova, J., & Ignatjeva, S. (2017). Sustainability and Unsustain-ability. Aspects of Social Adaptation of Children from Returning Immigrant Families. Conference paper - In ICERI2017 Proceedings (pp. 4054-4060). IATED	Unspecified	Latvia	To explore teachers' views on the social adaptation of children in families returning to Latvia.	Mixed method: A questionnaire designed to evaluate teachers' views on the social adaptation of children of returning families at school. Data was analysed in SPSS and with a Paired Sample Test comparing children in returning families with children who have not migrated. Focus group interviews with teachers and two principals.	160 teachers in Lettgallen, Latvia. 143 of these were pre-school teachers, and 17 of these in a management position.

#	Author(s)/ Year/Title	Country of reception	Country of return	Aim/ Research question(s)	Research design/method	Sample
6	Kunuroglu, F., Yagmur, K., Van de Vijver, F. J., & Kroon, S. (2015) Consequences of Turkish return migration from Western Europe, *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 49, 198-211.	Germany, the Netherlands and France	Turkey	What are the most common consequences of return for returnees to Turkey? Are there gender, generational and socio-economic variations in the reintegration process?	Qualitative research design. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews.	A total of 48 individuals were interviewed, including returnees from Germany (64%), the Netherlands (27%), and France (9%). 11 of them were between 9-21 years old (all living with their families of origin). Only results based on children's statements, or parents' statements on the children's situation were extracted. 10 informants were either born in the previous country or migrated there at a very young age. The returnees lived at the time of the interview in Aydin, Izmir, Denizli, Istanbul, Izmit, Bursa, Sivas, Ankara or Kırıkkale.

#	Author(s)/ Year/Title	Country of reception	Country of return	Aim/ Research question(s)	Research design/method	Sample
7	Ní Laoire (2011) 'Girls just like to be friends with people': gendered experiences of migration among children and youth in returning Irish migrant families. *Children's Geographies*, 9:3-4, 303-318.	Several countries, but mainly USA and the UK.	Ireland	Examines the experiences of children who have moved to Ireland as part of returning Irish families. Focuses particularly on the role of gender in how children and young people experience aspects of relationships and identity after moving.	Qualitative research design, using child-centred and age-appropriate methods. Extensive participatory research. Periodic visits were made to families - with children, conversations were conducted in context and supported by photographs and paintings. In-depth interviews were conducted with parents. The conversations were recorded and the paintings made by the children were copied.	Data collection period was 2007-2009. 36 children and young people, 21 parents (16 families in total) - who had returned from Cork and Kerry to the South West of Ireland. The age range of the children was 3-18 years and 3 were young adults in their early 20s. 15 of the participants were boys and 21 were girls.

#	Author(s)/ Year/Title	Country of reception	Country of return	Aim/ Research question(s)	Research design/method	Sample
8	Zúñiga & Hamann (2015) Going to a home you have never been to: the return migration of Mexican and American-Mexican children, *Children's Geographies*, 13:6, 643-655.	USA	Mexico	Investigates and interprets children's stories of return, including the experience of moving to Mexico and the relationship with the previous country.	Two overall research methods. First, data were collected through four questionnaires (in Spanish) sent to 805 schools in four Mexican states (stratified random sampling). The questionnaires asked if the re-sponding student would like to be interviewed. Sub-sequently, students who responded yes to the question about being interviewed were contacted and in-depth interviews were conducted with them. The results obtained for this literature review come from the interviews.	The surveys were sent to schools in the areas of Nuevo León in 2004, Zacatecas in 2005, Puebla in 2009, and Jalisco in 2010. In total, 56,010 students aged 7-16 years were surveyed, 1,322 of whom had returned from the US to Mexico. 592 of these had answered a question about the reason for their return. Interviews were conducted with 140 children who agreed to be interviewed in the questionnaires.

#	Author(s)/ Year/Title	Country of reception	Country of return	Aim/ Research question(s)	Research design/method	Sample
9	Amuedo-Dorantes & Juarez (2022) Health Care and Education Access of Transnational Children in Mexico. *Demography* 59(2):511-533	USA	Mexico	Focuses on access to healthcare and education for US-born children who move to Mexico with one or two parents.	Representative data on 7.6 million children born in Mexico or the US and now living in Mexico, from the 2015 Mexican Intercensal Survey, to estimate differences in access to health care and education by country of birth. In the second part of the analysis, the focus is on children born in the United States to examine barriers to access to health care and education.	The sample consists of children aged 0-17 years for the survey on access to health care, and aged 6-17 years for access to education. Information on work (child labour) is also available, the likelihood of children aged 12-17 participating in the labour market or working at home is examined.

#	Author(s)/ Year/Title	Country of reception	Country of return	Aim/ Research question(s)	Research design/method	Sample
10	Vathi & Duci (2016) Making other dreams: The impact of migration on the Psychosocial wellbeing of Albanian-origin children and young people upon their families' return to Albania. *Childhood*, 23(1) 53-68	Greece	Albania	An exploratory study of the adaptation process of children in families who have returned to their country of origin, with a particular focus on their psychosocial well-being.	Qualitative research design. In-depth interviews and participant observations conducted in 2013 in Tirana, Korça, Saranda, and villages on the border between Albania and Greece.	A total of 141 participants. 81 of these were children and young people, 51 adults and 9 teachers and key informants. The article is primarily based on interviews with children and young people. The children were either born in Greece (n=39) or had migrated there at a very young age (n=42). The average age of the participants was 14.6 years, and the overall age range was 11-19 years. 45 were girls and 36 boys. The average time spent in Greece was 10.22 years, and the average time spent in Albania was 1.6 years.

#	Author(s)/ Year/Title	Country of reception	Country of return	Aim/ Research question(s)	Research design/method	Sample
11	Vathi & King (2021) Memory, place and agency: transnational mirroring of otherness among young Albanian 'returnees'. *Children's Geographies*, 19:2, 197-209	Greece	Albania	Examines the experiences of otherness of children in families after return, with a particular focus on children's own agency.	Qualitative research design with in-depth interviews and participant observation.	(same sample as above).

#	Author(s)/ Year/Title	Country of reception	Country of return	Aim/ Research question(s)	Research design/method	Sample
12	De Bree, J., Davids, T., & De Haas, H. (2010) Post-return experiences and trans-national belonging of return migrants: a Dutch Moroccan case study. *Global Networks*, 10(4), 489-509	The Netherlands	Morocco	Examines the experiences of returnees, focusing on the sense of belonging, gender and generation.	Qualitative research design. Semi-structured interviews.	Interviews with 23 adult returnees - but for the purposes of the review, only results relating to the integration of children (via parents' statements) are extracted. The interviews were conducted in Berkane, Morocco from December 2006 to April 2007.

#	Author(s)/ Year/Title	Country of reception	Country of return	Aim/ Research question(s)	Research design/method	Sample
13	Zevulun, D., Zijlstra, A. E., Post, W.. J., & Knorth, E. J. (2021). A qualitative study into the reintegration of vulnerable migrant children and families after return to Kosovo: Findings from a follow-up. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 125, 105991.	Various countries, including Sweden, Italy, Hungary, Germany, France, Belgium, Austria.	Kosovo	Seeks to gain insight into the living situation of particularly vulnerable children in post-return families, as well as the experiences of other family members. Also examines what measures have been taken in the family to strengthen the children's adaptation.	Qualitative research design. Follow-up study that is part of the larger project 'the Monitoring Returned Minors (MRM)' that ran from 2012-2014. In-depth interviews were conducted with 13 children in 9 families.	The MRM project involved families in Kosovo and Albania who sought asylum in European countries and then returned between 2008 and 2013. Up to two children in these families between the ages of 11 and 18 participated in the study. In total, 150 children and parents participated. Of these, 32 children in 24 families were identified as particularly vulnerable - e.g. due to poor living conditions, social problems, language difficulties, family problems, school problems, child labour, or health problems and lack of access to care and treatment. These children received specialised support during the project and 9 of the 24 families are case studies for this follow-up study. The average age of the children was 16 years at the time of the interview. The average length of time spent in

#	Author(s)/ Year/Title	Country of reception	Country of return	Aim/ Research question(s)	Research design/method	Sample
						Kosovo was 5 years. Time spent abroad varied - three were born there, one left Kosovo during the 1998 war and the rest left Kosovo between 2007-2010. All returned to Kosovo between 2010-2013. Three families returned involuntarily. The rest participated in the return but wanted to stay.
14	DRC/IRC/NRC/ ReDSS/DSP/A DSP/Samuel Hall (2019) Unprepared for (Re)Integratio n: Lessons learned from Afghanistan, Somalia and Syria on Refugee Returns to Urban Areas. Report.	Kenya, Jordan & Lebanon	Kosovo Afghanist an, Syria & Somalia	Explores how returnees, communities, authorities and organisations can more effectively prepare for a more successful reintegration of returnees.	Qualitative research design with 18 case studies, 21 focus group interviews and 102 individual interviews.	102 key informants interviewed in Afghanistan, Lebanon, Jordan, Kenya, and Somalia. 10 focus group interviews in Afghanistan and 11 in Somalia, 14 household case studies (5 in Afghanistan, 1 in Somalia and 8 in Syria, and 4 operational case studies - 2 in Afghanistan and 2 in Somalia.

#	Author(s)/ Year/Title	Country of reception	Country of return	Aim/ Research question(s)	Research design/method	Sample
15	Guillaume, Majidi & Samuel Hall (2018) From Europe to Afghanistan - Experiences of child returnees. Save the Children: Report.	Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, Netherlands & Norway	Afghani-stan	Examines how return can affect children.	Qualitative research design. Interviews with children, carers and community stakeholders; questionnaires to children and carers.	A total of 53 children were interviewed in Herat and Kabul, 18 of whom were children in families. These 18 children had returned with their families from Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands and Norway.

#	Author(s)/ Year/Title	Country of reception	Country of return	Aim/ Research question(s)	Research design/method	Sample
16	Rasmussen, Guillén Åkerlind & Hagan (2019) Thoughts on return - Children, young people and adults on returning to Afghanistan. Save the Children: Report.	Sweden	Afghani-stan	The aim of the study was to study children and young people's thoughts on return, the risks involved and the support children, young people and families need before, during and after the return process. The specific report focuses on Sweden as a receiving country.	Qualitative research design. Focus group interviews with parents and children. Interviews with girls in families.	A total of five meetings with parents in Save the Children's parent groups in Västmanland, Sweden. A mum group and a dad group met on two occasions each. The mothers met once more in 2019, when eight underage girls also participated. In total, 26 parents were involved, including 11 women, 15 men and eight girls. Finally, in August 2019, interviews were conducted with four girls in families aged between 13 and 17 who had been refused asylum and were at risk of deportation. 140 people, mainly teachers but also a small number of other school staff - including school counsellors, special education teachers and school nurses who had attended Save the Children's training courses in trauma-informed care - completed a questionnaire.

#	Author(s)/ Year/Title	Country of reception	Country of return	Aim/ Research question(s)	Research design/method	Sample
17	Hagan (2021) Rejection of an asylum application- Experiences of returning. Swedish Red Cross: Report.	Mainly Sweden, but also other EU countries.	Albania, Kosovo & Iraq	The aim of the report is to highlight the returnees' own experiences of the return process and to map their situation and needs after return.	Qualitative research design. In-depth interviews.	A total of 28 people were interviewed in-depth in Albania, Kosovo and Iraq. The interviews included 17 families/households with a total of 28 people, of which 12 were women/girls, 16 men/boys - 6 of these were children, including adults who had either applied for asylum or returned as underage children. The starting point was that the individual must have returned from Sweden, but in order to get more interviewees in Albania and Kosovo, the sample was broadened to include people who had returned from other EU countries as well.

#	Author(s)/ Year/Title	Country of reception	Country of return	Aim/ Research question(s)	Research design/method	Sample
18	Zevulun, Post, Zijlstra, Kalverboer & Knorth (2018) Migrant and asylum-seeker children returned to Kosovo and Albania: predictive factors for social-emotional wellbeing after return. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 44:11, 1774-1796	12 different countries In the EU - mainly Sweden, Belgium, Germany, Italy & France	Albania, Kosovo & Iraq Albania & Kosovo	The aim is to increase knowledge about the childhood environment and how the child is affected in terms of socio-emotional well-being after return.	A cross-sectional study. Data were collected in the framework of the Monitoring Returned Minors (MRM) project from November 2012 to December 2014. Surveys were sent to returning families and professionals who meet the children in the families.	Migrant and asylum-seeking children in European countries who returned to Kosovo and Albania with their parents. 106 families, 85 in Kosovo and 21 in Albania, participated in the study. The families had left their country between 1982 and 2013, and returned between 2008 and 2013. The children who participated in the study were strategically recruited for a balanced distribution of gender, age and geographical background. Age groups 11-14 and 15-18 were created.

#	Author(s)/ Year/Title	Country of reception	Country of return	Aim/ Research question(s)	Research design/method	Sample
19	Vathi, Duci & Dhembo (2016) Homeland (Dis)Integrations: Educational Experience, Children and Return Migration to Albania. *International Migration*, 54 (3), 159-172	Greece	Albania	Examines the educational experiences of children in returning families.	Qualitative research design. In-depth interviews.	Same sample as in studies 11 and 12.

#	Author(s)/ Year/Title	Country of reception	Country of return	Aim/ Research question(s)	Research design/method	Sample
20	Zijlstra, Bonhage-Talsma, Post & Kalverboer (2022). Forced Return of Embedded Asylum-Seeking Families with Children to Armenia from a Children's Rights Perspective: A Qualitative Study of Their Develop-mental Needs and Best Interests. *The International Journal of Children's Rights*, 30(2), 577-603.	The Netherlands	Armenia	The aim of the study is, from a child rights perspective, to gain greater insight into the children's situation in the country of return after the family has been forcibly deported.	Qualitative research design. Semi-structured interviews.	17 children who returned to Armenia from the Netherlands, including 6 boys and 11 girls aged 0-6 years (n=3), 7-11 years (n=8) and 12-18 years (n=6). The children had lived in the Netherlands between 4 and 7 years. At the time of the interview the children had lived in Armenia for between 2 and 13 months. 5 of the children were born in the Netherlands, 2 in another European country and 10 were born in Armenia.

#	Author(s)/ Year/Title	Country of reception	Country of return	Aim/ Research question(s)	Research design/method	Sample
21	Árendás, Durst, Katona, & Messing (2022). The Limits of Trading Cultural Capital: Returning Migrant Children and Their Educational Trajectory in Hungary. In Atterberry, A.L., et. al, (Ed.): *Children and Youths Migration in a Global Landscape* (Vol. 29, pp. 115-139) Emerald Publishing Limited.	Mainly UK and Canada	Hungary	Examines opportunities and barriers for migrant and returning families, in relation to access to different resources after return. A particular focus is on the educational integration of children.	Qualitative research design. Ethnographic field study. Semi-structured interviews. Three case studies.	Interviews with returning parents and children and teachers in schools in Hungary. Low-income, middle-income and high-income families are included in the sample. One case study consists of a school in Budapest with mixed socio-economic background pupils. Parents of these children had migrated abroad due to job offers. The second case study is in a more socio-economically disadvantaged area in the north-east of Hungary. The children in this case study had a Roma background and had returned from Canada after having their asylum application rejected. The third case study consisted of families in more affluent areas who emigrated for lifestyle reasons. Findings from the second case study have mainly been extracted to the review, as it has the greatest relevance to the Swedish context.

#	Author(s)/ Year/Title	Country of reception	Country of return	Aim/ Research question(s)	Research design/method	Sample
22	Grosa, D., & King, R. (2023). The Challenges of Educational Reintegration and the Psychosocial Wellbeing of Returnee Children: Evidence from Latvia. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 24(2), 407-426.	Different parts of the world; USA, Australia, Germany, Norway, UK, Ireland, etc.	Latvia	Focuses on the well-being of children in returning families. The main focus is on children's educational adjustment.	Qualitative research design. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews.	Parents, children and key informants such as teachers and psychologists. 15 families returning to Latvia - 20 parents and 11 children. Also 9 key informants were interviewed. Of the 20 parents, 17 were mothers. 6 of the children were girls and 5 were boys. The age range of the children was 8-18 years. Four of them were born abroad and the rest had migrated during their pre-school years. The families had returned from different parts of the world, such as the USA, Canada, Australia, Germany, Norway, Ireland and the UK.

#	Author(s)/ Year/Title	Country of reception	Country of return	Aim/ Research question(s)	Research design/method	Sample
23	Despagne, C., & Jacobo Suárez, M. (2019). The adaptation path of transnational students in Mexico: Linguistic and identity challenges in Mexican schools. *Latino Studies*, 17(4), 428-447	USA	Mexico	Examines the adaptation of returning children in families in relation to language, identity, how they position themselves and how they are positioned by others in school after return.	Qualitative research design - a retrospective study. Semi-structured in-depth interviews.	19 interviews with secondary school students (3rd year of high school when students are between 16-17 years old) in three public schools who had spent an average of 8 years in the US and then returned to Mexico. One student was in Puebla, five in San Martín Texmelucan and fourteen in Izúcar de Matamoros. 12 were girls, 7 were boys. Length of stay in the US ranged from 1 to 12 years, with an average of 7.8 years. 11 were born in the US, the rest migrated there at an early age. On average, students had lived in Mexico for 7 years at the time of the interview.

#	Author(s)/ Year/Title	Country of reception	Country of return	Aim/ Research question(s)	Research design/method	Sample
24	Ní Laoire (2015) Children, Cousins, and Clans: the role of extended family and kinship in the lives of children in returning Irish migrant families. Connolly, L. (Ed.): *The 'Irish' Family*, (pp. 140-258). London: Routledge	Several countries, but mainly the USA and England	Ireland	Focuses on the experiences of children and young people who have moved to Ireland with their returning Irish families. A particular focus is on social integration and sense of belonging in the new context.	Qualitative research design. Child-centred approach, allowing children to communicate in the way they can and feel most comfortable doing, such as playing or painting and drawing while having conversations. Interviews with older children and adults.	Same sample as in study number 7, see this for more details on sampling.

#	Author(s)/ Year/Title	Country of reception	Country of return	Aim/ Research question(s)	Research design/method	Sample
25	Kienzler, H., Wenzel, T., & Shaini, M. (2019). Vulnerability and psychosocial health experienced by repatriated children in Kosovo. *Transcultural Psychiatry,* 56(1), 267-286.	Germany & Austria	Kosovo	The study looks at how young people experience forced return, how they describe the impact of reintegration on their psychosocial health and well-being, and what measures they themselves take to improve their health.	Qualitative research design (based on data from a larger UNICEF mixed methodology study). This study is based on semi-structured interviews with young people.	14 young people aged 15-18 from different ethnic backgrounds - Roma (6), Albanians (5), Gorans (2) and Serbs (1). They had returned from Germany (11) and Austria (3). Nine were girls and 5 were boys. The sample was based on the number of young people who had been asked to rate their health in a questionnaire and scored 40 points or more.

#	Author(s)/ Year/Title	Country of reception	Country of return	Aim/ Research question(s)	Research design/method	Sample
26	Zayas, L.H., Guillermina, N., Callejas, F., Georgina, M.E., Pinedo, M. & Fuentes-Balderrama, J.F. (2023). Two Pathways to Mexico: Forced deportation or voluntary return of parents and US citizen children. *Family Process.* 2023;00, 1-15.	USA	Mexico	Examines the experiences of US-born children who have either been forcibly deported to Mexico, or who have 'voluntarily' returned. The effects that these different experiences may have on their reintegration are presented.	Qualitative research design. Part of a large-scale study - but this study is based on qualitative, semi-structured interviews.	36 children in middle age and early adolescence, who accompanied one or two parents back to Mexico from the U.S. as a result of parental deportation. Children who lived in foster care or had a clinical diagnosis of limited cognitive ability were excluded. 18 of the children had returned forcibly, and 18 had returned voluntarily. Half of the sample were boys/girls. The average age was 11.31 years, and the age range was 8-15 years. The children had spent an average of 9.91 months in Mexico after return, with a minimum of 4 months and a maximum of 22 months.

#	Author(s)/ Year/Title	Country of reception	Country of return	Aim/ Research question(s)	Research design/method	Sample
27	Grosa, D. (2022). Anxieties regarding family return to Latvia: Does the imagined turn out to be reality? *Central and Eastern European Migration Review*. 11(2):155-171.	Mainly UK, Ireland and Germany, but also: Norway, USA, Canada, Australia.	Latvia	Examines and compares perceptions and actual experiences of return, with a particular focus on the return of families and the impact it can have on children.	Mixed method: The study is mainly based on qualitative interviews with 22 emigrant and 17 returnee families, but also on a large-scale online survey conducted in 2019, with responses from 2,477 parents.	Mainly mothers were interviewed by parents as they responded more frequently to the invitation. The families had a varied socio-economic background. The children were between 8-18 years old, and both boys and girls were interviewed.

#	Author(s)/ Year/Title	Country of reception	Country of return	Aim/ Research question(s)	Research design/method	Sample
28	Riiskjaer, M. H. B., & Nielsson, T. (2008) Circular repatriation: The unsuccessful return and reintegration of Iraqis with refugee status in Denmark. UNHCR Report, Policy Development and Evaluation Service.	Denmark	Iraq	What factors in the return process may have prevented successful reintegration and resulted in re-migration?	Qualitative semi-structured interviews	35 Iraqi re-migrants are interviewed - these interviews reveal findings about the experiences and life situation of their children during and after their return. Results concerning the children have been extracted for the review. According to the description of informants, some interviews have also been conducted with people under the age of 18.

#	Author(s)/ Year/Title	Country of reception	Country of return	Aim/ Research question(s)	Research design/method	Sample
29	Hökeberg, J. (2019) Child-sensitive return: Upholding the best interests of refugee and migrant children in return and reintegration decisions and processes in Sweden. UNICEF Report	Sweden	Un-specified	What does the asylum and return process look like for children from a child rights perspective (best interest procedure)? How does the return process work in practice and what are the frameworks that govern this process?	Qualitative approach - the report is based on different data sources: results included in this review come from analyses of decision-making documents from the Migration Agency and interviews with practitioners and experts from authorities and civil society.	20 randomly selected decision documents from the Swedish Migration Agency were analysed. These included returns from Sweden to Morocco, Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, Albania, and Iran. Interviews were conducted with 25 practitioners and experts in the field (see previous column).

Source: Author's compilation.

Appendix 4

Table 4. Excluded studies read in full

#	Author(s)/Year/Title	Reason for exclusion
1	Save the Children / Samuel Hall (2018) Achieving Durable Solutions for Returnee Children: What do we know? Report.	Not based on original data.
2	Vuorenkoski, L., Kuure, O., Moilanen, I., Penninkilampi, V., & Myhrman, A. (2000). Bilingualism, school achievement, and mental wellbeing: A follow-up study of return migrant children. The Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry and Allied Disciplines, 41(2), 261-266.	Does not answer the research questions of the review, but is mainly concerned with issues in relation to bilingualism.
3	Vuorenkoski, L., Moilanen, I., Myhrman, A., Kuure, O., Penninkilampi, V. & Kumpulainen, E. (1998). Long-term mental health outcome of returning migrant children and adolesents. European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, 7: 219–224.	The study is considered outdated, with data collected in 1986 and 1992.
4	Handulle, A. (2022). Little Norway in Somalia–Understanding Complex Belongings of Transnational Somali Families. Nordic Journal of Migration Research, 12(1).	Wrong sample group - only people who have returned to their country of origin on a temporary basis are included.
5	Cebotari, V., Siegel, M., & Mazzucato, V. (2018). Migration and child health in Moldova and Georgia. Comparative Migration Studies, 6, 1–22.	Does not deal with children who have migrated and returned, but with children who have remained in their home country while their parents have migrated and returned.
6	Donato, K. M., & Duncan, E. M. (2011). Migration, social networks, and child health in Mexican families. Journal of Marriage and Family, 73(4), 713–728.	Does not deal with children who have migrated and returned, but with children who have remained in their home country while their parents have migrated and returned.
7	Fransen, S. (2017). The socio-economic sustainability of refugee return: Insights from Burundi. Population, Space and Place, 23(1), e1976.	Does not concern children, but adult children of returnees.

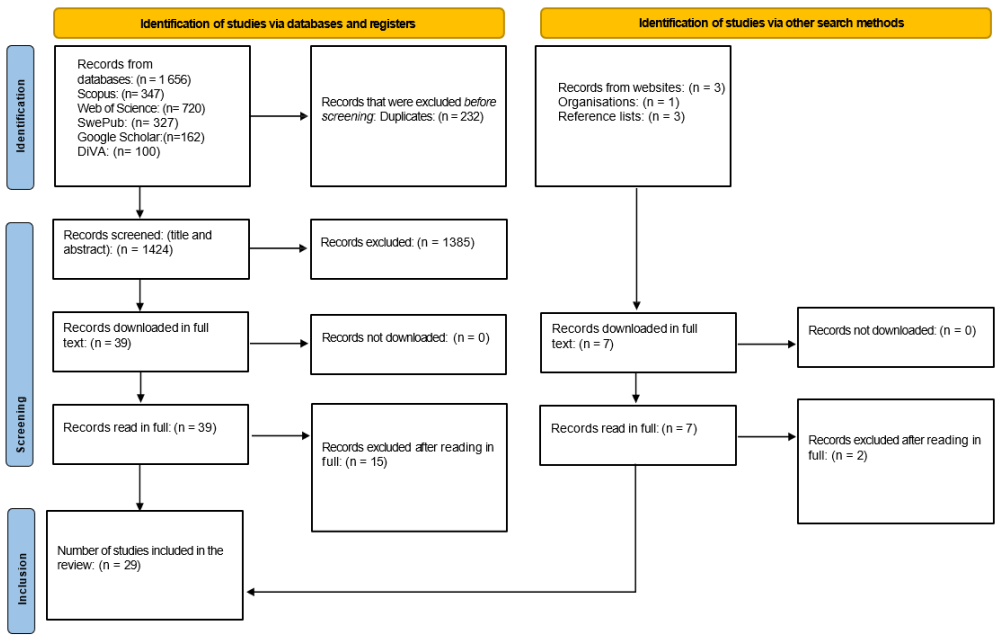
#	Author(s)/Year/Title	Reason for exclusion
8	Grgić, M., Vidović, V., Butković-Soldo, S., Vukšić-Mihaljević, Ž., Degmečić, D., & Laufer, D. (2005). The mental health of children upon their return home after a long displacement period. Collegium antropologicum, 29(2), 537–542.	The focus is not on return or reintegration, but rather on how war experiences and displacement affect health.
9	Hamilton, E. R., Masferrer, C., & Langer, P. (2023). US Citizen Children De Facto Deported to Mexico. Population and Development Review, 49(1), 175–203.	The results are not relevant to the Swedish context.
10	Vargas-Valle, E. D., & Glick, J. E. (2021). Educational and migration aspirations among children of Mexican migrant returnees in a border context. Migration Studies, 9(3), 677–701.	Does not answer the research questions of the review, but examines how returning young people are affected in terms of their educational aspirations.
11	Zevulun, D., Post, W. J., Zijlstra, A. E., Kalverboer, M. E., & Knorth, E. J. (2019). The best interests of the child from different cultural perspectives: factors influencing judgements of the quality of child-rearing environment and construct validity of the best interests of the Child-Questionnaire (BIC-Q) in Kosovo and Albania. Child indicators research, 12, 331–351.	It does not answer the research questions of the review. Rather, it looks at perceptions of 'the best interests of the child' in different cultural contexts.
12	NTG-asyl & Integration (2005) Återvändande i Sverige och Europa - Policy, praxis och projekterfarenheter.	Not up to date, as Swedish conditions have changed considerably since the report was published.
13	Farwell, N. (2001). 'Onward through strength': Coping and psychological support among refugee youth returning to Eritrea from Sudan.	Unaccompanied minors and children in families are lumped together and specific results for children in families are not reported. In addition, the age groups 13-20 are merged and it is not possible to identify specific results for different age groups.

#	Author(s)/Year/Title	Reason for exclusion
14	Hernández Ángeles, T., Hidalgo Avilés, H. & Cruz Pérez, A. (2023). Addressing Other Challenges Migrants' Children Face in Mexico: Coping with Adverse Realities and Circumstances, Journal of Latinos and Education, Doi: 10.1080/15348431.2023.2187632.	Does not focus on children under 18; 'migrants' children' refers to adult children of migrants.
15	Vázquez Vázquez, J.D. (2011). Problems involving the reintegration of schoolchildren with migration experience in the state of Tlaxcala, 2009. Migration and Development, 9(17), 105–125.	The sample group "migrant children incorporated into the Mexican education system after being educated abroad" is lumped together without a detailed description of the sample. The sample is not described in terms of reasons for migration or return, and it is therefore not possible to determine whether the study meets the inclusion criteria of the review.
16	Hatzichristou, C., & Hopf, D. (1992). School performance and adjustment of Greek remigrant students in the schools of their home country. Applied Psycholinguistics, 13(3), 279–294.	The study is considered outdated and therefore not relevant to the review.
17.	Iliško, D., Badjanova, J., Ignatjeva, S., & Zarina, S. (2018). The process of integration of the returnee immigrants' children in the home country: expectations and reality. I ICERI2018 Proceedings (s. 1103-1108). IATED.	Conference Paper that is a duplicate (re-titled) of an already included study.

Source: Author's compilation.

Appendix 5

Figure 1. Flow diagram for systematic reviews



Note: The flowchart is based on PRISMA 2020 flow diagram for new systematic reviews which included searches of databases, registers and other sources

Appendix 6

Quality assessment based on MMAT

The quality assessment was based on the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT), with some adaptations. The following methods were used in the studies on which this review is based and therefore included in the quality assessment: qualitative studies, quantitative studies and mixed methods studies.

For all studies, an overall assessment is made as to whether the study is of high, medium-high, medium, medium-low or low quality. The studies rated as medium-low or low quality are excluded from this table and listed in Appendix 4, a table of excluded studies. This means that only studies of high, medium-high or medium quality were included in the review.

Only a small number of studies raised concerns about scientific quality. This is probably because the vast majority of the included studies have already been subjected to peer review. Of the 25 qualitative studies, 19 were of high quality, 4 were of medium-high quality and 2 were of medium quality. The two quantitative studies were both of high quality. Of the two mixed methods studies, one was of high quality and one of medium quality.

Table 5. Qualitative studies (n=25)

Source	Criteria	Response to criteria		
		Yes	No	Comment
1. Szydłowska, P., Durlik, J., & Grzymała-Moszczyńska, H. (2019) Returning Children Migrants-Main Challenges in School Environment. Studia Migracyjne-Przegląd Polonijny, 45(1, 171-192.	Is the research question clearly formulated?	X		
	Is the qualitative approach appropriate to answer the research question?	X		
	Is the data collection method appropriate to answer the research question?	X		
	Are results derived from data correctly?	X		
	Are conclusions correctly based on results?	X		
	Is there a common thread between data source, data collection, analysis and interpretation of data?	X		
Overall assessment:	**The study is of high quality.**			
2. Gëdeshi & King (2022) Albanian Returned Asylum-Seekers: Failures, Successes and What Can Be Achieved in a Short Time. Journal of Balkan and near Eastern Studies, 24(3), 479-502.	Is the research question clearly formulated?	X		
	Is the qualitative approach appropriate to answer the research question?	X		
	Is the data collection method appropriate to answer the research question?	X		
	Are results derived from data correctly?	X		
	Are conclusions correctly based on results?	X		
	Is there a common thread between data source, data collection, analysis and interpretation of data?	X		
Overall assessment:	**The study is of high quality.**			

Source	Criteria	Response to criteria		
		Yes	No	Comment
3) Cenaa, Heima & Trandafoiub (2018) Changing places: children of return migrants in Albania and their quest to belong. Journal of ethnic and migration studies, 44(7), 1156-1176.	Is the research question clearly formulated?	X		
	Is the qualitative approach appropriate to answer the research question?	X		
	Is the data collection method appropriate to answer the research question?	X		Yes, but the sample consists mostly of boys.
	Are results derived from data correctly?	X		
	Are conclusions correctly based on results?	X		
	Is there a common thread between data source, data collection, analysis and interpretation of data?	X		
Overall assessment:	**The study is of high quality.**			
4. Herrera, Montoya & Erika (2019) Child Migrants Returning to Culiacán, Sinaloa, Mexico. A familial, Educational, and Binational Challenge. Ánfora, 26(46).	Is the research question clearly formulated?	X		
	Is the qualitative approach appropriate to answer the research question?	X		
	Is the data collection method appropriate to answer the research question?	X		
	Are results derived from data correctly?	X		
	Are conclusions correctly based on results?	X		
	Is there a common thread between data source, data collection, analysis and interpretation of data?	X		
Overall assessment:	**The study is of high quality.**			

Source	Criteria	Response to criteria		
		Yes	No	Comment
5. Kunuroglu, F., Yagmur, K., Van de Vijver, F. J., & Kroon, S. (2015) Consequences of Turkish return migration from Western Europe, International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 49, 198-211.	Is the research question clearly formulated?	X		
	Is the qualitative approach appropriate to answer the research question?	X	X	Partially. The qualitative approach is suitable for answering the overall purpose. However, the first research question is better answered with a quantitative approach.
	Is the data collection method appropriate to answer the research question?	X	X	See above
	Are results derived from data correctly?	X		
	Are conclusions correctly based on results?	X		
	Is there a common thread between data source, data collection, analysis and interpretation of data?	X		Yes, apart from the problem with research question 1.
Overall assessment:	**The study is of medium quality.**			

Source	Criteria	Response to criteria		
		Yes	No	Comment
6. Ní Laoire (2011) 'Girls just like to be friends with people': gendered experiences of migration among children and youth in returning Irish migrant families. Children's Geographies, 9: 3-4, 303-318.	Is the research question clearly formulated?	X		
	Is the qualitative approach appropriate to answer the research question?	X		
	Is the data collection method appropriate to answer the research question?	X		
	Are results derived from data correctly?	X		
	Are conclusions correctly based on results?	X		
	Is there a common thread between data source, data collection, analysis and interpretation of data?	X		
Overall assessment:	**The study is of high quality.**			
7. Zúñiga & Hamann (2015) Going to a home you have never been to: The return migration of Mexican and American-Mexican children, Children's Geographies, 13:6, 643-655.	Is the research question clearly formulated?	X		
	Is the qualitative approach appropriate to answer the research question?	X		
	Is the data collection method appropriate to answer the research question?	X		
	Are results derived from data correctly?	X		
	Are conclusions correctly based on results?	X		
	Is there a common thread between data source, data collection, analysis and interpretation of data?	X		
Overall assessment:	**The study is of high quality.**			

Source	Criteria	Response to criteria		
		Yes	No	Comment
8. Vathi & Duci (2016) Making other dreams: The impact of migration on the Psychosocial wellbeing of Albanian-origin children and young people upon their families' return to Albania. Childhood 23(1) 53-68.	Is the research question clearly formulated?	X		
	Is the qualitative approach appropriate to answer the research question?	X		
	Is the data collection method appropriate to answer the research question?	X		
	Are results derived from data correctly?	X		
	Are conclusions correctly based on results?	X		
	Is there a common thread between data source, data collection, analysis and interpretation of data?	X		
Overall assessment:	**The study is of high quality.**			
9. Vathi & King (2021) Memory, place and agency: transnational mirroring of otherness among young Albanian 'returnees'. Children's Geographies, 19:2, 197-209.	Is the research question clearly formulated?	X		
	Is the qualitative approach appropriate to answer the research question?	X		
	Is the data collection method appropriate to answer the research question?	X		
	Are results derived from data correctly?	X		
	Are conclusions correctly based on results?	X		
	Is there a common thread between data source, data collection, analysis and interpretation of data?	X		
Overall assessment:	**The study is of high quality.**			

Source	Criteria	Response to criteria		
		Yes	No	Comment
10. De Bree, J., Davids, T., & De Haas, H. (2010) Post-return experiences and transnational belonging of return migrants: a Dutch Moroccan case study. Global Networks, 10(4), 489-509.	Is the research question clearly formulated?	X		
	Is the qualitative approach appropriate to answer the research question?	X		
	Is the data collection method appropriate to answer the research question?	X		
	Are results derived from data correctly?	X		
	Are conclusions correctly based on results?	X		
	Is there a common thread between data source, data collection, analysis and interpretation of data?	X		
Overall assessment:	**The study is of high quality.**			
11. Zevulun, D., Zijlstra, A. E., Post, W.. J., & Knorth, E. J. (2021). A qualitative study into the reintegration of vulnerable migrant children and families after return to Kosovo: Findings from a follow-up. Children and Youth Services Review, 125, 105991.	Is the research question clearly formulated?	X		
	Is the qualitative approach appropriate to answer the research question?	X		
	Is the data collection method appropriate to answer the research question?	X		
	Are results derived from data correctly?	X		
	Are conclusions correctly based on results?	X		
	Is there a common thread between data source, data collection, analysis and interpretation of data?	X		
Overall assessment:	**The study is of high quality.**			

Source	Criteria	Response to criteria		
		Yes	No	Comment
12. DRC/IRC/NRC/ReDSS/DSP/ADSP/ Samuel Hall (2019) Unprepared for (Re)Integration: Lessons learned from Afghanistan, Somalia and Syria on Refugee Returns to Urban Areas. Report.	Is the research question clearly formulated?	X		
	Is the qualitative approach appropriate to answer the research question?	X		The question is broad, but the qualitative material is rich and varied and can answer the question at an analytical level.
	Is the data collection method appropriate to answer the research question?	X		Several data sources and data collection methods are used.
	Are results derived from data correctly?	X		
	Are conclusions correctly based on results?	X		
	Is there a common thread between data source, data collection, analysis and interpretation of data?	X		Yes, but the disposition of the report could be better. For example, a literature review and primary data are used to answer the same research questions. A literature review as a basis for results from primary data would have been more logical.
Overall assessment:	**The study is of medium quality.**			

Source	Criteria	Response to criteria		
		Yes	No	Comment
13. Guillaume, Majidi & Samuel Hall (2018) From Europe to Afghanistan - Experiences of child returnees. Save the Children: Report.	Is the research question clearly formulated?	X		
	Is the qualitative approach appropriate to answer the research question?	X		
	Is the data collection method appropriate to answer the research question?	X		
	Are results derived from data correctly?	X		
	Are conclusions correctly based on results?	X		
	Is there a common thread between data source, data collection, analysis and interpretation of data?	X		
Overall assessment:	**The study is of high quality.**			
14. Rasmussen, Guillén Åkerlind & Hagan (2019) Thoughts on returning - Children, young people and adults on returning to Afghanistan. Save the Children: Report.	Is the research question clearly formulated?	X		
	Is the qualitative approach appropriate to answer the research question?	X		
	Is the data collection method appropriate to answer the research question?	X		
	Are results derived from data correctly?	X		
	Are conclusions correctly based on results?	X		
	Is there a common thread between data source, data collection, analysis and interpretation of data?	X		
Overall assessment:	**The study is of high quality**			

Source	Criteria	Response to criteria		
		Yes	No	Comment
15. Hagan (2018) Rejection of an asylum application - Experiences of return. Swedish Red Cross: Report.	Is the research question clearly formulated?	X		
	Is the qualitative approach appropriate to answer the research question?	X		
	Is the data collection method appropriate to answer the research question?	X		
	Are results derived from data correctly?	X		
	Are conclusions correctly based on results?	X		
	Is there a common thread between data source, data collection, analysis and interpretation of data?	X		
Overall assessment:	**The study is of high quality.**			
16. Vathi, Duci & Dhembo (2016) Homeland (Dis)Integrations: Educational Experience, Children and Return Migration to Albania. International Migration 54 (3), 159-172.	Is the research question clearly formulated?		X	The research question could be stated more clearly.
	Is the qualitative approach appropriate to answer the research question?	X		
	Is the data collection method appropriate to answer the research question?	X		
	Are results derived from data correctly?	X		
	Are conclusions correctly based on results?	X		
	Is there a common thread between data source, data collection, analysis and interpretation of data?	X		
Overall assessment:	**The study is of medium quality.**			

Source	Criteria	Response to criteria		
		Yes	No	Comment
17. Zijlstra, Bonhage-Talsma, Post & Kalverboer (2022). Forced Return of Embedded Asylum-Seeking Families with Children to Armenia from a Children's Rights Perspective: A Qualitative Study of Their Developmental Needs and Best Interests, International Journal of Children's Rights, 30(2), 577-603.	Is the research question clearly formulated?	X		
	Is the qualitative approach appropriate to answer the research question?	X		
	Is the data collection method appropriate to answer the research question?	X		
	Are results derived from data correctly?	X		
	Are conclusions correctly based on results?	X		
	Is there a common thread between data source, data collection, analysis and interpretation of data?	X		
Overall assessment:	**The study is of high quality.**			
18. Árendás, Durst, Katona, & Messing (2022). The Limits of Trading Cultural Capital: Returning Migrant Children and Their Educational Trajectory in Hungary. Children and Youths' Migration in a Global Landscape (Vol. 29, pp. 115-139) Emerald Publishing Limited.	Is the research question clearly formulated?	X		
	Is the qualitative approach appropriate to answer the research question?	X		
	Is the data collection method appropriate to answer the research question?	X		
	Are results derived from data correctly?	X		
	Are conclusions correctly based on results?	X		
	Is there a common thread between data source, data collection, analysis and interpretation of data?	X		
Overall assessment:	**The study is of high quality.**			

Source	Criteria	Response to criteria		
		Yes	No	Comment
19. Grosa, D., & King, R. (2023). The Challenges of Educational Reintegration and the Psychosocial Wellbeing of Returnee Children: Evidence from Latvia. Journal of International Migration and Integration, 24(Suppl 2), 407-426.	Is the research question clearly formulated?	X		
	Is the qualitative approach appropriate to answer the research question?	X		
	Is the data collection method appropriate to answer the research question?	X		
	Are results derived from data correctly?	X		
	Are conclusions correctly based on results?	X		
	Is there a common thread between data source, data collection, analysis and interpretation of data?	X		
Overall assessment:	**The study is of high quality.**			
20. Despagne, C., & Jacobo Suárez, M. (2019). The adaptation path of transnational students in Mexico: Linguistic and identity challenges in Mexican schools. Latino Studies, 17(4), 428-447	Is the research question clearly formulated?	X	X	Various aim formulations in different sections.
	Is the qualitative approach appropriate to answer the research question?	X	X	One of the objectives is to study the effects of return on returning countries - to answer this question, other methods are needed.
	Is the data collection method appropriate to answer the research question?	X	X	See above.
	Are results derived from data correctly?	X		
	Are conclusions correctly based on results?	X		
	Is there a common thread between data source, data collection, analysis and interpretation of data?	X		
Overall assessment:	**The study is of medium quality.**			

Source	Criteria	Response to criteria		
		Yes	No	Comment
21. Ní Laoire (2015) Children, Cousins, and Clans: the role of extended family and kinship in the lives of children in returning Irish migrant families. In Linda Connolly (Ed.) (2015) The 'Irish' Family, London: Routledge.	Is the research question clearly formulated?	X		
	Is the qualitative approach appropriate to answer the research question?	X		
	Is the data collection method appropriate to answer the research question?	X		
	Are results derived from data correctly?	X		
	Are conclusions correctly based on results?	X		
	Is there a common thread between data source, data collection, analysis and interpretation of data?	X		
Overall assessment:	**The study is of high quality.**			
22. Kienzler, H., Wenzel, T., & Shaini, M. (2019). Vulnerability and psychosocial health experienced by repatriated children in Kosovo. Transcultural Psychiatry, 56(1), 267-286.	Is the research question clearly formulated?	X		
	Is the qualitative approach appropriate to answer the research question?	X		
	Is the data collection method appropriate to answer the research question?	X		
	Are results derived from data correctly?	X		
	Are conclusions correctly based on results?	X		
	Is there a common thread between data source, data collection, analysis and interpretation of data?	X		
Overall assessment:	**The study is of high quality.**			

Source	Criteria	Response to criteria		
		Yes	No	Comment
23. Riiskjaer, M. H. B., & Nielsson, T. (2008) Circular repatriation: The unsuccessful return and reintegration of Iraqis with refugee status in Denmark. UNHCR Report, Policy Development and Evaluation Service.	Is the research question clearly formulated?	X	X	It is clear what the approach of the study is, but there are different aim formulations in different sections of the report.
	Is the qualitative approach appropriate to answer the research question?	X		
	Is the data collection method appropriate to answer the research question?	X		
	Are results derived from data correctly?	X		
	Are conclusions correctly based on results?	X		
	Is there a common thread between data source, data collection, analysis and interpretation of data?	X		
Overall assessment:	**The study is of medium quality.**			

Source	Criteria	Response to criteria		
		Yes	No	Comment
24. Hökeberg, J. (2019) Child-sensitive return Upholding the best interests of refugee and migrant children in return and reintegration decisions and processes in Sweden. UNICEF Report.	Is the research question clearly formulated?	X	X	It is clear what the approach of the study is, but the aim and research question could have been further clarified. There are different formulations in different sections of the report.
	Is the qualitative approach appropriate to answer the research question?	X		
	Is the data collection method appropriate to answer the research question?	X		
	Are results derived from data correctly?	X		
	Are conclusions correctly based on results?	X		
	Is there a common thread between data source, data collection, analysis and interpretation of data?	X	X	Partly, a better disposition could strengthen the common thread.
Overall assessment:	**The study is of medium quality.**			

Source	Criteria	Response to criteria		
		Yes	No	Comment
25. Zayas, L.H., Guillermina, N., Callejas, F., Georgina, M.E., Pinedo, M. & Fuentes-Balderrama, J.F. (2023). Two Pathways to Mexico: Forced deportation or voluntary return of parents and US citizen children. Family Process. 2023; 00, 1-15.	Is the research question clearly formulated?	X		
	Is the qualitative approach appropriate to answer the research question?	X		
	Is the data collection method appropriate to answer the research question?	X		
	Are results derived from data correctly?	X		
	Are conclusions correctly based on results?	X		
Overall assessment:	**The study is of high quality.**			

Source: Author's quality assessment.

Table 6. Quantitative studies (n=2)

Source	Criteria	Response to criteria		
		Yes	No	Comment
1. Amuedo-Dorantes & Juarez (2022) Health Care and Education Access of Transnational Children in Mexico. Demography 59(2):511-533.	Is the research question clearly formulated?	X		
	Is the quantitative approach appropriate to answer the research question?	X		
	Is the data collection method appropriate to answer the research question?	X		
	Is the sample representative of the population?	X		
	Are measurement methods appropriate in terms of outcome and intervention/exposure?	X		
	Is the data complete?	X		
	Have possible confounding factors been considered in the research design and analysis?	X		
	Is the intervention/exposure implemented as planned during the research period?	X		
Overall assessment:	**The study is of high quality.**			

Source	Criteria	Response to criteria		
		Yes	No	Comment
2. Zevulun, Post, Zijlstra, Kalverboer & Knorth (2018) Migrant and asylum-seeker children returned to Kosovo and Albania: predictive factors for social-emotional wellbeing after return. Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 44:11, 1774-1796.	Is the research question clearly formulated?	X		
	Is the quantitative approach appropriate to answer the research question?	X		
	Is the data collection method appropriate to answer the research question?	X		
	Is the sample representative of the population?	X		
	Are measurement methods appropriate in terms of outcome and intervention/exposure?	X		
	Is the data complete?	X		
	Have possible confounding factors been considered in the research design and analysis?	X		
	Is the intervention/exposure implemented as planned during the research period?	X		
Overall assessment:	**The study is of high quality**			

Source: Author's quality assessment.

Table 7. Mixed method studies (n=2)

Source	Criteria	Response to criteria		
		Yes	No	Possible comment
1. iliško, D., Badjanova, J., & Ignatjeva, S. (2017). Sustainability and Unsustainability Aspects of Social Adaptation of Children from Returning Immigrant Families. Conference paper - In ICERI2017 Proceedings (pp. 4054-4060) IATED.	Is the research question clearly formulated?	X		Research question could be reformulated or expanded with an additional question.
	Is a mixed methods approach appropriate to answer the research question?	X		
	Is the data collection method appropriate to answer the research question?	X		It is not clear how the Paired Sample Test answers the question.
	Is the choice to use a mixed methodology clearly justified?		X	
	Are the different components of the study effectively integrated to answer the research question?	X		Not entirely - see comment above.
	Do the different approaches fulfil the quality criteria for each method?	x		To a large extent
Overall assessment:	**The study is of medium quality.**			

Source	Criteria	Response to criteria		
		Yes	No	Possible comment
2. Grosa, D. (2022). Anxieties regarding family return to Latvia: Does the imagined turn out to be reality? Central and Eastern European Migration Review.	Is the research question clearly formulated?	X		
	Is a mixed methods approach appropriate to answer the research question?	X		
	Is the data collection method appropriate to answer the research question?	X		
	Is the choice to use a mixed methodology to answer the research question clearly justified?	X		
	Are the different components of the study effectively integrated to answer the research question?	X		
	Are qualitative and quantitative data correctly integrated and interpreted together?	X		
	Are any discrepancies between quantitative and qualitative data addressed?			Not applicable
	Do the different approaches fulfil the quality criteria for each method?	X		
Overall assessment:	**The study is of high quality**			

Source: Author's quality assessment.

Appendix 7

Table 8. Number of children in families in Sweden in a return process

Number of individuals who received a refusal or expulsion decision			
REFUSAL/EXPULSION Decision-group	Type of person	Decision year	Number of individuals
Refusal/expulsion	Family child	2020	3,614
Refusal/expulsion	Family child	2021	3,628
Refusal/expulsion	Family child	2022	3,679
Refusal/expulsion	Family child	2023	1,668
Total			**12,589**
Number of individuals who have actually returned			
REFUSAL / EXPULSION Decision-Group in detail	Type of person		Number of individuals returned
Refusal/expulsion (normal)	Family child		5,137
Refusal/expulsion Police	Family child		510
Immediate enforcement (EU country)	Family child		63
Immediate enforcement (home country)	Family child		159
Immediate enforcement (third country)	Family child		1
Deportation to an EU country	Family child		64
Total			**5,934**
Number of individuals admitted to detention			
Type of person	Change of address year		Number of individuals in detention
Family child	2020		7
Family child	2021		1
Family child	2022		5
Family child	2023 (until June 2023)		3
Total			**16**

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Report and Policy Brief 2014:1, *Radikala högerpartier och attityder till invandring i Europa*, Mikael Hjerm and Andrea Bohman.

Report and Policy Brief 2015:1, *Internationell migration och remitteringar i Etiopien*, Lisa Andersson.

Research Overview 2015:2, *Politiska remitteringar*, Emma Lundgren Jörum and Åsa Lundgren.

Research Overview 2015:3, *Integrationspolitik och arbetsmarknad*, Patrick Joyce.

Research Overview 2015:4, *Migration och företagens internationalisering*, Andreas Hatzigeorgiou and Magnus Lodefalk.

Report and Policy Brief 2015:5, *Svenskt medborgarskap: reglering och förändring i ett skandinaviskt perspektiv*, Mikael Spång.

Report and Policy Brief 2015:6, *Vem blir medborgare och vad händer sen? Naturalisering i Danmark, Norge och Sverige*, Pieter Bevelander, Jonas Helgertz, Bernt Bratsberg and Anna Tegunimataka.

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Since 2013, the Resource Centre in Strömsund Municipality has been working on issues related to the asylum and return process, with a particular focus on the conditions for unaccompanied minors in the process. The Resource Centre's knowledge and experience is a starting point for the current project Children in Families, which is supported by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund. The project aims to ensure a clear child perspective for asylum-seeking children in families and to strengthen children's rights. This report is part of a knowledge production that will, among other things, form the basis for future support material for the child, the guardian and those who meet them in their professional role.

The report is written by Pinar Aslan Akay, PhD in Social Work and Research Coordinator at Delmi.

The Migration Studies Delegation is an independent committee that initiates studies and supplies research results as a basis for future migration policy decisions and to contribute to public debate.

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