



AVRR Newsletter

Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration from Austria

April 2012 Issue 3

Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Colleagues,

April is a busy and exciting month in the IOM Vienna AVRR Department. On the one hand, we are busy with the day to day implementation of our country-specific AVRR projects in Nigeria, Georgia, the Russian Federation / the Chechen Republic and Kosovo. We have regularly been receiving reintegration plans from our colleagues in the countries of return, which we review and approve for funding. It is always an interesting task for us to witness the reintegration processes going on in the countries of return. On the other hand, we are very happy that IOM Vienna has been supporting two new projects since the start of the year: "**VREN** - *Voluntary Return European Network*" and "**MAGNET** - *Austria, Belgium, France and the Netherlands toward a joint approach in the field of job placement promotion for Iraqi returnees*".

In addition, another project is now also available to returnees from Austria: "**SIREADA** - *Support to the Implementation of EC Readmission Agreements with the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation and Ukraine: Facilitation of Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration*". The project provides reintegration assistance to returnees to the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation and Ukraine.

In light of these activities, we would like to take this opportunity to thank our excellent interns, Lisa Hessenberger and Tamar Chikvaidze, who in addition to supporting us in our daily work, both actively contributed to making this newsletter issue a reality during this busy time.

We wish you all a very pleasant read and welcome you to share your thoughts and feedback with us!

Best regards,

The IOM Vienna AVRR Team

In this issue:

The MAGNET Project

Perspectives of a Return Counsellor

The SIREADA Project

What happens after return?
AVRR Chechnya IV

The Reintegration Team of
IOM Tbilisi

Success in Kosovo with an
innovative business idea

VREN - Voluntary European
Return Network

**Department for Assisted Voluntary
Return and Reintegration**
IOM Country Office Vienna
Nibelungengasse 13/4
1010 Vienna
+43 (0) 1 585 3322 28
avrr.vienna@iom.int

BM.I  REPUBLIK ÖSTERREICH
BUNDESMINISTERIUM FÜR INNERES



MAGNET – Job Placement Assistance for Voluntary Returnees in Iraq (Kurdistan Region)

On 15 February 2012 the kick-off meeting of the project MAGNET – "*Austria, Belgium, France and the Netherlands toward a joint approach in the field of job placement promotion for Iraqi returnees*" co-financed by the European Return Fund (Community Actions 2010), France and the Netherlands took place in Paris in the presence of the Iraqi Deputy Minister for Migration and Displacement, Mr. Al-Khafagy, the Director of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), Mr. Haji Rasoul, and the Director of the Bureau for Migration and Displacement in the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), Mr. Shokr Yasseen Yasseen.

The latter stressed the importance of cooperation of different actors: "*(...) we need a cooperative and unified mechanism that is three dimensional including host countries, home country, and returnees (...)*".

The overall aim of the project, which is supported by the Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior, is to contribute to the establishment of a common approach of four EU Member States (Austria, Belgium, France and the Netherlands) with regards to the reintegration of Iraqi assisted voluntary returnees in the labour market in



Erbil, Dahuk, Sulaymaniyah and their respective governorates. The project runs from 1 January 2012 until 30 June 2013 and is implemented with the support of the Bureau of Displacement and Migration and in coordination with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG).

The project responds to the results of a study commissioned to the Altai Consulting Company by IOM in 2010 named "Reintegration of Returnees in Iraq: Local economy absorption capacity, scalability of IOM programs and potential local partners – a study in seven governorates".

After a thorough analysis of the needs and absorption capacities of local enterprises in Sulaymaniyah, Erbil, Ninewa, Dahuk, Anbar, Diyala und Kirkuk, the study came – amongst others – to the conclusion that there was a demand for certain skills that companies have difficulties in finding locally (e.g. in the ICT, construction, water supply, waste management sectors), and recruitment methods are rarely formal.

The following activities will be carried out under MAGNET to assist Iraqi voluntary returnees in finding a job in the Kurdistan Region, thus fostering their sustainable socio-economic reintegration:

1. Provision of information on reintegration services and respective service providers present in Iraq (Kurdistan Region) (prior to departure and upon return)

Information on key economic sectors, the labour market, training opportunities, microcredit institutions, etc. will be gathered in a booklet and disseminated to the voluntary returnees. Furthermore, voluntary returnees can contact IOM offices in Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands, France and Iraq (Kurdistan Region) directly to receive targeted information and support. Video conferences can be organized to facilitate information exchange between voluntary returnees and IOM staff in Iraq (Kurdistan Region) and/or other project participants.

2. Setting-up of a job matching database

An online job-matching database has been developed and is currently being tested. It will allow voluntary returnees to Iraq / Kurdistan Region to register in the database and fill in their professional profiles. Companies will be able to post open vacancies. The database will contribute to a more structured recruitment mechanism.

3. Reinforcement of the network of employers as partners in Iraq

IOM in cooperation with the local government will actively engage in partnerships with the local private sector and will strengthen its network with employers in order to identify vacancies and encourage prospective employers to hire voluntary returnees. Three job fairs will be organized in order to facilitate a direct contact between job seekers and potential employers.

4. Job counselling, job referrals and placement

IOM will play an active role in the job placement of voluntary returnees by conducting a skills/profiling assessment, reviewing qualifications, work experience and expectations, and assisting in the creation of CVs that will be uploaded in the job matching database.

Please note that neither IOM nor MAGNET partners, including governments and the private sector, can ensure the availability of suitable vacancies or guarantee (long-term) employment to all voluntary returnees.

MAGNET is coordinated by IOM Paris. The MAGNET focal point at IOM Vienna is Ms. Barbara Albrecht (balbrecht@iom.int; Tel: (01) 585 33 22 12).



IOM Iraq colleague Nicola Graviano presenting an overview on the results of the Altai Study at the MAGNET kick-off meeting in February 2012.



This project is financed by the European Return Fund.

Assistance in Voluntary Return and Reintegration in Nigeria – perspectives of a return counsellor

Christian Fackler, team leader of the Caritas return assistance since 2011, has been working as a return counsellor since 2000. Mr. Fackler and the Caritas return assistance team work in close collaboration with IOM on the project “Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration for Nigerian Nationals in Austria”, which is co-financed by the Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior (Mol) and the European Return Fund. The interview was conducted by IOM staff Barbara Albrecht, Katie Klaffenböck and Lisa Hessenberger.

IOM: Since when and in which Austrian Federal Provinces does Caritas undertake return counselling and what are its main tasks?

Christian Fackler: The project has been in place since 1998. At that time the provinces of Vienna, Salzburg and Styria were involved. In the meantime Vorarlberg, Burgenland and Upper Austria have joined the project, too. Our job is to render assistance to people who come to us with the desire to return. In doing so, we set high value on voluntariness, meaning that migrants approach us and we do not seek to contact them or attempt to persuade them. We try to discern the various possibilities that our clients have, and render assistance in their best interest in cases where they might be confronted with family or political problems. We try to identify all issues and address them as best we can. In the last couple of years, the topic of reintegration in the return country has gained importance and the possibilities to support clients in this regard have increased.

IOM: With which organizations does the Caritas return counselling cooperate?

Christian Fackler: The project is financed by the European Return Fund and the Austrian Mol. We cooperate at very many levels. Firstly, of course, there is close cooperation within Caritas through regular internal exchange of experiences and information among the Austrian Federal Provinces. We also collaborate with other Caritas institutions such as legal counselling services, the Caritas Centre for Migrants, the Social Service Unit at the airport or publicly funded accommodation. Secondly, we regularly exchange information with other NGOs such as Diakonie Austria, Volkshilfe, LEFÖ and with all actors involved in the field of asylum procedures and social counselling for migrants. We are also in contact with the administrative authorities, the Mol, the Aliens’ Police stations in and outside of Vienna and with various embassies. We also cooperate closely with IOM to organize the return travel and regarding the reintegration projects. The latter significantly improve the counselling interviews as it is favourable and easier to be able to present additional choices to the clients during the interview. I think that the clients’ general feeling about their return is better when they have the opportunity to receive assistance after their return. It’s positive for both sides – we can offer more and the clients have something that helps them immediately after their return.



Christian Fackler in the office of the Caritas Perspektivenberatung in Vienna.

IOM: How many Nigerians receive return counselling per week and how do they learn about your services?

Christian Fackler: That depends. I would guess five to seven Nigerians come to us per week, and the number of clients from Nigeria is increasing. In some cases the Embassy sends them to us, in other cases clients live in the Caritas accommodation centre and are referred to us by their advisors. In the notification to leave the country the Aliens’ Police make reference to us and the Verein Menschenrechte Österreich. Furthermore, we are in contact with the Nigerian communities in Vienna. The rest learn about us through word of mouth; after all, we have been around for quite some time.

IOM: What happens during return counselling sessions?

Christian Fackler: We hardly make appointments unless a client wishes to meet at a fixed date. Usually clients simply drop by and we have our initial interview where we try to clarify questions regarding asylum provisions and other legal questions. The client decides whether he or she wants to apply for participation. The first step is to get the necessary identification and travel documents. The second step is to file an application with the Mol and see whether the application is approved. These steps can also be taken simultaneously. As a third step the flight is booked.

IOM: What is the clients’ reaction to the project?

Christian Fackler: Our clients take a lively interest in the project. There are few doubts that it really works. I also think that there has been a lot of positive feedback from returnees within the community.

IOM: How well does the project “Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration to Nigeria” meet the needs of its target group?

Christian Fackler: All in all, I think, the needs of the target group can be satisfied. I know that the project is built on a lot of experience and that the staff in Nigeria knows exactly what works and what does not. I see one difficulty, however, in the selection criteria for participation in the project, especially regarding a person’s exclusion due to his or her criminal record or a regulatory offence. Our clients are under the pressure to earn money, but are not allowed to do so. The fact alone that people come and ask for money because they can’t afford to buy the return ticket shows that we are dealing with people who are in dire need of the assistance provided by the project. Someone who has made a serious profit from his or her criminal activities does not need this help. These people are a whole different calibre; they do exist, but they certainly do not come to Caritas for return assistance.

I think, however, that the chosen path of project is the right one, and we notice that when counselling our clients. The project’s concept is pretty clear to them, they know they have to draft a business plan and that money up to a certain amount can be spent for the purpose of their business. The fact that they don’t receive the money in cash is accepted in most cases. Right from the beginning I noticed that the project’s concept is flexible and the scope of possibilities conforms to the returnees’ creativity and ideas. This is great and I see this open-mindedness as a distinct feature of the Nigeria project.

IOM: Thank you for the interesting interview!



SIREADA – Supporting the reintegration of Moldovan, Ukrainian and Russian returnees from the European Union

The IOM missions in Moldova, Russia and Ukraine have launched a new project “Support to the Implementation of EC Readmission Agreements with the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation and Ukraine: Facilitation of Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration – SIREADA” which is funded by the European Union and co-funded by the Austrian Development Agency, the Federal Office for Migration of Switzerland, the Italian Development Cooperation, and IOM. The project runs from 1 March 2011 until 28 February 2013.

In the framework of this project, up to 150 Moldovan, Russian and Ukrainian nationals returning from the European Union will be assisted in their socio-economic reintegration in their respective country of origin. This includes educational courses, vocational trainings, setting up small businesses or job placement. Urgent medical needs can also be covered, and small installation and emergency grants can be provided if required. The maximum amount of reintegration assistance varies depending on the country.

Returnees who are interested to apply for participation in the project must:

- return to the country of origin through the AVR procedure or readmission
- be a national of one of the above countries
- be at least 16 years old
- prove their difficult socio-economic situation and their willingness to durably reintegrate into the country of origin.

Additional criteria may be applied depending on the country of origin.

For further information please contact the respective IOM missions:

IOM Chisinau: Mr. Simion Terzioglo (sterzioglo@iom.int, iomchisinau@iom.int)

IOM Moscow: Ms. Olga Pozdorovkina (opozdorovkina@iom.int, iommoscow@iom.int)

IOM Kiev: Ms. Olga Kulebyakina (okulebyakina@iom.int, reint-ukraine@iom.int)

IOM Vienna: Ms. Barbara Albrecht (avrr.vienna@iom.int)

This project is co-financed by the European Commission, the Austrian Development Cooperation, the Swiss Confederation, the Italian Development Cooperation and the International Organization for Migration.



Austrian
Development Cooperation



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra



IOM International Organization for Migration

What happens after return? An example from the Chechen Republic

38-year old Ms. I. had been in Austria since April 2011 before she chose to return to a rural area in the Chechen Republic together with her then 17 year old son and 11 year old daughter at the beginning of July 2011. She returned to the house where she had lived before and is now living with her husband and extended family.

Before her return to the Chechen Republic, Ms. I. envisioned launching her own small business revolving around livestock breeding. The in-kind assistance granted by IOM in the framework of the project "Assistance for the Voluntary Return and Reintegration of Returnees to the Russian Federation/ the Chechen Republic", which is co-financed by the European Return Fund and the Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior, allowed her to realize this idea.

After her return in July 2011, the NGO Vesta, IOM's implementing partner in the Chechen Republic, visited Ms. I. at her home to assess her living conditions and to assist her in opening her own bank account. Furthermore, Vesta helped Ms. I. to address the Ministry of Health, Labour and Education with the request to find a place for her disabled daughter in a special needs school. The child received a medical examination and an individual psychological rehabilitation plan was developed by the Federal State Bureau for Medical and Social Assessment, but unfortunately there were no suitable facilities which could meet the child's needs. However, a full-fledged rehabilitation centre is being built in the Chechen Republic, which will hopefully soon make it possible to render all required assistance to the disabled child.

In November 2011, Ms. I. developed a business plan with the assistance of the Chechen Chamber of Commerce, IOM's implementing partner responsible for helping beneficiaries to formulate their business ideas.



Ms. I.'s business plan focused on raising calves to be slaughtered for the sale of meat. She already had a barn to keep the animals and contributed hay and fodder necessary for the feeding period. Five months after returning to the Chechen Republic, Ms. I. received her bull-calves. She plans to raise the calves for the sale of meat and reinvest her profits to buy new cattle.

In December 2011, Vesta paid another visit to Ms. I. and her family to undertake a mid-term monitoring of her reintegration progress. The returnee stated that she was very content with the reintegration measures, as they had provided her with the calves. Thanks to the reintegration assistance, she and her husband are able to run their joint cattle breeding business, which will contribute to further improving the family's living conditions.

Ms. I. and the cattle that she received in the framework of the project "Assistance for the Voluntary Return and Reintegration of Returnees to the Russian Federation/ the Chechen Republic".

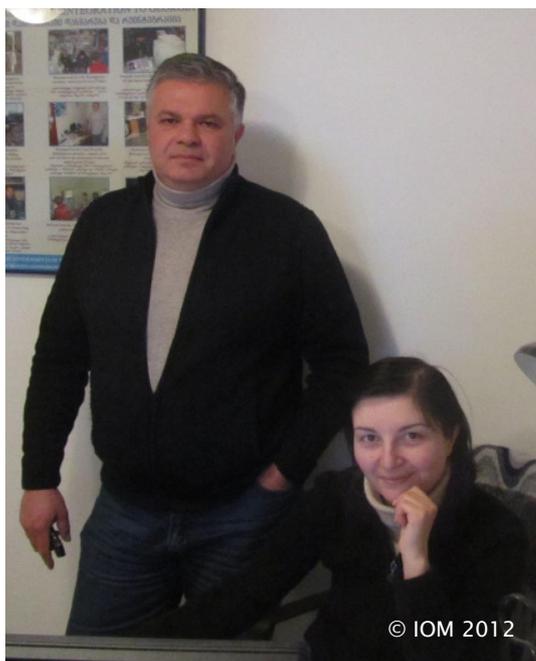
With Vesta's help, Ms. I. submitted a request to IOM for special assistance to improve the family's living conditions. In order for Ms. I.'s disabled daughter to be able to use the bathroom and promote her personal hygiene, it was necessary to build a bathroom next to the girl's bedroom. The application was approved by IOM in February 2012, and Vesta ordered the urgently needed bathtub and sink.

In Ms. I.'s opinion, the project's flexibility allowed for individual assistance, taking her and her family's specific situation into account. The received grant gave Ms. I. sufficient start-up aid to establish her small business and to ensure proper and dignified living conditions for her daughter.



A Day with the Reintegration Team of IOM Tbilisi

IOM Tbilisi is the central office of IOM in Georgia and oversees the activities of the IOM offices in Kutaisi and Batumi in Western Georgia as well as the seven Job Counselling and Placement Centers throughout the country.



IOM colleagues Mamuka Talakhadze and Rusiko Imnaishvili in the IOM office in Tbilisi.

Ms. Rusiko Imnaishvili, who coordinates the implementation of the Austrian project for Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) in Georgia, has been with IOM Georgia since 1996. Over the years, she has been involved in a variety of activities ranging from English and computer classes for state employees working in the field of migration to capacity building of law enforcement officers to combat trafficking in human beings. At the beginning of 2006, she started working in the area of AVRR. She has been coordinating these activities since 2007, and has assisted Georgian nationals from 15 different countries from EU and beyond. She is responsible for the overall coordination of the projects, assessment of the feasibility of reintegration plans, liaison with the colleagues in sending countries and addressing medical and accommodation needs of the returning migrants.

Rusiko regularly participates in meetings with key players in the reintegration field, government institutions and international community. She also has close contacts with the health care sector and various clinics and doctors to draw upon their experiences and discuss individual medical cases. In addition, she is responsible for answering country of origin-information requests on medical, accommodation and reintegration related questions from other countries before the actual return takes place. Her daily work may vary from administrative tasks to direct contact with returnees, including reintegration counselling.

Each individual reintegration plan is discussed with returnees several times until it takes its final shape. These discussions are either personal interviews or phone conversations. When returnees live outside of Tbilisi, most of the counselling is done over the phone and necessary documents are collected by the relevant regional JCP centre or IOM Kutaisi office.

Rusiko works in a team with her colleagues Mamuka Talakhadze and Natia Didebulidze. Because of the diverse activities in the return projects, the reintegration team members coordinate closely and support one another in their tasks. Mamuka has been at IOM since 2000 and took the position of AVRR project assistant in 2008. He welcomes the returnees at the Tbilisi airport and organizes their transportation to their final destination. He is also responsible for procurement, including purchase of tools for business start-ups and monitoring activities for the beneficiaries. He travels around Tbilisi as well as in other regions of Georgia to deliver assistance and monitor project activities. Natia joined the reintegration team at IOM Tbilisi in 2008 to help with the growing numbers of returning migrants. She is responsible for drafting business plans and other project-related documents. She also undertakes the initial counselling with the returnees to inform them about the reintegration package and general procedures. Natia also completes the monitoring reports.

IOM Tbilisi's reintegration team maintains friendly contacts with most of the returnees beyond the official closure of their cases. The returnees often address IOM Tbilisi for assistance and advice in minor details and they feel very much at home in the small AVRR room in the office.

To date there are over 1600 persons in the database on AVRR projects of IOM in Georgia and there are more people to come. They will be warmly welcomed by IOM staff, who will do their best to help them in this challenging period in their lives.



Natia Didebulidze (second from the right) working with IOM beneficiaries.



Mr. H. – Success in Kosovo with an innovative business idea

Kosovo is a country with an enormous trade imbalance, where around 90% of all products are imported. This is particularly felt within the local communities, as their chances of profitably producing goods are significantly reduced.

However, there are possibilities to influence this imbalance positively, as proved by Mr. H. In the beginning of the year 2012, Mr. H. returned to Klinë e Epërme, a village in the province of Skenderaj in Kosovo. With the support of the IOM project “Return and Reintegration Assistance for Voluntary Returnees to Kosovo”, funded by the European Return Fund, the Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior as well as the provincial governments of Lower Austria, Tyrol and Carinthia, Mr. H. had the opportunity to develop an innovative plan for the establishment of a small business: Depending on the season, he plans to process and dry mushrooms, cranberries, chamomile, juniper, plums, wild apples or mint and other forest plants and sell the products profitably thereafter. Mr. H. and his brother used to run a similar business in the past. At that time, they only acted as gatherers, selling collected fruits to resellers. The conditions for their work and this type of business were not very favourably then. As a result from their previous experience, however, they now have technical and economic knowledge about this business sector and about specific distribution channels. This knowledge will be particularly relevant for the development of their current business plan and for the success of their business strategy.

Their strategy takes into consideration the fact that fresh mushrooms and fresh forest fruits have an especially short natural life time. Mushrooms, for example, have a life span of only one to two days. Thus, if sold fresh, the seller has to sell the product immediately, no matter what price he/she gets. This means that there is a high likelihood that he/she will not make any profit or even take a loss from that trade. The resulting dependence of the sellers reduces their chances for a sustainable improvement of their livelihood. Therefore, drying these products is crucial for making profit on the markets. Knowing this, Mr. H. and his brother rose to the occasion and put their ideas into practice. Their newly rented premise and machinery, purchased in the framework of the IOM project, will serve for drying of the fruits and selling the produce.

However, not only the selected method of processing will contribute to the sustainability of the business idea. What makes this business idea additionally innovative is that it draws on local resources on the one hand, and caters to international market requirements on the other hand: Their business premise is located in an area with a high business potential for this branch. Located at a junction of the three big towns Skenderaj, Mitrovica and Peja, the location connects important regions of the country. It is easily accessible and well known for the availability of forest fruits and products. Usually mushrooms and wild fruits are collected in the surrounding forests and sold at the collection points to resellers. Mr. H.'s business site thereby serves as an important trading location for gatherers and buyers.

Small quantities of their products are being sold on the local markets. They are mostly bought by people dealing with health issues, for example people suffering from diabetes and high cholesterol. The biggest amount of the produce, however, is sold to foreign countries as raw materials for further processing. International demand for the produce is great and large quantities go directly to exports. The distribution process to the main export markets, including Italy and the Netherlands, runs through specialized export companies.

In the long run, Mr. H. is also considering packaging and branding his products. This will complement and complete this innovative business plan and make the two brothers even more independent and competitive on the international market.



Mr. H. with his drying machine, which he uses for mushrooms and wild fruits.

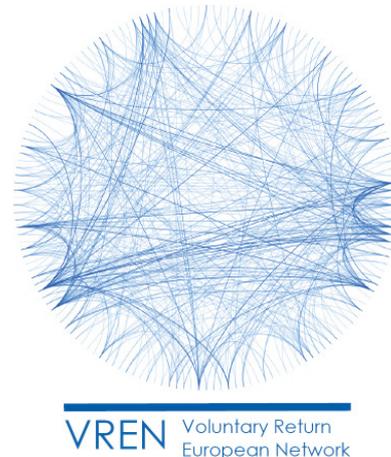


VREN – Creation of a Voluntary Return European Network

Voluntary return of migrants has become an important aspect of the EU's overall migration policy.* However, the European Commission has noted that there is a lack of coordination among Member States, and even within certain Member States, in the area of voluntary return and voluntary return assistance.

In order to improve the coordination among EU Member States in the field of voluntary return, a project was recently launched to create a “Voluntary Return European Network” (VREN). This two-year initiative, prepared jointly by IOM and 15 EU Member States (including Austria) is funded by the European Return Fund and aims to facilitate exchanges among stakeholders in participating EU Member States as well as in Switzerland and Norway on voluntary return and reintegration of third country nationals.

Following a participatory approach involving also major countries of transit and origin, VREN aims to create a platform for exchange of information, ensuring visibility and harmonization of activities between various partners. Once established, it will be a reference source in the field of voluntary return and reintegration and a tool to strengthen awareness and compliance with the standards set by the EU Return Directive (2008/115/EC).



Over an initial period of two years, from 1 January 2012 to 31 December 2013, the project will build a bottom-up, multi-layered framework, allowing for coordination and cooperation at the national and international level to identify needs, priorities, responses and good practices in the field of voluntary return.

To ensure regular communication, VREN will set up a website that will be nurtured and used by the experiences of all its members, represented by governmental officials of the Member States, international organizations (IOs), NGOs, and other stakeholders in the field of voluntary return. This e-community will be able to share information through the web-based platform which is designed to enhance coordination among all interested stakeholders on all aspects of voluntary return.

At the European level, an Advisory Group (AG), consisting of one government representative of each participating EU Member State, Norway and Switzerland, will advise the Project Management Team on the access to, design and content of the website. Throughout the implementation of the project, the Advisory Group will also suggest the ad hoc participation of representatives of other organizations with relevant expertise on voluntary return such as, UNHCR, EMN, or Caritas. These “thematic partners” will enrich the network through sharing their experience and expertise with the other members of the Advisory Group, their participation at the final conference, and their direct contribution to the “thematic” areas of the website (i.e. unaccompanied migrant children, vulnerable migrants, minorities, or reintegration in the countries of origin).

At the national level, IOM will make use of its existing contacts to establish National Stakeholders Networks (NSNs). The focus of the NSNs will be the deepening of the discussions launched within the e-community, the identification of further areas in need of coordination and the facilitation of the exchange of information amongst all national stakeholders. Moreover, the NSNs will engage in annual stakeholder consultations to gather quantitative and qualitative information on voluntary return and reintegration that will be made available for the e-community in the form of country factsheets.

The Austrian NSN is currently being set up and is open to all stakeholders interested in participating. Interested organizations can contact IOM Austria (Ms. Andrea Götzelmann, agoetzelmann@iom.int) for more information.

* The Council Conclusions on Voluntary Return in December 2005 as well as the Stockholm Programme stated the primacy of voluntary return, which should be in the interest of the returnee, the country of return and also of the Member States. Directive 2008/115/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on common standards and procedures in Member States for returning illegally staying third-country nationals underlines the primacy of voluntary return of third-country nationals who do not or no longer fulfil the conditions for entry and/or stay in a Member State.



This project is financed by the European Return Fund.