IOM Vienna Activities

CulTrain – Cultural Orientation Trainings for Unaccompanied Minor Refugees

As of January 2012, IOM Vienna is implementing the new project CulTrain, which will offer cultural orientation trainings to Unaccompanied Minor Refugees in Austria. The aim of the project is to provide the target group with a comprehensive cultural orientation via trainings in order to assist them to successfully integrate into Austrian society. The trainings are also intended to serve as a sign of welcome to positively shape the interaction process with the host community. Furthermore, the trainings will address the perceived image of Austria and promote self-empowerment of the participants.

The project is divided into two phases and will include the following activities:

In the preparation phase, a comprehensive training curriculum will be developed which will include materials and handouts for conducting the trainings. Moreover, the training material will be prepared in a target group-sensitive way. In order to match the training contents to the needs of the target group, national experts will be consulted through four round tables. To reach the target group, informational material about the trainings will be designed and disseminated to relevant institutions.

During the second phase, the trainings will be conducted mainly in Vienna, but also in Lower Austria, Upper Austria and Salzburg. Each of the trainings will be carried out for three afternoons with approximately eight participants per training. These trainings will provide them with basic insight into the Austrian way of life. The trainings will be carried out in six modules and will cover topics such as culture, the country and its people, everyday life, living together, justice and injustice, and relevant authorities and their contact information. The overarching aim of each module is to remove shortages in knowledge and information in order to ease the challenges during the integration process into the host society. The trainings will each be evaluated by the participants; this input will continuously be taken into account in order to improve implemented methods and will also be incorporated into the final report.

The project is co-financed by the European Refugee Fund and the Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior.

17./18.11.2011: International Workshop for Return Counsellors

On 17 and 18 November 2011, the second International Workshop for Return Counsellors, which was organized by IOM Vienna, was held at the premises of the Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior. The goal of the event was to facilitate direct exchange between return counsellors and the colleagues responsible for implementing IOM Vienna’s Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration projects in the respective countries of origin. For this purpose, IOM colleagues from Georgia, Nigeria and the Russian Federation as well as representatives of the Chechen NGO Vesta came to Vienna to present their work, provide insight into the living conditions of returnees in the respective countries, and answer questions of the return counsellors.

Our guests imparted the successes and challenges of implementing reintegration measures in the countries of origin through informative and true-to-life presentations. The responsible project coordinators from IOM Vienna complemented these reports through general information on the projects, all of which are co-funded by the Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior and the European Return Fund. In addition, evaluation results of the project for Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration in Kosovo were presented.
Return counsellors from Caritas, Verein Menschenrechte Österreich, European Homecare and the Refugee Unit of the Carinthian Provincial Government as well as representatives of other NGOs and institutions had the opportunity to ask organizational questions, discuss individual cases, and learn more about living conditions in Nigeria, Georgia and the Chechen Republic. This will allow return counsellors to better inform their clients about living conditions and project implementation in the country of origin, which will thereby better prepare returnees for their reintegration after their voluntary return.

All parties involved in Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration expressed great interest in the workshop. The active participation, lively discussions – during the breaks as well – and the large amount of positive feedback emphasize the need for regular exchange in this area.

This event was co-financed by the European Return Fund and the Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior.

Workshop in Vienna: practical cooperation to fight human trafficking

In late November 2011 participants from seven countries arrived in Vienna for a week-long workshop organized by IOM Vienna’s counter-trafficking team. Following up on the previous, successful Study Visits to Nigeria and to Belgium, the workshop constituted the third activity in the framework of the joint IOM/UNODC/EXIT Project Enhancing multi-stakeholder cooperation to fight human trafficking in countries of origin and destination. Law enforcement, judiciary and civil society representatives from Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Nigeria, Switzerland and the United Kingdom met once again, eager to discuss and share their concrete experiences in the area of trafficking in human beings. In line with this, the Vienna workshop focused on reviewing case studies to increase understanding of practical application of policies and procedures in each of the seven countries.

The workshop kicked off on the afternoon of 28 November with a welcome from the Project Management Team (PMT) and from a representative from the Austrian Federal Ministry for Justice which hosted the event. A recap of the previous Study Visit to Belgium and a review of the objectives of the project refreshed everyone’s memory of what had been accomplished so far while the presentation of the workshop agenda set out the schedule for the coming week. The PMT also took the opportunity to present a proposal for a follow-up project on addressing human trafficking from Nigeria to Europe, which was received with interest by participants. The PMT and project participants then enjoyed dinner together before being accompanied on a walk through Vienna’s red light district by members of the Austrian police force.

Over the course of the next days, seven specific cases of human trafficking were presented, accompanied by lively and animated exchanges on diverse issues such as effective prosecution, victims’ rights, transnational cooperation, etc. Participants enthusiastically shared their professional experience with discussions often continuing informally in the evenings.

In addition, representatives from Switzerland and from Spain informed project participants about methods of formal cooperation, presenting bilateral agreements which their countries have concluded with Nigeria that incorporate the area of human trafficking. The workshop was rounded out with sector-specific meetings to discuss pertinent issues and with country-specific meetings to formulate national action plans in order to disseminate the knowledge gained to their peers at home.

Project participants also had the opportunity to attend a NaWa event (www.nawafestival.org) where the film "Are We Aware" by Emanuel Danesch was screened. Subsequently several participants outlined their experiences in Nigeria during the course of the Study Visit and shared their professional and personal perspectives on the crime of human trafficking in the course of an open discussion.
The workshop ended with a review of the week’s activities, an evaluation of the workshop and of the project to date. Participants expressed appreciation of the opportunity the project offered to increase transnational cooperation in fighting human trafficking and pledged to disseminate the knowledge gained during the past months to counterparts in their home countries. It was with promises to keep in touch both at the personal and the professional levels that participants headed home on 2nd December after a productive week in Vienna.

The National Contact Point Austria in the European Migration Network (EMN) in cooperation with the Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior organized a National EMN Conference on the topic “Linking Research and Policy in the field of Migration, Asylum and Integration” on 12 December 2011 in Vienna. The Conference was organized as an open forum for discussion between national and international experts and sought to contribute to increased evidence-based policymaking. Three sessions laid the focus on the following aspects:

1. Research-policy processes: Knowledge production and transfer
The aim of this session was to detect obstacles that hinder effective dialogue, cooperation and knowledge-sharing between the fields of research and policy; and to identify effective strategies and mechanisms to address these.

2. Research-policy infrastructures: Institutions, co-operations and partnerships
The second session dealt with the various structural and institutional contexts in which research is undertaken to inform policy-makers and focused in particular on the effectiveness of these settings in supporting evidence-based policy-making.

3. Research-policy nexus examples: Knowledge utilisation in policymaking
The third session aimed to present good practice examples of migration/integration research used for policymaking and integrated in the administrative procedures.

Each session was followed by discussions to facilitate an exchange of information and learning from experiences made in other countries.

EMN Study “Temporary and Circular Migration: empirical evidence, current policy practice and future options”

The Austrian country report on temporary and circular migration of third country nationals in Austria illustrates empirical insights, legal requirements and political discussions on these topics. The study covers the period from 2004 to the end of 2010.

The EMN synthesis report on temporary and circular migration summarizes the main findings of the country reports which were compiled by 24 EU Member States. The study aims to illustrate the political approaches and preferences as well as compare and contrast respective particularities in the field of temporary and circular migration in the EU Member States.

Both the country report and the synthesis report are available on the Austrian EMN website www.emn.at/en/studies. Further information on the EMN is available at www.emn.at.

The EMN was established via Council Decision 2008/381/EC. The National Contact Point Austria in the EMN is financially supported by the European Union and the Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior.
IOM’s World Migration Report 2011 “Communicating Effectively about Migration” was launched in Brussels on 8 December 2011. The launch attracted more than 70 participants, including representatives from EU institutions, international organizations, governments, the private sector, academia and civil society. According to the Report, migration is one of the most misunderstood themes of the present times, even though high mobility and migration characterize the current, globalized world. “Unfortunately the theme of migration is often discussed with a negative focus hiding fears and insecurities of the population with regards to unemployment, living conditions and social cohesion” comments General Director William Lacy Swing. For this reason, a fundamental shift needs to be made in how communication about migration takes place. Instead of focusing on fears, communication should be defined by an open, balanced and comprehensive discourse, possibly depoliticized and focusing on issues of concern and existing evidence. This is especially important in times of financial crisis when the political discourse, media reporting and public opinion on migration tend to be negatively tainted.

The analysis undertaken in the World Migration Report reveals a growing recognition of the socioeconomic contributions of migration and migrants to societies within media and public discourse. However, the overall perception tends to be negative due to misinformation. For example the percentage of migrants within the overall national population is regularly overestimated. This discrepancy between real and perceived numbers is even larger within discourse regarding irregular migrants. Moreover, migrants themselves are often excluded from public forms of communication. This exposes a strong need to acknowledge migrants as active communication agents. Instead of viewing migrants as passive agents in the migration debate, they should be heard and listened to and thereby contribute to the public discussion.

The World Migration Report 2011 warns that distorted communication about migration can trigger a vicious cycle that leads to misinformation being perpetuated through government policy, the mass media and the public at large and vice versa. Therefore, policies and political discourse can play an essential role in shaping a more positive image of migration. Because the media is often the public’s primary source of information about migrants and migration, its role in framing the debate and thematic focus of reporting is crucial.

The 2011 Report also includes an overview of current migration movements and trends as well as important political issues related to migration from the years 2010 and 2011. A special section is also devoted to IOM’s 60th anniversary and the history of the organization and the present work of IOM.