

We hope that this finds you and your colleagues, families and loved ones well. This newsletter will provide you an insight into the work of IOM in Austria and beyond. We wish you an interesting read!

## NEW IOM STRATEGIC PLAN

In January, IOM launched its global five-year strategic plan aimed at delivering on the promise of safe, orderly and regular migration while supporting the world's most vulnerable.

The plan – which will guide IOM's activities through 2028 – was developed after extensive internal consultations, including with migrants themselves, as well as dialogue with Member States, with partners and other United Nations agencies.

"The evidence is overwhelming that migration benefits communities around the globe, yet climate change, conflict and growing inequality are making the migration landscape more complex and challenging," IOM Director General Amy Pope said at the launching event. "This plan is designed to meet those challenges so migration can be a full and powerful force for development, prosperity and progress."

IOM's new global strategic plan emphasizes reducing the risks and impacts of climate change, which evidence shows is now the top driver of migration. It also aligns with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, because migration is integral to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.



The strategic plan sets out three overarching goals:

- Saving lives and protecting people on the move, a core function of IOM's broad and global humanitarian work
- Driving solutions to displacement, with IOM combining its data and expertise to proactively address crises before they get wider and more expensive.
- Facilitating pathways for regular migration, which will help migration become safer and more orderly, and dismantle the incentives for smuggling, trafficking, exploitation, and abuse.

Building on IOM's 70-plus years of experience, the strategic plan applies innovative thinking and technology to help migrants, their families, communities, and societies flourish. This new Strategic Plan enables IOM to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow while enabling us to continue to do what we do best: help people in need.

The full plan is available here: [www.iom.int/iom-strategic-plan-2024-2028](http://www.iom.int/iom-strategic-plan-2024-2028)

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### IOM STRATEGIC PLAN 2024–2028



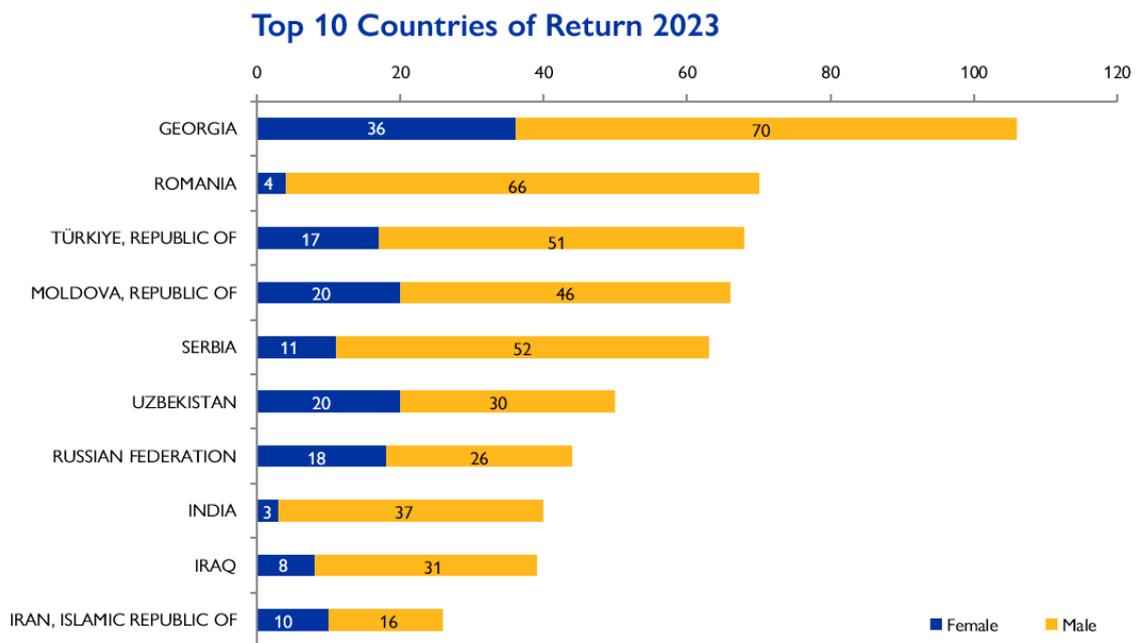
# ASSISTED VOLUNTARY RETURN & REINTEGRATION (AVRR)

## In 2023, IOM Austria supported more than 800 migrants in their voluntary return

In 2023, a total of 829 migrants were assisted by IOM Austria to voluntarily return to their country of origin. The decreased number compared to previous years should be seen in the context of the strategic realignment by the Austrian Ministry of the Interior, according to which operational support for voluntary returns should be provided primarily by the Federal Agency for Reception and Support Services. The guidance, which came into force in March 2023, stipulates that IOM is the responsible organization for the operational support of the voluntary return of pre-defined target groups. This includes migrants in vulnerable situations and migrants with a legal residency status in Austria.

Protecting the dignity and rights of migrants is a key principle of IOM's work. Focusing on the needs of migrants in vulnerable situations, such as those affected by human trafficking, unaccompanied children or migrants with health needs, is therefore in line with the organizational priorities and builds on years of expertise and experience. Overall, 26 per cent of all returnees supported by IOM Austria in 2023 were female and 3.5 per cent were older migrants over 65 years of age. Out of 125 assisted children, four returned unaccompanied by parents or primary caretakers. 119 of the voluntary returnees had special health needs which were duly addressed when organizing the travel. This corresponds to more than 14 per cent of the total number of cases. 41 migrants were accompanied by a medical escort on their return.

In both 2023 and 2022, Georgia was the country with the highest number of IOM-supported voluntary returnees from Austria (106 migrants). This is followed by Romania with 70 and the Republic of Türkiye with 68 migrants who were supported in their voluntary return. A comparison with previous years is not accurate due to the changed operational set-up in the Austrian return system.



In addition to operational return support, IOM provided reintegration assistance\* to 59 migrants in 2023. 17 migrants were supported in the Islamic Republic of Iran, five in Somalia and 37 in Uzbekistan, inter alia with cash and in-kind assistance. 39 reintegration participants were male and 20 were female. The participants' ideas for reintegration investments very manifold and ranged from a grocery store to transportation services to agricultural activities. More detailed analyses, including some case stories on reintegration activities, is provided in the current [AVRR newsletter](#). For more information on IOM Austria's activities in the area of AVRR, please visit the [IOM Austria website](#).



## The WIR films are online: Two years of the project WIR IV and its creative output

Over the past two years, our dynamic youth project WIR IV (Workshops for Integration and Encounters) has produced a total of four captivating films which are available on the [WIR YouTube channel](#). Participants in the workshop series in Graz 2022 crafted the vlogs (video blogs) "Marrying young?" and "This is me!" that delve into thought-provoking topics like marriage and the journey to adulthood from the perspective of young women navigating diverse viewpoints in their communities. The films provide glimpses into the everyday lives of young Muslim women living in Austria.

Participants of our workshop series "Young, Chechen, Honourable" in 2022 produced a fascinating 15-minute documentary short film. Through insightful interviews with Chechen contemporary witnesses from their parents' generation, these talented young individuals shed light on the rich history and vibrant culture of their people after having received an introduction to journalism and visual storytelling.

Our most recent short film "10 CENTS - A Comedy of Mistaken Identities" is also available online. In this short comedy clip, teenagers with a migrant background from Vienna, Austria, humorously depict everyday discrimination. They draw attention to this important topic through a story they scripted and directed themselves. We eagerly anticipate your views, likes, and comments!



Workshop participants filming the short film "10 CENTS". © IOM 2023

## WIR Farewell: The WIR project series came to an end in December 2023

After six inspiring years of WIR projects, we bid farewell to our workshop series for young people, school workshops facilitated by multipliers, our storytelling evenings, and our film screenings and project events. We extend our gratitude to our longstanding project donor, the Federal Chancellery of the Republic of Austria. Without their support, the realization of the WIR projects would not have been possible. We also wish to thank the ERSTE Foundation and the ZukunftsFonds of the Republic of Austria for their financial support of our WIR IV project.

Our sincere appreciation goes out to all those who actively contributed to the success of the WIR projects. Special recognition is due to our dedicated and inspiring intercultural mediators who guided us through the workshop series, as well as to our external trainers whose expertise enabled the implementation of our workshops.

Lastly, we extend a special thank you to all the young participants who engaged in our workshops or served as multipliers. Their motivation, dedication, and courage have been instrumental in our project's success. Together, we have cultivated a space defined by diversity and inclusion.



Workshop participants in Graz reflect on their discussions. © IOM 2022

## EMN Impactful Contributions:

### Celebrating 15 years of migration and asylum insights

The European Migration Network (EMN) marked a significant milestone in 2023, celebrating 15 years of providing up-to-date, objective, reliable and comparable information on asylum and migration. On this occasion, the EMN published a document spotlighting its most influential achievements and contributions from 2018 to 2022, underlining the network's ongoing commitment to addressing complex migration and asylum issues.

As outlined in the document, the EMN played a crucial role in collecting information on the activation of the Temporary Protection Directive following the invasion of Ukraine in 2022. The EMN also responded promptly during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 by reaching out to relevant stakeholders to meet emerging information needs.

The production of a variety of studies and informs, and the possibility to launch ad hoc queries at the request of any member of the network or the European Commission on specific migration and asylum topics, as the document highlights, are of significant value. The EMN outputs provide relevant information to the general public and function as valuable resources for evidence-based policymaking. Read more [here](#).

The EMN, which was established in 2008, is a Europe-wide network consisting of 33 National Contact Points (NCPs) in the EMN Member (EU Member States except Denmark) and Observer Countries (Norway, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, Montenegro, Armenia and Serbia), the European Commission (DG Migration and Home Affairs) and the EMN Service Provider (ICF).

The NCP Austria is – based on an agreement with the Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior – located in the Policy Research and Migration Law Unit of the IOM Country Office for Austria. The main responsibility of the IOM Country Office is to analyse national migration issues and emerging trends and to develop and implement corresponding national projects and programmes. In its role as NCP Austria, the IOM Country Office contributes to information-sharing amongst the EMN Member and Observer Countries on topics such as legal migration, international protection, minors and vulnerable groups, integration, trafficking in human beings, return and others. Find out more about the EMN [here](#).



## New EMN study:

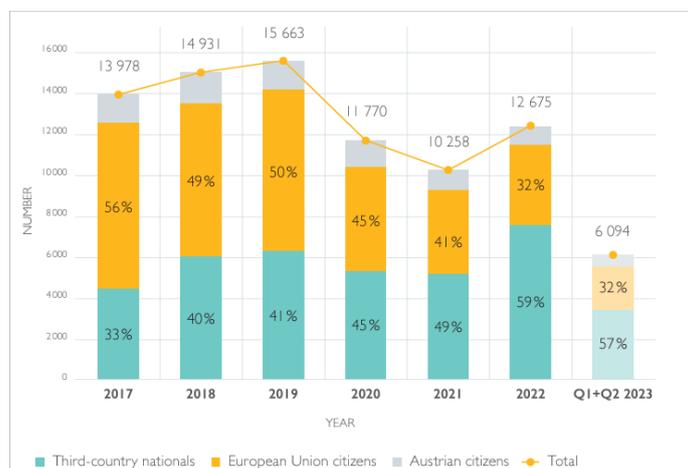
### Unlawful employment of third-country nationals in Austria

Migration in the context of irregularity is a highly debated topic in the EU. A new EMN study addresses this important topic from the perspective of unlawful employment of third-country nationals in Austria in the period 2017-2023. The study provides an overview of risk areas and current trends. It also analyses measures to prevent and identify unlawful employment. The analysis shows that unlawful employment of third-country nationals in Austria poses a complex challenge. It is closely related to issues such as labour market access, economic developments, the progress of digital technologies and labour exploitation.

In terms of the scope and groups of persons affected, the study shows that whereas previously unlawful employment involved mostly EU citizens and only to a marginal extent third-country nationals, this trend has now reversed. Despite the same framework conditions and the same scope of control activities, the number and proportion of identified cases of suspected unlawful employment of third-country nationals has risen notably since 2017.

The study also highlights key challenges, such as the cross-border enforcement of penalties for employers, or the assertion of rights by affected migrants: Regarding the latter, Austrian law provides that foreign nationals have the same rights towards their employers, regardless of whether or not they have a valid employment contract. Moreover, unlawfully employed third-country nationals have access to the same scope of support services from the Chamber of Labour and have the same mechanisms to lodge complaints as Austrian workers, regardless of whether they are staying in Austria regularly or irregularly. As the study shows, however, one key challenge is that even if those in precarious and/or unlawful employment know their rights, they tend not to assert them. In this context it is relevant that whilst a foreign employee cannot be penalized for unlawful employment, as it is the employer's responsibility to ensure the employment is lawful, there may still be consequences under aliens' law. Low barrier access to information, such as integrating information on rights into language courses for migrants, in turn is seen as an effective practice.

The study can be accessed in German and English [here](#).



Persons whose employment breaches the requirements of labour and social law and has been reported to the authority, by nationality.



Federal Ministry  
Republic of Austria  
Interior

The EMN (European Migration Network) Austria is co-funded by the European Union and the Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior.