

We hope that this finds you and your colleagues, families and loved ones in good health amid this pandemic. This newsletter will provide you an insight into the work of IOM in Austria, as well as some historical information on the occasion of IOM's 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. We wish you an interesting read!

## HELPING PEOPLE ON THE MOVE FOR 70 YEARS

December 5<sup>th</sup> marked the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the organization that is today the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Our history is closely linked to that of our founding member Austria, and based on strong partnerships. From the Hungarian crisis to the present day, IOM has been working with various stakeholders to shape migration in such a way that it benefits everyone – migrants and the receiving society, the countries of origin, transit and destination.

### The post-war years - international solidarity for refugees and displaced persons

After the Second World War, a solution to the unbearable situation of refugees and displaced persons in Europe and new perspectives for Europeans had to be found. With this aim, 19 states, including Austria, decided on December 5<sup>th</sup>, 1951 to set up a "Provisional Intergovernmental Committee for the Movements of Migrants from Europe (PICMME)". This was the forerunner organization of IOM, and it had one major task: To promote international cooperation in order to enable people in Europe to emigrate to countries that were ready to receive them.

Austria joined the provisional committee in 1952, initially for one fiscal year. In 1953, the constitution of the organization – renamed the "Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM)" – was adopted, and Austria decided in the same year to extend its membership until further notice.

A liaison office was set up in Vienna, and branches were established in Salzburg and Linz for cooperation with the federal states.

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*Austria is present when the "Provisional Intergovernmental Committee for the Movements of Migrants from Europe" (PICMME) is founded on 5 December 1951.*

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### The Hungarian crisis

Only a few years later, Austria and ICEM were put to the test: After the events in Hungary in October 1956, around 180,000 people fled to Austria. Several states agreed to support Austria and take in refugees, and ICEM took responsibility for the onward journey of 144,000 people. ICEM registered the refugees, took care of their medical treatment, and offered language courses and vocational training opportunities, working closely with Austrian authorities, the countries that were ready to receive them, as well as with UNHCR, the League of Red Cross Societies and Austrian NGOs.

### From European to global cooperation

When more than 160,000 Czechoslovak refugees came to Austria in 1968 following the "Prague Spring", ICEM assisted around 40,000 of them to settle in a new country. In the 1970s, the ICEM, UNHCR and Austria worked together so that refugees, for example from Uganda, Chile, or Indochina could be granted protection in Austria. In recognition of its increasing global role, the organization was renamed the "Intergovernmental Committee on Migration (ICM)" in 1980 and finally the "International Organization for Migration (IOM)" in 1989.

In the 1980s, IOM mainly helped Eastern European refugees to emigrate from Austria. The organization also supported Austrian development workers with flights and from 1990 onwards organized the return and reintegration of refugees from Chile living in Austria.

In the course of the crisis in the Balkans in the 1990s, 13,000 people from Croatia and 90,000 people from Bosnia and Herzegovina found protection in Austria; Austria also took in around 5,000 refugees from Kosovo\* in the framework of an evacuation program organized by IOM and UNHCR. Between 1993 and 2001, the IOM office in Vienna supported around 4,400 Bosnian refugees in their departure and onward journey and worked with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to help refugees in Austria and other countries participate in elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as in local elections in Kosovo\*. In 1999, IOM began to support the return of Kosovars from Austria in cooperation with the Austrian authorities, the federal states and NGOs such as Caritas.

Since then, IOM has been active in various work areas in Austria, for example as a national contact point in the European Migration Network (EMN), in assisted voluntary return and reintegration, resettlement, the fight against human trafficking, and integration, but also in the context of humanitarian aid and development cooperation that is financed by Austria in other countries.

All of these activities would not have been possible without our many partners. For this reason, we use the occasion of our "birthday" to say a big thank you to all of them!

\* References to Kosovo should be understood in the context of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999)



Red Cross volunteers distribute hot tea and coffee to tuberculosis patients emigrating to Sweden with the help of ICEM. © IOM 1957



Shortly before a charter flight organized by ICEM from Salzburg to Australia. © IOM 1962

## INTRODUCING A TRADITION: AUSTRIAN RETURN DAY 2021

On 13 October 2021, return counsellors from all over Austria met in Vienna with representatives of the Austrian Ministry of the Interior (Mol) and IOM to exchange on Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration. Following a similar event in June 2020, this second Austrian Return Day confirmed the excellent cooperation between the Ministry, the Federal Agency for Care and Support Services (*Bundesagentur für Betreuungs-und Unterstützungsleistungen GmbH/BBU*) and IOM in this field.

The event took place nine months after the BBU started with return counselling services. Mr. Andreas Achrainer, BBU's Chief Executive Officer, stated that one major challenge of these first months was the integration of employees from different organizations in one new agency. He emphasized that each and everyone involved could be proud of what has been achieved so far. So did Ms Elisabeth Wenger-Donig (Mol), highlighting that the Austrian return system is often cited as one best practice on the European level. The Ministry also took the opportunity to inform the participating return counsellors on the available reintegration programmes for returnees from Austria: 29 countries worldwide are covered by different reintegration projects; in 14 of these, returnees from Austria are currently being assisted in their reintegration.



Marian Benbow Pfisterer (IOM), Andreas Achrainer (BBU) and Elisabeth Wenger-Donig (Mol) met in Vienna for the Return Day 2021. © IOM

In order to continue consolidating and improving processes and standards in return counselling, three working groups had been established by the BBU and the Mol during the last months. The working group leaders from BBU and Mol presented first results to the audience.

The afternoon of this year's Return Day was dedicated to practice: The return counsellors participated in workshops on the Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration of minors and persons with health needs of physical or mental nature, and discussed standards and frequent challenges. These workshops were a teaser for trainings on the voluntary return of persons in vulnerable situations which IOM will offer in 2022. All stakeholders are looking forward to continuing discussions and exchange with return counsellors on Return Day 2022.

Visit our [website](#) for more information on AVRR from Austria.



Exchange during the afternoon's workshop sessions. © IOM

## FOLLOW THE MONEY: AUSTRIAN CONFERENCE ON EU-ANTI TRAFFICKING DAY

On 14 and 15 October 2021, the Austrian Task Force on Combating Human Trafficking held its yearly conference on the occasion of EU Anti-Trafficking Day. This year's conference was titled "Follow the Money: Financial Aspects of Combating Human Trafficking". Over two days, participants and experts from across the world asked difficult and complex questions about where the huge amount of money (estimated at 150 billion Dollars per year) from human trafficking ends up. The role of the financial sector in trying to tackle trafficking was emphasized: profits from trafficking are flowing through some sort of formal or informal financial system, which need to be identified. It can even lead to identifying and freeing victims of trafficking!

Following the money is important merely in order to prove the crime of trafficking, as well as to secure assets and funds to allow victims of trafficking to be compensated for human rights abuses and for lost opportunities, such as the lost time in education for example. On the second day, IOM partnered once again with VIDC (Vienna Institute for International Dialogue and Cooperation) to host a workshop, looking in more details at the exploitation of agricultural workers in Austria. The workshop highlighted the complex legal system, including remuneration rules, regarding agricultural worker's rights in Austria – which often vary from region to region: agricultural workers are unlikely to know what earnings they are owed. As a consequence, thousands of Euros a year are lost for them in unpaid earnings, sick leave, holidays and tax and social security payments.



### The workshop concluded with concrete propositions of measures for improvement:

- Easily accessible information campaigns around workers' rights in several languages – this needs to be government-financed such as the best practice example of "Faire Mobilität" in Germany
- Compulsory training and capacity building for inspectors across sectors
- Clear and aggregated data regarding agricultural workers - these data need to be publicly available, as data is key to measuring improvements

## ASYLTRAIN II:

### IN-PERSON TRAININGS & NEW BROCHURE ON INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

After over a year of conducting trainings online due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the AsylTrain II team was very pleased to resume in-person trainings in early autumn. Since September 2021, three trainings have been held for staff members of the Federal Agency for Care and Support Services (*Bundesagentur für Betreuungs- und Unterstützungsleistungen/BBU*) including for return counsellors, basic service counsellors, interpreters and legal counsellors.

Two trainings on identifying victims of trafficking introduced attendees to indicators of human trafficking with a specialised module covering key legal aspects in asylum and immigration procedures offered to legal counsellors. Feedback showed that the trainings were considered useful and importantly of practical application for participants. In one training on intercultural competence, participants discussed and learned about diversity, tolerance of ambiguity or conflict management skills.



This content, along with practical exercises, aims at supporting participants to deal with culturally complex situations with acuity and sensitivity and to enhance and strengthen awareness of their own stereotypes, all while supporting reflection on their practices and positions. Participants also received the new brochure on intercultural competence which was recently published and can be accessed [here](#).

*Participants of the training on intercultural competence are debriefing after the exercise "In my bootstraps" on power and privileges. © IOM*



Federal Ministry  
Republic of Austria  
Interior

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## WIR III: EMPOWERING YOUTH

The project [WIR III – Workshops on Integration and Encounters](#) empowers youth with different migration backgrounds to actively participate in Austrian society and to voice their ideas and concerns.

At the beginning of October 2021, a one-day preparation training for multipliers of the WIR project took place. As part of the training, completed with individual coaching sessions, the young participants developed their own school workshops on social inclusion, civil courage, experiences of discrimination and equality. Accompanied by IOM, they designed two hours of interactive exercises and shared their perspectives with pupils in Vienna and in Graz: Six school classes registered to host the workshops.

In an exciting editing meeting in October 2021, project participants edited the short films they produced during the WIR III workshop weeks for girls and young women in July 2021. As part of the workshop week in Vienna, a humorous and yet thoughtful short movie was created in which the girls and young women share their future dreams and wishes for society. In Graz, our young project participants draw different portraits of women and conclude: "I am proud to be a woman."

The short films were presented for the first time as part of the WIR III closing events on 12 November 2021 in Vienna and on 26 November 2021 in Graz with plenum discussions. In Vienna, our guests and young project participants discussed experiences of discrimination and how social inclusion can be strengthened. They also exchanged their views on multicultivity and how young people with migration backgrounds can embrace multiple socio-cultural affiliations. In Graz, our project participants and representatives of the Chechen community talked about their culture and traditions with a special focus on Chechen women living in the province of Styria.

On 21 November 2021, WIR III hosted a workshop especially for boys and young men with a Chechen background and for everyone interested. The workshop participants learned about Chechen history and traditions and reflected on different narratives, parents' and grandparents' perspectives and the own identity as young Austrian-Chechen men.

You can also follow the WIR III Project on [Instagram](#).

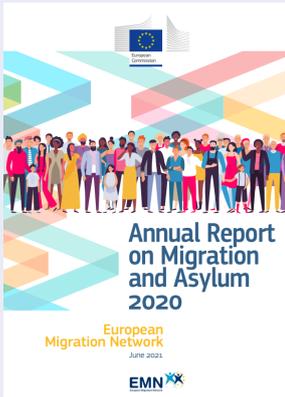


Reflection exercise during the one-day preparation training.  
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Project participants in Graz experiencing with film material  
and filming their short movie.  
©IOM

## NEW PUBLICATION: EMN ANNUAL REPORT



The aim of the EMN (European Migration Network) Annual Policy Reports is to outline the most significant political and legislative developments in Austria as well as in the EU. In Austria, a main development in 2020 was the inauguration of a new Federal Government, ushering in changes in migration and asylum policy, as outlined in the Government Program 2020–2024. Overall, however, developments in 2020 were driven by the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, in Austria and other Member States, new electronic systems and digital tools were introduced to ensure the maintenance of asylum and migration processes.

You may access the following publications free of charge:

[Annual Policy Report Austria EMN](#) | [Annual Report on Migration](#) | [Country Fact Sheet Austria](#)

## EU MIGRATION TALKS: TRENDBAROMETER MIGRATION & ASYLUM

On 11 October 2021, IOM Austria as the National Contact Point in the EMN organized another EU Migration Talks Event to discuss the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the integration and education of migrants in Austria. Among other things, renowned experts explored the question of how migrants were included in the strategies for coping with the pandemic, and to what extent negative consequences could be mitigated by support services.

A summary of the discussion and the presentations are available [here](#).

## NEW PUBLICATION: DETENTION PENDING REMOVAL AND ALTERNATIVES TO DETENTION

Detention pending removal as well as the alternatives to detention specified under Austrian law play a key role in Austria's migration policy. This new policy report analyses the legislation, statistics as well as specific challenges and advantages of existing alternatives to detention. Furthermore, the report provides an overview on the support available to affected migrants as well as to specifically vulnerable groups among these migrants.

[Detention and Alternatives in Austria \(DE\)](#) | [Detention and Alternatives in Austria \(EN\)](#)



**Detention Pending Removal  
and Alternatives to Detention  
in Austria**  
Alexander Spiegelfeld



 **Federal Ministry  
Republic of Austria**  
Interior

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