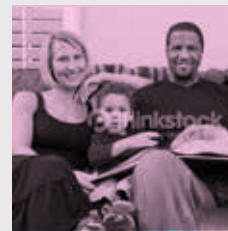
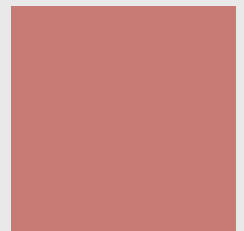
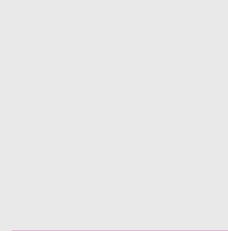
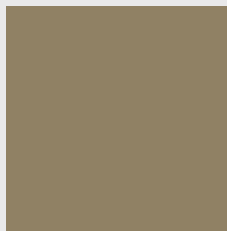
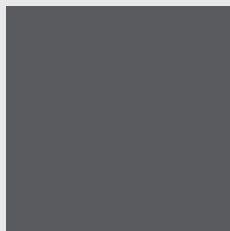
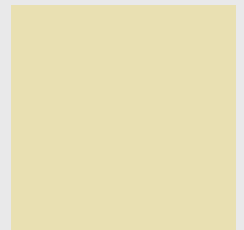
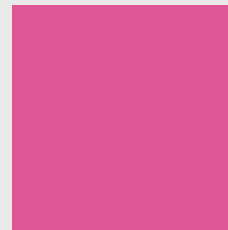
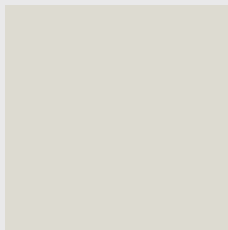
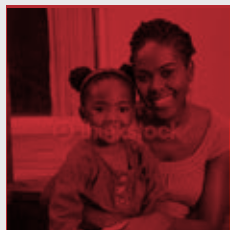
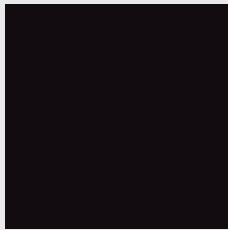
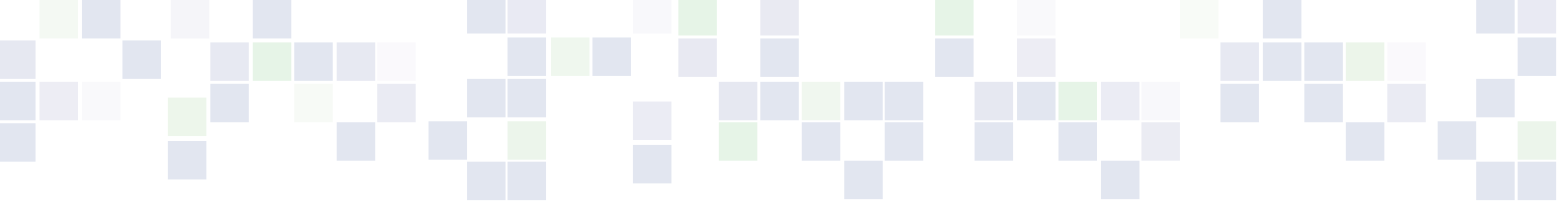


Strengthening Information & Outreach for Assisted Voluntary Return In Ireland





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Strengthening Information & Outreach for Assisted Voluntary Return In Ireland

Author: Liam Coakley

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acronyms

Foreword

Acknowledgements

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION 01

1.1 Background 01

1.2 Assessment rationale 01

1.3 Key findings for Ireland 02

1.4 Methodology 04

CHAPTER 2 – IRELAND 07

2.1 Introduction 07

2.2 Assisted Voluntary Return Programmes (AVRR) in Ireland 08

2.3 AVRR outreach in Ireland 08

2.4 Recommendations 10

CHAPTER 3 – GERMANY 12

3.1 Introduction 12

3.2 AVRR in Germany 12

3.3 AVRR outreach in Germany 13

3.4 Recommendations 14

CHAPTER 4 – NORWAY 16

4.1 Introduction 16

4.2 AVRR in Norway 16

4.3 AVRR outreach in Norway 17

4.4 Recommendations 18

CHAPTER 5 - THE NETHERLANDS 20

5.1 Introduction 20

5.2 AVRR in the Netherlands 20

5.3 AVRR outreach in the Netherlands 21

5.4 Recommendations 22

CHAPTER 6 - CZECH REPUBLIC**25**

6.1 Introduction	25
6.2 AVRR in the Czech Republic	25
6.3 AVRR Outreach in the Czech Republic	26
6.4 Recommendations	27

CHAPTER 7 – SWITZERLAND**29**

7.1 Introduction	29
7.2 AVRR in Switzerland	29
7.3 AVRR outreach in Switzerland	30
7.4 Recommendations	30

CHAPTER 8 – BELGIUM**33**

8.1 Introduction	33
8.2 AVRR in Belgium	33
8.3 AVRR Outreach in Belgium	34
8.4 Recommendations	35

CHAPTER 9 – CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**37**

9.1 Introduction	37
9.2 General Conclusions	37
9.3 Within the asylum system	39
9.4 Outside the asylum system, in the community	42
9.5 Recommendations for Strengthening Information Outreach in Ireland.	44
9.6 In the Asylum System	45
9.7 In the Community	46

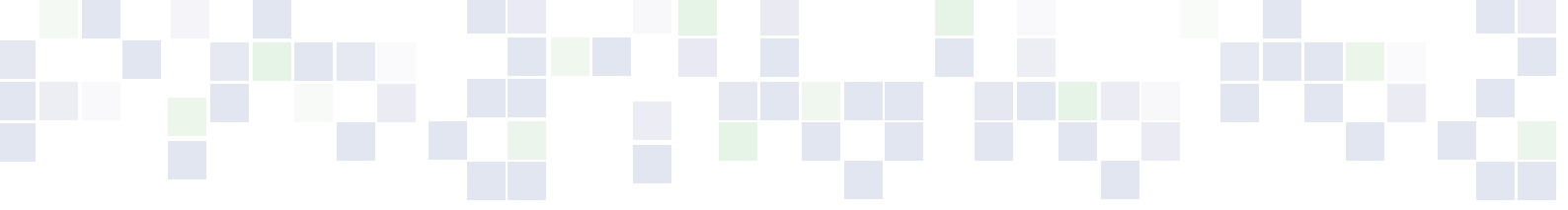
Appendix 1- Tool

Methods of Information and Outreach in the Seven Participating Member States



ACRONYMS

AFA	Asylum Facilities Administration, Czech Republic
AP	The Aliens Police, Czech Republic
ARE	Return and reintegration support to Ethiopia, Norway
AVRR	Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration
BAMF	Federal Migration Ministry, Germany
COA	A governmental agency responsible for reception and the accommodation of asylum seekers and refugees, the Netherlands
CoO	Country of Origin
CoT	Country of Transit
DoJ	Department of Justice, Ireland
Dprov	'Direct Provision' system of asylum seeker accommodation, Ireland
EEA	European Economic Area
FEDASIL	Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers, Belgium
FOM	Federal Office for Migration, Switzerland
GARP	Government Assisted Repatriation Program, Germany
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
IRRANA	Return and reintegration programme to Afghanistan, Norway
IRRINI	Return and reintegration programme to Iraq, Norway



- I-VARRP The Irregular Voluntary Assisted Return & Reintegration Programme, Ireland
- ORAC Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner, Ireland
- MOI Ministry of the Interior, Czech Republic
- MRCI Migrant Rights Centre of Ireland, Ireland
- NGO Non-governmental Organisation
- RAS Reintegration Assistance Switzerland, Switzerland
- RAT Refugee Appeal Tribunal, Ireland
- R&DS Repatriation and Departure Service, the Netherlands
- REAB The Return and Emigration of Asylum Seekers ex Belgium, Belgium
- REAG Reintegration and Emigration Program for Asylum-Seekers, Germany
- REZ The Voluntary Return Assistance at the Reception Centres programme, Switzerland
- RIA Reception and Integration Agency, Ireland
- RIF The Return Information Fund, Switzerland
- TCN Third Country National
- UDI The Directorate of Immigration, Norway
- VARRP The Voluntary Assisted Return & Reintegration Programme, Ireland
- ZIRF The Centre for the Provision of Information on Assisted Return at the BAMF, Germany
- WOM Word of Mouth



FOREWORD

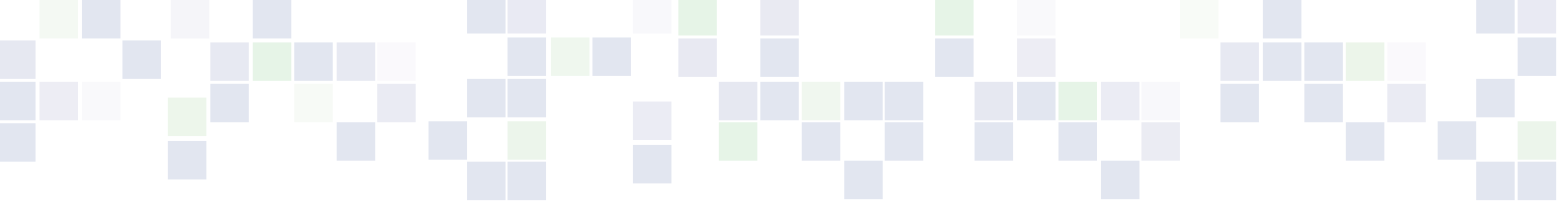
Since 2001, IOM has, in conjunction with the Government of Ireland's Department of Justice (DoJ), been offering assisted voluntary return and reintegration (AVRR) support to migrants with an active claim for asylum and to irregular migrants experiencing difficulty in Ireland. Over this time, IOM's mission to Ireland has assisted over 3,800 migrants to voluntarily return in a dignified and humane manner to 96 countries of origin.

Migratory patterns are changeable however and over the past 10 years Ireland has moved from being an attractive destination country experiencing unprecedented and multi-faceted inward migration to a country experiencing net out-migration, with a concomitant retraction in the numbers of people seeking to claim residency under international instruments and national provisions. The needs of the Government of Ireland have changed in line with these new realities and operational migration management programmes such as IOM's AVRR programmes have had to adjust and readjust accordingly.

The purpose of the present assessment is to offer the basis for a practice-based approach to AVRR that takes into account and synthesizes experiences and methodologies in seven pre-selected European Economic Area (EEA) member states (MS) with on-going voluntary return programmes. It compares specific national strategies and mechanisms with the aim of identifying key lessons and recommendations for the development of a more strategic approach to return management in Ireland and more broadly.

The assessment has taken full account of diverse national specificities and priorities and recognizes that there can be no single "right" approach to AVRR outreach but basic principles have been identified. Governments share desired outcomes, operational methodologies, overall institutional frameworks and oftentimes engage government and non-government service providers in the return process. These are not mere coincidence; they reflect considered institutional responses to common migration management challenges across the EEA and reflect years of experience and continuous adaptation to changing migration dynamics.

Valuable lessons have emerged from this assessment, lessons that can inform and support efficient, humane and sustainable voluntary return – in Ireland but also in other European countries engaged or considering engaging in voluntary return programmes. And, while migration dynamics can change quite dramatically from one day to another there is a longer term value and a certain degree of permanence to these lessons: return has been an integral part of migration since times immemorial and will, in all likelihood, continue to be so in the predictable future.



The overarching lesson for all governments promoting AVRR programmes is that migrants and their needs and concerns should be at the center of the return process. To achieve this requires the cooperation and participation of a broad range of actors, including governments, civil society organisations, and migrants themselves - not just in host countries but also in countries of origin. Building partnerships and networks and including a diverse range of national and international stakeholders is essential to the effective implementation of AVRR – from the pre-return to the reintegration stages.

This has considerable bearing on the information and outreach strategies that need to be put in place, specifically on the AVR message, as word of mouth about benefits, supports and the quality of services filters into communities and ebbs and flows between host countries and countries of origin. In support of this finding, carefully considered and targeted information and outreach strategies have an especially key role to play in building trust and understanding with potential beneficiaries and challenging any misinformation especially about the benefits of AVRR. The assessment findings clearly demonstrate that communication with potential beneficiaries needs to start in the very early stages of the process; it needs to be predictable and sustained, a two-way conversation between the migrant and the counsellor, whether an immigration officer, an IOM staff or an NGO worker.

To this end, the intention of study was not only to put together a useful inventory of current methodology and practice for voluntary return but to articulate a living, flexible tool for all practitioners and decision makers, including especially service providers working in return. Return is complex and sensitive; it affects not only especially migrants and their families but also their communities and wider societies. There is ‘a before’, ‘a during’ and ‘an after’ and with so much at stake, any attempt to clarify, understand and improve the service that governments, civil-society and IOM provide to migrants should be a worthwhile endeavour. It is also our hope for the present study.

IOM Ireland
March 2015



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Strengthening Information & Outreach for Assisted Voluntary Return In Ireland

Author: Liam Coakley

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Assisted voluntary return and reintegration (AVRR)¹ is an indispensable part of a comprehensive approach to migration management aiming at orderly and humane return and reintegration of migrants who are unable or unwilling to remain in host countries and wish to return voluntarily to their countries of origin. The successful implementation of AVRR programmes requires the cooperation and participation of a broad range of actors, including the migrants themselves, civil society and governments in both host countries and countries of origin. IOM is mandated by its constitution to ensure orderly migration, inter alia, through AVRR and an emphasis that voluntariness remains a precondition for all AVRR activities, is at the core of IOM's policy and procedures.

IOM has been implementing AVRR programmes since the late 1970s, helping individual migrants to return and reintegrate, and governments to develop and implement a humane and cooperative approach to return migration (IOM, 2011c)². Indeed, IOM's AVRR programmes have come to be accepted as integral and essential elements of migration management in general, and almost all IOM Missions are now involved in the delivery of such programmes. In 2012, with the support of over 200 IOM Missions in destination countries and countries of origin worldwide, IOM assisted 88,829 migrants to voluntarily return and/or reintegrate in their respective countries of origin. In Europe, IOM has been carrying out AVRR programmes for nearly three decades, and in 2012 implemented some 94 programmes with the European Economic Area (EEA)³.

1.2 Assessment Rationale

Since 2001, IOM has, in conjunction with the Government of Ireland's Department of Justice (DoJ), been offering AVRR support to migrants with an active claim for asylum and to irregular migrants experiencing difficulty in Ireland. Over this time, IOM's mission to Ireland has assisted over 3,800 migrants to voluntarily return in a dignified and humane manner to 96 countries of origin.⁴

Migratory patterns are changeable however and over the past 10 years Ireland has moved from being an attractive destination country experiencing unprecedented and multi-faceted inward migration to a country experiencing net out-migration, with a concomitant retraction in the numbers of people seeking to claim residency under international instruments. The needs of government of Ireland have changed in line with these new realities and operational migration management programmes such as AVRR have had to adjust and readjust accordingly.

IOM-Ireland has experienced a retraction in its core AVRR caseload - from 401 returnees, in 2010 (165 asylum seekers, 236 irregulars) to 152 in 2013 (35 asylum seekers, 115 irregulars) and has been compelled to modify its yearly Voluntary Assisted Return and Return Programmes (VARRP). Given Ireland's specific policy environment and associated complexities (discussed in detail in the country report) IOM-Ireland has placed a key emphasis on consolidating and strengthening the information and outreach procedures used in this comparatively small but challenging context⁵.

1. IOM defines "assisted voluntary return and reintegration" (AVRR) as "the administrative, logistical, financial and reintegration support to rejected asylum-seekers, victims of trafficking in human beings, stranded migrants, qualified nationals and other migrants unable or unwilling to remain in the host country who volunteer to return to their countries of origin" (IOM, 2011e). 2. http://www.iom.int/files/live/sites/iom/files/partnerships/docs/2012-IOM-CSOCConsultations/Additional_Resources/AVRR_Report_2011.pdf 3. <http://www.efta.int/eea> 4. AS of March 2015 (IOM Ireland). 5. Outreach in this context is an activity of providing information and services to migrants who might not otherwise have access to the information and/or those services. Compared to traditional service providers, outreach services are provided closer to individuals, i.e. those engaged in outreach are mobile and are actually going to the locations where potential beneficiaries are found. Outreach may employ a number of tools of outreach: leaflets, posters, newsletters, CDs, videos, and dedicated events, e.g. link-up visits with the common location being where potential beneficiaries are found (government offices (during the asylum process), accommodation centers, Embassy and High Commission missions, churches, mosques, hospitals .etc.)

Furthermore, and in contrast to other countries, IOM-Ireland is the sole provider of AVRR, and is closely associated with the official response to managing migration in Ireland, which can entail forced return. The promotion of AVRR is impacted and civil society actors and potential beneficiaries can be distrustful of AVRR with respect to promoting the AVRR message.

Lessons have been drawn and key methods of outreach have been modified accordingly. Current activities include; i) networking at a grassroots level, ii) increasing awareness amongst diaspora groups and diaspora/community leaders, and iii) facilitating link-up visits with IOM staff in key countries of return. IOM-Ireland has also employed diaspora mapping exercises to determine the most adequate and effective communication strategy to follow when raising awareness about voluntary return within key diaspora communities in Ireland. However again, AVRR uptake, in particular by asylum seekers, has not increased significantly as a result of these methodological changes.

Therefore, and given the complexities and challenges present in the Irish asylum system, the Irish Government has supported a European Economic Area (EEA) wide comparative assessment of AVRR outreach methodologies. The aim of this assessment was to identify key lessons and recommendations for the development of a more strategic approach to return management in Ireland. The assessment's objective was to inform and strengthen Ireland's outreach strategy with a strong emphasis placed on the training of service providers working in voluntary return, especially in the promotion of referral and delivery of return counselling. Targeted beneficiaries included: i) the government of Ireland, ii) asylum seekers in Ireland, iii) vulnerable irregular migrants in Ireland who meet the agreed vulnerability criteria to avail of voluntary return, iv) service providers v) the governments of the six participating EEA member states (MS).

1.3 Key findings for Ireland

The policy landscape in which Irish AVRR programmes operate is significantly different to the landscapes in which other EEA AVRR programmes operate. At present, there is no 'single procedure' in Ireland and migrants seeking international protection are assessed for the range of different residential statuses open to them (refugee status, subsidiary protection status, and leave to remain status) in a sequential manner. As a result, applicants routinely spend a considerable time in the asylum system, mostly in the Direct Provision (Dprov) system. In this context, the direct messaging of asylum seekers is conceptually difficult and challenging. Ireland's VARRP programme for asylum seekers is particularly constrained from delivering its basic AVRR message early as it is inappropriate to consider informing migrants about the AVRR option before each potential beneficiary is assessed for the full range of statuses allowing them to stay in Ireland.⁶

The assessment has underlined the fact that the successful implementation of AVRR programmes requires the cooperation and participation of a broad range of actors, including migrants, civil society organisations and the government. No such network of motivated partner organisations currently exists in Ireland. IOM is the sole provider of information and outreach, both inside and outside the system, and many significant NGOs remain wary of the very concept of return. At the present time IOM Ireland is increasing its efforts

6. Current provisions may soon be subject to change however. Ireland's oft-muted flagship attempt to draft a comprehensive migration bill the International Protection Bill – is due to be enacted in 2015. It is hoped that this piece of legislation will include a streamlined asylum applications procedure (or single track system). Should this come to pass, a major impediment to the early provision of AVRR messaging will have been removed.⁷ <http://www.inis.gov.ie/>

to facilitate a positive engagement with all potential partners, including those civil-society organisations providing services to migrants.

Given the nature of the policy environment currently operational in Ireland, and especially until the expected passage of the 'single procedure'⁹ Ireland is best placed to consider adopting the following EEA-wide practices:

1.3.1 In the Asylum System

Misinformation about AVRR abounds - both in the asylum system and in the community. To effectively reach asylum seekers, the Irish authorities should consider embedding and placing the AVRR message to best-effect, at all points of Ireland's migrant processing procedure. This should happen from the point the migrant first enters the Irish asylum system and through the various stages of appeal:

- 1.3.1.1 When claims are lodged consider placing AVRR information (including media based) at the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner (ORAC).
- 1.3.1.2 Following a negative recommendation from ORAC, the Refugee Appeal Tribunal (RAT) should consider providing information about AVRR. Referral to AVRR counseling should also be considered.
- 1.3.1.3 After referral to the Reception and Integration Agency *(RIA) consider placing dedicated nationality councillors at the Baleskin Reception Centre.
- 1.3.1.4 Within the Dprov accommodation centers, individual and passive outreach should be replaced with structured presentations and AVRR media events using NCs.
- 1.3.1.5 As residents in Dprov are in fact de facto members of the community, outreach in DProv should be complemented and reinforced with outreach and information campaigns and networking with NGOs, communities and diasporas.

The AVRR message does not reach potential beneficiaries via the NGO sector. More attention should be given to improving information dissemination so that message delivery can be more effective. Particular emphasis should be placed on positioning the message so that it can filter back through informal information networks, including those operating trans-nationally.

1.3.2 In the Community

The value and benefits of AVRR must be impressed on all stakeholders. With the aim of strengthening AVRR outreach in the community there is a need to improve communication, coordination and partnership between government/ IOM and organisations working with migrants including asylum seekers and irregulars. The following is suggested:

- 1.3.2.1 Drawing on EEA-wide practices, consider providing capacity building and training on AVRR to both government and non-government service providers. Training should highlight the benefits, principles and procedures of AVRR.

9. The technical workshop was held at the European Union House (EC) Dublin 5th November 2015.

- 1.3.2.2 To foster a more inclusive and informed approach to AVRR, consider establishing a migration task-force drawn from all stakeholders, including NGOs active in Ireland. This task force would provide an important platform for sharing information about return as well as facilitating improved cooperation and coordination across a range of migrant related issues.
- 1.3.2.3 Develop and launch a communications campaign to re-launch IOM as a *migrant friendly* organization including highlighting IOM's work internationally so that civil-society is better informed on the Organizations mandate. Consider the development of supporting AVRR tools that can be used in outreach and by sensitised service providers for referral.
- 1.3.2.4 To improve communication, coordination and partnerships, consider engaging the services of more outreach workers from particular targeted communities. Nationality councillors would act as more trusted messengers with potential beneficiaries, NGOs, communities and diasporas.

1.4 Methodology

In liaison with the IOM Regional Office, a fact finding assessment was instituted in seven pre-selected member states (Ireland, Switzerland, Belgium, Netherlands, Czech Republic, and Norway. Germany). The assessment sought to provide comparable data on current practices and effectiveness in outreach methodologies and counselling for the potential AVRR caseload, in particular through the asylum process. The assessment specifically identified key EEA governments' procedures and innovative best practices in AVRR outreach and counselling. The results were presented by each individual government in a technical workshop which informed and suggested core recommendations for strengthening the outreach of AVRR in Ireland (and the EEA). These are provided in detail in the individual country reports and are summarised the final chapter.⁸

The seven country offices selected to participate in the study were given a detailed question schedule for use as a methodological template in the field (see appendix 1). Questions were developed in cooperation with IOM Ireland and served to standardise data collection in each country. The methodology was shared with all participating countries. However, it is important to note that this question schedule was not developed for use as a prescriptive tool. Comparable data was sought across the European area but each mission was given space to interpret the requirements of the assessment in line with the specificities of their own national regulatory context. This fluidity was important as migration management challenges, legal and policy environments and procedures differed in each country. The assessment was completed between June and September 2014.

The methodological template was divided into four sections – each section was specifically focused on a different type of AVRR outreach.

Questions included in section one of the template sought to gather information on the types of 'direct outreach' employed by each MS. It was anticipated that the information collected here would enable the project team to account for activities designed to identify and support

8. Full country and summary reports are available on the IOM website: <http://www.ireland.iom.int/>

specific potential beneficiaries in their decision to avail of AVRR, and in their experience of the AVRR applications process.

Questions included in section two sought to identify wider, more 'indirect' forms of AVRR outreach aimed at bolstering uptake amongst potential beneficiaries in general. In particular, information collected here allowed the project team to understand commonly practiced patterns of general AVRR outreach that seek to create a favourable enabling environment for AVRR amongst all potential beneficiaries resident in the country (not simply in response to a specific individual's need). Outreach methodologies and media campaigns were of particular interest, especially those seeking to engage with migrant communities at large. This type of information was sought so that the assessment could identify how different organisations seek to allow for potential 'multipliers' to develop in their areas of interest.

Question headings included in section three asked country researchers to provide information on wider AVRR awareness-raising activities still. Messaging activities explored in this section included inputs focused on supporting staff members in partner organisations and networks that interact with potential beneficiaries or at members of the host country community more generally. Missions were asked to consider the activities surrounding formal 'joint service provider' meetings that their office may be involved in or those that take place around wider 'trainings' aimed at organisations active amongst potential beneficiary groups, such as 'train the trainer' style events.

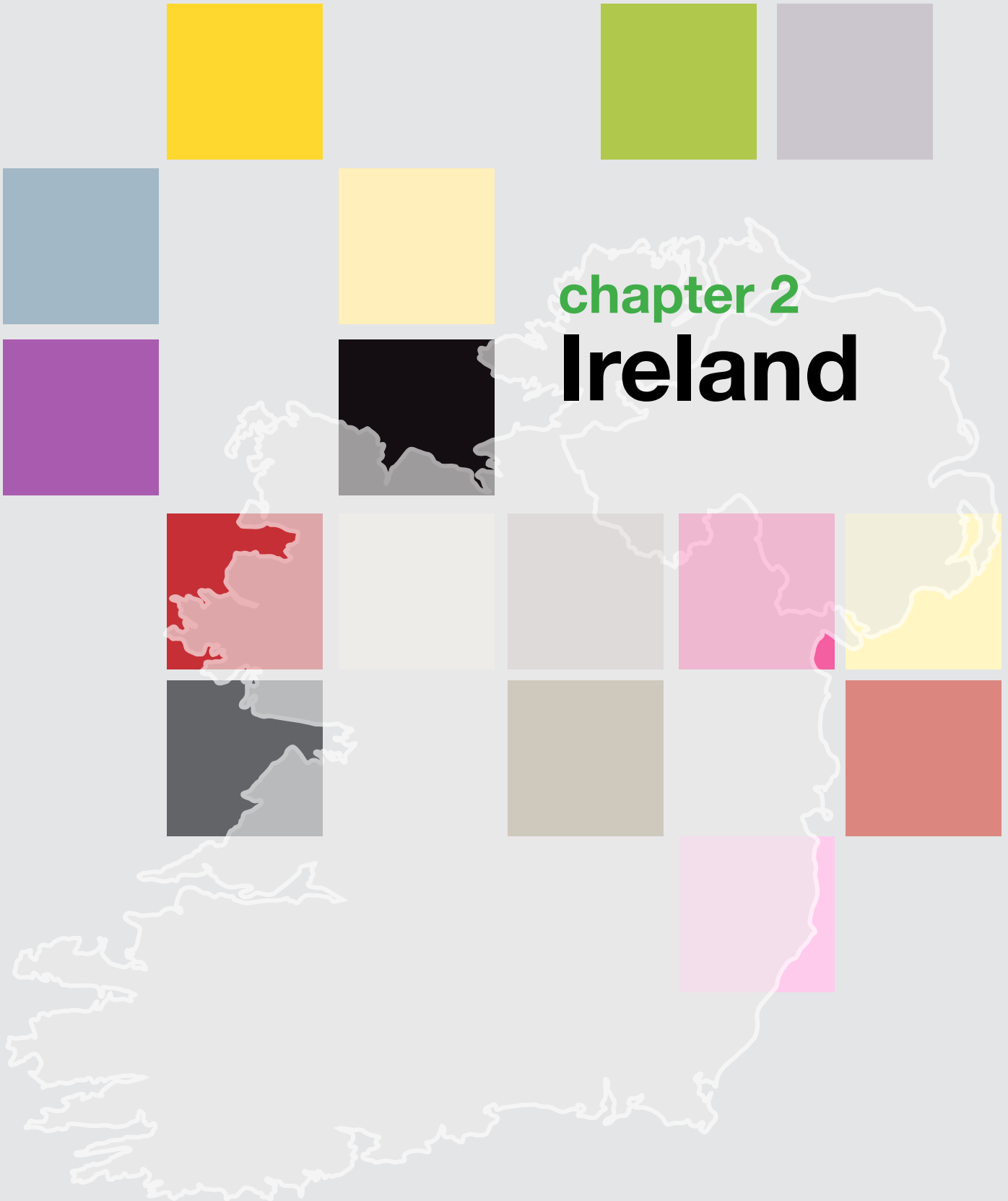
Broader types of self-evaluative information were sought in the final section (section four) of the methodological instrument. Researchers were asked to consider their organisation's effectiveness in the provision of AVRR outreach in general. The types of information sought here were entirely left at the discretion of the individual tasked with the completion of this question schedule. The assessment did not evaluate the nature of an organisation's inputs or assess their effectiveness, rather it sought to understand how each partner organisation sees its role in the provision of AVRR outreach, in general.

Each national dataset was analysed by the country team responsible for the collection of the data. A comprehensive country-report⁹ was produced for each participating country and endorsed by each MS. To facilitate ease of reference, a summary report was also produced. Recommendations for strengthening outreach amongst the participating MS were identified by each county team and included in both reports and shared at the technical workshop.⁹

The following chapters contain abridged versions of the seven summary reports. The succeeding section of the report contains a synthesis of conclusions, findings, and recommendations and presents, in a preliminary manner, a summary matrix tool that we hope practitioners will find useful.

chapter 2

Ireland



CHAPTER 2 - IRELAND¹⁰

2.1 Introduction

Ireland has been an emigrant society for most of its recent history. It has not been a viable destination for immigrants. Nevertheless, Ireland experienced unprecedented immigration in the final years of the 20th century and the early years of the 21st and Irish policy makers were compelled to engage with a scale of human movement in a manner that could hardly have been foreseen prior to the 1990s. A total of 74,000 asylum applications were made from 1998 to 2008. The number of persons seeking asylum in Ireland increased dramatically from 362 in 1994 to a peak of 11,634 in 2002 before falling to approximately 956 in 2012. Ireland's Migrant Rights Centre of Ireland (MRCI) estimated that up to 30,000 irregulars were present in Ireland in 2012¹¹

In less than a decade, and after a somewhat slow start, a raft of measures has been enacted to address the challenges of immigration in particular. Much of Ireland's effort has been directed at the management of potentially productive migrants from EU countries and high value workers from non-EEA contexts, whilst protecting the integrity of Ireland's labour market from potentially unwarranted asylum claims and undocumented migrants.

Ireland is characterised by relatively low numbers of incoming migrants, and the presence of a sticking population of long-term asylum-seeking migrants, many of whom have proven resistant to the notion of return itself. In particular, the asylum-seeking caseload, which IOM has assisted over the past few years, has become increasingly complex - resulting in longer more involved case processing times. The majority of cases are now at the late stages of the asylum process, such as at Subsidiary Protection / Leave to Remain / Judicial Review stage and matters of documentation can be extremely involved and time consuming, particularly if children who have been born in Ireland are also subject to the application. Applications on average take up to four years to process with some being in the system as long as seven years. Migrants awaiting a decision are housed in one of 32 centres nationwide in a Direct Provision (DProv) system.¹²

The Department of Justice (DoJ) funds IOM's voluntary return programmes. The Irish government is particularly interested in promoting AVRR as a response to the difficulties long-term asylum seekers experience. However, there remains a significant level of civil opposition to the asylum system and to the implementation of AVRR in Ireland, particularly from the NGO sector. AVRR outreach is particularly problematic in this context. Ireland's overly complex asylum and immigration system and civil society attitudes towards return have significantly impacted AVRR up-take. Given the effect on AVRR, it was foreseen that AVRR information and outreach methodologies would need to be further strengthened to ensure their effectiveness until the passage of a new Immigration Bill that will put into place a single procedure more in line with existing asylum policy and processes across the EEA.

10. A comprehensive report on AVRR outreach in Ireland can be accessed at <http://www.ireland.iom.int/>

11. http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/reports/docs/emn--studies/irregular-migration/ie_20120330_irregular-migration_final_en.pdf 12. At the start of 2014, there were 4,360 people in Ireland's Direct Provision system that houses asylum seekers awaiting a decision. More than 3,000 people have been in the system for two or more years

2.2 Assisted Voluntary Return Programmes (AVRR) in Ireland

Two AVRR programmes are active in Ireland. These are: i) the Voluntary Assisted Return & Reintegration Programme (VARRP) which is open to asylum seekers and ii) the Irregular Voluntary Assisted Return & Reintegration Programme (I-VARRP) which is open to vulnerable irregular migrants. All those currently in the Irish asylum process are entitled to apply for AVRR assistance, with one exception. In contrast to the case in many other EU states, asylum seekers in receipt of a deportation order are not entitled to avail of AVRR from Ireland.

The number of applicants presenting themselves to AVRR caseworkers has declined in recent years. A total of 395 applications for assistance were received by IOM in the 2013. Only 82 of these applications were made by asylum seekers applying for assistance through the VARRP programme. The majority of applications were submitted by irregular migrants, to the I-VARRP programme (313 individuals). An analysis of this 2013 data shows that AVRR applicants tend to have been resident in Ireland for significant periods of time. Over half of all VARRP applicants (43 people, 52.5%) and over two thirds of all I-VARRP applicants (215 people, 68%) were resident in Ireland for more than three years prior to applying for return assistance.

IOM-Ireland actively engages in AVRR outreach but, is the Government's only partner in the delivery of these programmes. In this way, the landscape in which AVRR is conducted is very different to that present in many other European contexts – where a range of different actors and institutional networks are invested in the operationalisation of return.

IOM-Ireland actively engages in AVRR outreach but, is the Government of Ireland's only partner in the delivery of these programmes. In this way, the landscape in which AVRR is conducted is very different to that present in many other European contexts – where a range of different actors and institutional networks are invested in the operationalisation of return. Migrant NGOs, for example, tend not to advocate for AVRR and, even actors invested in the management of migration in Ireland, more broadly, tend to treat of return as an input that is best left to the dedicated specialist service provider – IOM. No network or broad coalition of interested parties currently exists.

2.3 AVRR outreach in Ireland

There is no comprehensive, legally-defined framework for the delivery of AVRR in Ireland. AVRR activities in Ireland are divided between information and outreach provided in the asylum system and activities outside with stakeholders, partners and the community. Eligible migrants are not encouraged to think about return, at any level and the current approach can best be described as migrant driven. Whilst referrals are sometimes made by social workers and NGOs, IOM-Ireland is in effect, the only AVRR-outreach-active organisation in the field and a pattern of respectful and passive information provision and outreach is followed. Return decisions are made entirely by the individual migrant and word of mouth is a key source of referral.

IOM ensures that asylum seekers in Direct Provision have access to AVRR information through the placing of information posters and through the circulation of information leaflets.

Leaflets are printed in a number of demand-determined languages. IOM have made a particular effort to ensure that these materials are made available to newly arrived migrants residing in Ireland's only reception centre – (Balseskin Reception Centre, Co Dublin). In this way, it is hoped that accurate information is provided as early as possible in a migrant's stay in Ireland. However and in contrast to other European states, IOM or the Irish authorities do not actively solicit or provide AVRR counselling to potential beneficiaries.

This information provision is reinforced through outreach visits to asylum seeker accommodation centres and during presentations to those charged with the management of migration in Ireland. For example IOM continually reinforce the already close working relationship it has with ORAC and is a partner in a nationwide series of 'inter-agency meetings'. IOM staff also meet with embassy officials and provide staff training for the Irish police force - An Garda Síochána. In this way, service providers and stake-holders are presented with up-to-date information on the conduct of AVRR which it is hoped, will help in the formulation of an informed and AVRR-friendly network of policy makers and service providers in Ireland.

Outside the asylum system NGOs are contacted. Many of Ireland's more prominent migrant-advocacy NGOs however have proven themselves to be indifferent to the presence of IOM's VARRP programme. IOM has also been consolidating its information and outreach activities. Networking at a grassroots level is also emphasised, as are efforts to increase AVRR awareness amongst diaspora/community groups. A multi-channel information strategy is followed.

Outreach is supported with a range

of materials; posters and leaflets are provided and short trainings are made available.

Furthermore, in 2013, IOM-Ireland undertook to place the AVRR message: i) in migrant-led media channels ii) with migrant-led diaspora organisations and iii) directly with the Georgian and Chinese communities resident in Ireland. Efforts were also made to reach out to the Brazilian community.

To reinforce this strategy, IOM-Ireland launched an initiative to host a staff member from four different IOM missions. It was anticipated that IOM staff members 'from home' would be more effective in raising awareness and changing attitudes with potential beneficiaries in particular and civil society service providers, about the benefits and principals of AVRR.

In addition to conducting link-up visits and initiating nationality mappings, IOM-Ireland has been growing its digital footprint. FAQs, language specific VARRP leaflets and applications forms can all be accessed via IOM-Ireland's website. One particular initiative is show-cased – Stories of Return. Its primary aim is to offer migrants considering return an opportunity to learn about the benefits of AVRR and see other returnees experiences as part of their decision making process. It also provides information about what returnees did with their reintegration assistance and their status after return. The website also includes a new

In addition to conducting link-up visits and initiating nationality mappings, IOM-Ireland has been growing its digital footprint. FAQs, language specific VARRP leaflets and applications forms can all be accessed via IOM-Ireland's website. One particular initiative is show-cased – Stories of Return. Its primary aim is to offer migrants considering return an opportunity to learn about the benefits of AVRR and read about other returnees experiences as part of their decision making process

migrant and service provider information tool and a link to IOM-Ireland's multi-lingual Guide to Starting Your Own Business. Social media and Twitter are also integrated.¹³

2.4 Recommendations

2.4.1 These are provided in the conclusions and recommendations section of the report

chapter 3

Germany



CHAPTER 3 – GERMANY¹⁴

3.1 Introduction

Germany has a long history of migration and is the second most popular destination for permanent immigration behind the United States. Most immigrants tend to come from other European countries (59% in 2013) but 362,984 third country nationals (TCNs) moved to Germany in 2013 as well (41%), many of whom lodged an application for international protection.¹⁵ In addition, whilst difficult to quantify, some estimates suggest that between 100,000 and 400,000 irregular migrants were resident in Germany in 2010.

Germany is a Federal state. Migration and asylum competencies and responsibilities are shared between the Federal government and the 16 Federal States (Länder). Protection status is assessed at national level. The Länder and their Foreigners' Authorities are responsible for implementing the Foreigners' Law, for accommodating asylum seekers and providing basic services to irregular migrants. Länder are also able to organise AVRR programmes. Unsuccessful asylum seekers as well as asylum seekers, irregular migrants, migrants refused permission to reside in Germany under the Dublin II regulations, and persons with refugee protection status may benefit from AVRR in Germany but migrants who cannot obtain a permanent right of residence in Germany are specifically targeted.

Dedicated return counselling centres are operated by a range of entities, including NGOs and municipalities. These return counselling centres tend to be embedded in the local contexts in which they work, meaning that they establish networks at local level with a view to attracting return migrants to their services through public outreach as well as through networking with other entities and referrals.

AVRR operates in a complex organisational environment in Germany. Many competing influences are present. Furthermore, German migration authorities are currently operating in a very challenging environment in general. Large numbers of asylum seekers are currently seeking international protection and all elements of Germany's migration management infrastructure are attempting to affect as best a response to the situation as possible, albeit within a currently over-burdened system. Emphasis is being placed on the provision of humane reception facilities for these large numbers. AVRR programmes face extra challenges in this context. Specifically, AVRR is seen to be of less of a political priority at present than in years past.

3.2 AVRR In Germany

There is no comprehensive, legally-defined framework for the delivery of AVRR in Germany. AVRR is not explicitly embodied in law and migrants do not have the right to be assisted to leave. Rather, AVRR is dependent on established return and reintegration programmes operating between the Federal level of government, Länder ministries, municipalities and non-governmental organizations. However, despite the lack of a clearly defined legal framework, return is considered to be central to Germany's basic drive to manage migration.

The main joint initiative of the Federal government and the 16 Federal States, and the longest-standing initiative aimed at facilitating the voluntary return of eligible beneficiaries is

14. A comprehensive report on AVRR outreach in Germany can be accessed at: <http://www.ireland.iom.int/>

15 Germany received 136,039 asylum applications in the nine months between January and September 2014 (an increase of 59.4% on the same period in 2013, and the highest monthly level since 1995).

IOM's REAG/GARP (Reintegration and Emigration Program for Asylum-Seekers in Germany/ Government Assisted Repatriation Program) which provides a range of financial and operational supports for voluntary return to third countries. Since its inception, more than 570,000 people have been assisted to return to their CoO or emigrate to a third country. A wide variety of other programmes also facilitate and promote AVRR at the Federal level, at the level of the Federal State and at municipal level, but all such initiatives build upon REAG/GARP. Moreover, there are different return-counselling structures in Germany, composed of NGOs as well as public authorities' return counselling organizations.

Due to the divided competencies at different levels of government and to the range of different actors with experience of AVRR in Germany, the Federal government has created two particular entities to help build cooperation and foster the exchange of information in the field. These are: i) the "Return and Reintegration Coordination Facility" which aims to facilitate a coordinated approach to returns and improve networking amongst the various actors involved in the return process and ii) ZIRF (the Centre for the Provision of Information on Assisted Return at the BAMF). The ZIRF Counselling project, implemented by IOM, provides information on the current situation in various countries of return through Country Fact Sheets. A number of internet-based resources also seek to provide information to organizations involved in providing assisted voluntary returns as well as potential returnees themselves.

3.3 AVRR Outreach In Germany

AVRR is presented as an option to 'failed' asylum seekers. In the case of a negative asylum decision, information sheets on potential return support and return assistance in several languages are appended to the rejection letter sent to the unsuccessful asylum seeker. These migrants are therefore directly messaged about AVRR from the point of their failure to establish residential rights in Germany. Other migrants tend to be less directly messaged and as much accurate information as possible is delivered in as non-directive a manner as possible.

Dedicated return counselling centres are operated by a range of entities, including NGOs and municipalities. These return counselling centres tend to be embedded in the local contexts in which they work, meaning that they establish networks at local level with a view to attracting return migrants to their services through public outreach as well as through networking with other entities and referrals. Return counsellors do not necessarily actively approach migrants. Rather, they may interact with 'intermediary' organizations with a view to these organizations referring potential voluntary returnees to them but lectures and presentations can be given at asylum seeker accommodations and at places where potential beneficiaries gather. These Return Counselling Centres agree that counselling is best seen as a multi-stage process which should be available to potential beneficiaries in the form of an open-ended counselling about the different available options at an early stage, and not only after receipt of a negative decision. In this process, the individual elements of return counselling can be fulfilled by different counselling centres with specific specializations, networked together.

IOM-Germany and the German Government's ministry for migration (BAMF) conduct information campaigns in order to increase the awareness of AVRR more generally. These

campaigns have historically been targeted at so-called “applying entities” i.e. public authorities as well as municipal and civil society-led return counselling centres. Information materials in relevant languages are mailed to relevant organizations. These materials are also available on IOM-Germany’s website, which acts as a repository for all relevant forms and information materials about the AVRR programmes operated by IOM-Germany. IOM-Germany also reaches out to the diplomatic community and regular updates on the programme are provided. IOM-Germany provides information through circulars, through telephone counselling, and by spreading relevant information to various authorities and civil society organizations, both at Länder and at local level. Alternative outreach strategies are also used. For example, IOM-Germany participates in and contributes to networking/ training events for return counselling structures in Germany in order to raise awareness of the programme, its conditions and applying procedures. Also, network meetings are organised and outreach is directed at relevant diaspora organisations.

Media advertisements are also used and public information channels, such as press reports in local print media, press releases and radio interviews have been used to message members of certain diaspora groups directly. Specific counselling / reintegration projects are also instituted with targeted nationalities (most recently for migrants from Vietnam, Ghana and Northern Iraq). A mix of targeted and indirect outreach and information provision is used here. In this way, it is hoped that an AVRR-friendly informational environment is supported in Germany. Those who can be messaged directly, are messaged directly. In other cases, migrants are provided with information to use in their own decision making. Dedicated counsellors are widely available to advise migrants who have initiated contact. These also help build trust in the process. Information is provided more widely as well - in an effort to ‘normalise’ the presence of AVRR in the migrant landscape.

3.4 Recommendations

- 3.4.1 In procedural terms, AVRR programmes should seek to establish contact with potential beneficiaries as early as possible, to allow sufficient time for migrants to receive adequate non-invasive information and for trust in AVRR to be fostered. Such outreach could take place at specific points in a migrant’s stay. These include direct outreach possibilities at initial and further reception facilities for asylum seekers and irregular migrants, where outreach could be conducted through topical group information sessions and workshops, or through individual meetings with migrants. Other potentially positive interventions include return counselling centres that enable potential returnees to drop by whilst they are dealing with questions of their status in Germany in general.
 - 3.4.2 Secondly, and in a more indirect manner, possible outreach interventions include information campaigns aimed at people who have access to potential applications as well as the creation of networks of cooperation with all possible organizations and individuals engaging with the target group.
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chapter 4
Norway

CHAPTER 4 - NORWAY¹⁶

4.1 Introduction

Norway has experienced increasing immigration since 1950. Numbers of migrants seeking international protection have increased as well (approximately 10,000 migrants apply for protection per year, on average)¹⁷. Migrants from 111 different countries applied for asylum in Norway in 2013.¹⁸

Asylum success rates are high. In 2013 65% of asylum applicants were granted a permit to stay in Norway (5800 people). All asylum seekers are offered accommodation in reception centers and most asylum seekers make use of this offer at least for a period of time whilst their asylum application is being processed. Numbers vary but 16,300 asylum seekers were resident in Norwegian reception centers at the end of 2013.

Migrants deemed not to have a legitimate claim for protection are required to leave Norway. However, this is a procedural requirement and many simply decide to ignore this requirement and reside irregularly in Norway. An effective deportations regime is in operation and such over-staying failed asylum seekers are subject to sanction. The Norwegian police forcibly returned 5934 persons in 2013. This deportation regime remains a stated priority for the current government.

AVRR is an important element of Norway's migration management infrastructure. It is hoped that both current and failed asylum seekers will avail of AVRR from Norway and therefore reduce Norway's need to repatriate people forcibly. However, the number of migrants choosing to remain in Norway, outside the accommodation system and in the face of a negative decision is a challenge to the AVRR programme.

4.2 AVRR In Norway

IOM-Norway's Voluntary Assisted Return Programme (VARP) was first instituted in 2002. IOM works closely its donor – the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) and UDI exerts significant leverage in determining the nature of the AVRR programme. Two groups of possible beneficiaries are targeted: i) current asylum seekers and ii) 'ex-asylum' applicants who do not fulfill the conditions of asylum set by the Norwegian government and who are required to leave Norway.

Over the period of its operation (to 31st July 2014), approximately 14,500 migrants have been returned from Norway through this programme (a departure rate of 54%). In addition to counseling, assistance with the acquisition of travel documents and the organising of actual travel, an AVRR returnee can also benefit from an economic reintegration assistance package. One general reintegration assistance program is available - Financial Support to Return (FSR). This provides a variety of different resettlement grants based on the applicant's legal status and the circumstances of their application for AVRR assistance (up to 20,000 NORK can be provided).

IOM Norway cooperates with key NGO staff to make sure that the latest information on AVRR is available to them. For example, 'train the trainer' events are commonly used in this sector. Examples of organizations active are INLO (a national immigrant organization), the Salvation Army, 'Radio Latin Amerika' and Caritas.

16 A comprehensive report on AVRR outreach in Norway can be accessed at <http://www.ireland.iom.int/> 17 7467 applications for protection were lodged in the eight months to August 2014.18 Whilst it is voluntary to live at a reception centre, 16,300 asylum seekers were resident in such contexts at the end of 2013.18

Three country-specific programs are also in operation: i) IRRINI (return and reintegration programme to Iraq), ii) IRRANA (return and reintegration programme to Afghanistan) and iii) ARE (return and reintegration support to Ethiopia). Additional assistance, such as an in-kind support to be used for business startup, further education or vocational training, or a job placement or housing allowance, are provided, in these instances. A further program (VARP for vulnerable groups – VG) offers targeted assistance to those deemed to be members of vulnerable groups. This programme seeks to provide extra assistance for victims of trafficking, for unaccompanied minors, and for ‘aged-out’ minors (individuals who arrived in Norway as an unaccompanied minor but who have since turned 18 and are still resident in Norway). The reintegration support offered to here amounts to 7,800 USD.

4.3 AVRR Outreach In Norway

Voluntariness remains a pillar of Norwegian return policy, including for ‘failed’ asylum seekers. Even in instances where the migrant is required to leave Norway, contact is generally seen to be best initiated by the migrant him/herself. For example, whilst AVRR information is available in reception centres, and whilst relevant people are expected to attend interviews and information sessions about AVRR, the decision to attend is generally discretionary and many migrants do not receive effective AVRR counseling early enough in their stay in Norway. Furthermore, migrants residing outside the centers are very difficult to reach out to. This does much to structure the provision of AVRR outreach, which is seen as best carried out by IOM in cooperation with a range of specific partners.

The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) is the link between the Norwegian authorities and the reception centers where IOM’s potential beneficiaries are residing. The UDI administers a central webpage where potential beneficiaries can find information about the asylum return processes. However, the roles of IOM and UDI are kept as separate as possible and UDI does not therefore engage in AVRR information and outreach. Rather, UDI focuses on the provision of information to, and training of, reception center staff and other relevant actors, so that they can provide relevant information to potential returnees.

The reception centers for asylum seekers host information meetings for centre residents as well as for invited members of the public sector, such as municipality staff who are in touch with potential beneficiaries such as police officers and health care workers. These information sessions are often synchronized with IOM’s scheduled meetings at the reception centers and IOM staff often present the actual information. Much outreach is done in this way, also on the margins of these meetings through individual conversations and consultations. Each reception center has a focal point dedicated to follow up on return issues. A large number of AVRR applicants are referred to IOM by these reception center staff members.

NGOs are important. IOM cooperates with several local and national NGOs. Many of these organizations locate individuals eligible for AVRR assistance through their existing programs, for example at cafes where migrants gather, whilst participating at events hosted by migrants and by simply approaching individuals in the street. Their extensive contact networks create information channels that IOM would not have access to otherwise. These NGOs also participate in almost every kind of event, for example, national days, festivals,

religious celebrations, and even private parties. AVRR materials are brought to such events and conversations about return are fostered.

IOM cooperates with key NGO staff to make sure that the latest information on AVRR is available to them. For example, ‘train the trainer’ events are commonly used in this sector. Examples of organizations active are INLO (a national immigrant organization), the Salvation Army, ‘Radio Latin Amerika’ and Caritas.

IOM visits reception centers to hold information sessions with staff and residents and provide counseling for those interested in AVRR. Whilst visiting reception centers IOM staff have also organized “Skype meetings” to be held with IOM offices in CoOs. During these Skype sessions, IOM officers in a CoO inform the migrant about the program in their native language and allow migrants to talk to beneficiaries of an AVRR program and hear their “return stories”. IOM also advertise in public space - on “taxi tops” and on interactive screens and posters at metro/bus/tram stations, and in areas where potential returnees socialize. Social and cultural events are also attended and social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are used to widen awareness of the AVRR programme.

4.4 Recommendations

- 4.4.1 Earlier provision of information is essential. In so doing, service providers could avoid the need to engage in costly outreach to migrants who are in the later stages of their asylum application and who are already living in the community, often in an irregular manner. Specifically, prior knowledge of AVRR, before receipt of a negative decision on an asylum application may strengthen the perception of AVRR as an option linked to the asylum process in general and not solely a response to a negative solution.
 - 4.4.2 The system of “training of trainers” should be strengthened and supported. This approach allows IOM staff to access key people and organizations working with migrants and provide them with accurate information about AVRR. In so doing, IOM can ensure that AVRR information is potentially disseminated to potential AVRR beneficiaries living in the community by as wide a group of stakeholders as possible, including actors migrants’ may already trust. This could further improve the image and therefore the impact of the AVRR programme in Norway.
 - 4.4.3 Although many AVRR applicants depart with IOM, quite a few also drop-out prior to departure. A further exploration of when and why applicants withdraw from AVRR could help improve the VARP process by addressing the specific reasons for these withdrawals. For example, if the reasons for withdrawal are due to the quality of the counselling, IOM could identify and address these factors
 - 4.4.4 IOM Norway’s outreach strategy should increase its media visibility - to communicate more closely with the civic, academic and political communities as well as to improve its online presence.
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chapter 5
**The
Netherlands**

CHAPTER 5 - THE NETHERLANDS¹⁹

5.1 Introduction

The Netherlands has a long history of immigration. Whilst asylum applications decreased steadily at the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st, applications for international protection have risen significantly in recent years. Many of these migrants will be granted the right to reside in the Netherlands. However, many others will not. Dutch migration law states that any such migrant without the right to remain in the Netherlands, such as rejected asylum seekers and irregular migrants, should leave the country of their own accord. Migrants are provided with information about voluntary return whilst interacting with Dutch authorities. However, oftentimes, ‘failed’ asylum seekers do not choose to leave and remain resident in an irregular manner.

An ever more sophisticated range of instruments is being employed by the Dutch authorities to address this issue. Voluntary return, with an emphasis on effective reintegration planning, is one such instrument – particularly for migrants who have failed in their attempt to reside in the Netherlands but who remain resident in an irregular manner. Indeed, voluntary return is a high priority for the Netherlands migration policy and planning and is regarded as “a necessary precondition” to the operationalisation of an effective admissions procedure in general.

With respect to policy, a ‘carrot and stick’ approach is used. More than simply being made available, Dutch authorities recognize that return programmes only work well when sufficient pressure is also brought to bear on the individual to choose the return option or face: i) increasing difficulty in the Netherlands through withdrawal of social welfare, for example and ii) a credible likelihood of being removed from the state forcibly²⁰. Voluntary return, as practiced in the Netherlands, should therefore be best seen as but one element of an integrated migration management strategy. Much effort is expended seeking to engage with migrants who would potentially benefit from participation in such a returns programme, particularly those irregulars living outside the system (reflected in the fact that in 2013, 57% of all referrals to IOM come from migrants themselves, on their own initiative or as a result of information gained by word of mouth, or from a civil society organisation). Many different organizations are involved in the management of this process.

5.2 AVRR In The Netherlands

IOM’s REAN programme was launched in 1992 and was the first dedicated instrument to facilitate the voluntary return of rejected asylum seekers and irregular migrants in the Netherlands. This programme is still in operation today. This programme organizes and delivers full-service return assistance for vulnerable irregular migrants who have opted for assisted voluntary return. When a migrant wishes to return voluntarily with IOM’s assistance, he/she signs an official application form requesting IOM’s services for AVRR. An AVRR counsellor checks the request against the REAN criteria, based on the information received during the meeting with the migrant and through the verification with the IND. If all criteria are met, preparations are made for return. Extra assistance is available for vulnerable migrants with health related concerns and is provided through REAN and/or a dedicated project for AVRR Medical Cases. In addition to the REAN programme, several other projects

19. A comprehensive report on AVRR outreach in the Netherlands can be accessed at <http://www.ireland.iom.int/>
20. 4870 forced returns were carried out in the Netherlands in 2013.

offer post-arrival reintegration assistance, based on needs assessments, especially for families, vulnerable migrants requiring extra assistance, and migrants that have become victim of trafficking and/or labour exploitation.

A number of other organisations – both government and civil society- are also involved in the delivery of AVRR, and the AVRR provision sector is competitive. For the actual departure procedure, migrants are referred to IOM. Several other organizations also input in the process as, for example, in the assessment of a person’s residency application or in management of a person’s reintegration into their CoO once a return decision has been made. The most significant of these are: i) The Repatriation and Departure Service (R&DS) of the Dutch government, which has overall responsibility for the management of return in the Netherlands ii) the COA - a governmental agency responsible for reception and the accommodation of asylum seekers and refugees, iii) the national police, and iv) numerous civil society organisations, some of whom have a formal role in the provision of services for refugees and asylum seekers. A number of these organisations actively engage in outreach on AVRR and work together as members of the Netherland’s so-called ‘migration chain’ to manage migration to best effect.

AVRR outreach workers are active in asylum centres and administration detention centres in the Netherlands. Migrants with active claims for residency come to know about return through informal channels whilst resident in an asylum centre. Migrants with rejected claims for asylum are officially informed of the return option and of their requirement to avail of it.

5.3 AVRR Outreach In The Netherlands

AVRR outreach workers are active in asylum centres and administration detention centres in the Netherlands. Migrants with active claims for residency come to know about return through informal channels whilst resident in an asylum centre. Migrants with rejected claims for asylum are officially informed of the return option and of their requirement to avail of it. Migrants who have failed in their attempt to claim asylum and who do not choose to return to their CoO can become difficult to access if they leave these centres and continue to reside in the Netherlands, as an irregular migrant. IOM-NL has invested considerable resources in seeking to engage with such migrants.

In 2000, the office of IOM-NL changed from a ‘departure office’ based in The Hague to a decentralized organization working in the whole of the country. Some 25 counselors were recruited to establish consultation hours, organize information meetings and develop relevant networks. This approach is still used today. Counselors seek direct contact with migrants rather than working exclusively through referrals. Since 2004, IOM has also been working with so called ‘native counselors’ as well. These IOM counselors assist with the entire return procedure and are the IOM’s primary contacts for migrants. In addition, different projects have been developed to fine tune the outreach approach, especially towards irregular migrants in the main cities. There are a wide range of options for project officers

IOM counselors conduct outreach with individual migrants or with wider migrant communities, such as via church groups and migrant organizations. This direct form of contact takes time but it also enables outreach workers to establish contact and develop working relations with potential “key figures” and ‘gatekeepers’

when performing outreach activities. An IOM counselor can make contact with potential AVRR beneficiaries at migration events, homeless shelters, asylum-centers or just by visiting migrant shops and restaurants. Three overall areas of operation can be distinguished: asylum centers; administrative detention and the urban areas/ community.

IOM counselors conduct outreach with individual migrants or with wider migrant communities, such as via church groups and migrant organizations. This direct form of contact takes time but it also enables outreach workers to establish contact and develop working relations with potential “key figures” and ‘gatekeepers’. During outreach, IOM distributes information materials aimed at improving awareness of IOM in general.

When a migrant has doubts and concerns about the possibilities in their CoO, the counselor can help the migrant call a colleague in the CoO. On several occasions, colleagues from countries of origin have been invited to visit the Netherlands and attend meetings with migrants from that particular country and provide firsthand information and reassurance. IOM counselors have also visited CoOs to get a better understanding of the situation, push factors compelling migration and the context in which migrants might return.

Over the years a variety of printed materials have been developed. In the end, what works best are simple texts with a telephone number, and a direction to where more detailed information can be found.

5.4 Recommendations

IOM-NL believes that outreach is an integral part of the AVRR process and cannot be neglected, without negative consequences. Outreach is an especially important in reaching migrants who have chosen to reside outside official accommodation centres. In such instances, outreach is best seen as a movement towards the migrant, aimed at raising awareness of return as a viable option. This definition is integrated into the work of IOM-NL. However, its implementation can differ.

Three Specific Recommendations Arise.

- 5.4.1 Outreach does not stand alone but is a part of the whole AVRR process. One of IOM’s strong points is the presence of IOM missions in CoOs for assistance after arrival. However, every returnee can signal that he/she is not receiving the assistance he or she is expecting. False, rumors or misinformation can be damaging. IOM in the Netherlands has to be very alert to act upon every signal accordingly. Information is quickly spread and has consequences for the contact with the target group.
- 5.4.2 Outreach is more than contact in the context of return. Some migrants will be happy to talk to an IOM counselor as they already know what assistance they need. Others will take time to decide. Sometimes a migrant will only want to talk about the difficulties of life. A migrant with health problems will appreciate being referred to a sensitive medical doctor. A migrant in need of advice will be glad to be referred to a migrant organization speaking the same language or to a counselor of the same religion. Contact on any level and on many issues will help foster a better relationship and builds trust. This may or may not lead directly to the return of the migrant but it will definitely establish the IOM counselor as a valuable contact.

5.4.3 Word of mouth is important. Most migrants will be pleased to get written information, preferably in a language they can understand. However, most information on IOM on its value and trustfulness is disseminated by word of mouth, from person to person. It is therefore important to have reliable personal contacts, to maintain high quality services and importantly keep promises.

chapter 6
**Czech
Republic**



CHAPTER 6 - CZECH REPUBLIC²¹

6.1 Introduction

The nature of migration across the Czech Republic's borders has changed over time. From a source country in early 1990s, the country experienced a period of significant immigration of people seeking international protection at the turn of the 21st century and the Czech Republic has become, in recent years, a destination country for foreign nationals migrating for work and business purposes. Consequently, while there were just under 80,000 foreign nationals resident in the Czech Republic in 1993, nearly 425,000 foreign nationals currently reside in the country.

However, in contrast to many other European countries, significant numbers of migrants are not currently seeking international protection in the Czech Republic. Indeed, 2013 saw the lowest number of applications for international protection in the country's history (707 applications, a decline of 6.1% on 2012). Asylum was granted in 95 cases. Additional protection was extended in 201 cases. Irregular migrants are also present and in 2013, a total of 4,153 irregular migrants were identified. Of these, 179 persons (4.3%) were detected whilst unlawfully crossing the external Schengen border of the Czech Republic and 3,974 persons (95.7%) were uncovered during their unauthorized residence.

The Czech government supports an AVRR programme as part of its managerial inputs in this regard, but budgets are small and the government's need for co-financing acts as an impediment on many levels. Also, IOM operates as a specialist service provider without the benefits of a well-developed network of partner organisations. Beneficiary numbers are low, as a result, and challenges abound. Outreach can be particularly difficult. The Czech government funds a relatively 'low-budget' return counselling project, nevertheless, IOM has responded innovatively in an effort to build capacity and achieve results.

6.2 AVRR in the Czech Republic

The first AVRR programme in the Czech Republic was launched in 1989 by the Asylum facilities Administration of the Ministry of the Interior. The program exclusively targeted Asylum seekers. IOM joined the field in 2000 and opened a program targeting irregular migrants (initially open only to those detained in MoI detention centres). IOM and MoI currently cooperate closely on the voluntary return of asylum seekers and detainees. Different types of migrants are eligible to apply for assistance. 'Failed asylum seekers', for example, are given direct advice to engage with AVRR. Similarly, potential beneficiaries still subject to a claim for residency are proactively identified in detention centres (residents of asylum centres represent c.10% of the total AVRR caseload). However, irregular migrants/walk-ins from outside the accommodation system have become by far the most numerous group of AVR beneficiaries assisted by IOM.

IOM is also active in a coordinative capacity. The need to ensure the sustainability, continuity and cohesion of Czech AVRR activities was addressed through the establishment of the Return Centre (RC) in 2011. The RC provides a coordination platform for AVRR, bringing relevant stakeholders together. It aims to secure a broad awareness of AVRR amongst the target group, ensuring easy access to return counselling and the professional processing of the AVRR caseload. It consists of two platforms. i) The Coordinative

21: A comprehensive report on AVRR outreach in The Czech Republic can be accessed at <http://www.ireland.iom.int/>

Platform which includes institutions that bear responsibilities of state administration directly linked to migration. ii) The RC Forum which includes organisations dealing with migrants or implementing AVRR related projects, and institutions indirectly linked to migration. Depending on what issue needs to be addressed, meetings or communications may include the whole RC or one of these platforms. IOM acts as RC coordinator. Other RC stakeholders include: i) the Asylum and Migration Department of the Mol, ii) IOM, iii) the Aliens Police (AP), iv) the Asylum Facilities Administration (AFA) of the Mol and v) relevant NGOs. However, a number of NGOs still find it difficult to accept that voluntary return is an option that should be offered to migrants. The RC strives to be very sensitive when engaging with these NGOs but firmly presents the view that every migrant who seeks help or legal/social assistance should be informed of all options relevant to his/her situation – including the option of voluntary return. In this way, an enhanced awareness of AVRR among stakeholders is one of the key outcomes of the RC project. Meetings and trainings are organized to achieve this goal.

6.3 AVRR Outreach In The Czech Republic

IOM has access to MOL datasets. These are used during direct outreach with migrants currently in the asylum process by either a social worker or an IOM counsellor. Migrants living outside of the system are harder to reach. Some potential returnees are referred to IOM by intermediary organisations such as NGOs but more beneficiaries make contact with IOM themselves.

IOM is seeking to increase the profile of the AVRR programme. The mission is actively seeking to engage widely with migrant communities in general, not just with potential beneficiaries themselves. All migrants are deemed to be useful conduits for use in the dissemination of the AVRR message. A range of direct outreach strategies are also used to inform migrants about the presence of AVRR. Media outlets are used. Stories of successful return are placed in periodicals that are published and disseminated with migrant communities. Posters and leaflets are also placed at points where a high concentration of the target group is expected – usually in the waiting rooms of the AP, Mol departments, and with NGOs. It is proposed to place AVRR information on public transport, on buses and the subway. Furthermore, IOM has cooperated with the Mol in the creation of a television documentary describing the programme. This will be broadcast in 2015.

All migrants, even those with a residence permit, are encouraged to engage with IOM and learn about AVRR. It is anticipated that information may then filter back into the wider migrant communities via word-of-mouth. This approach has been motivated, in part, by IOM's efforts to normalise the AVRR message so that potential beneficiaries will no longer need to unnecessarily engage the services of intermediaries, as had been the case up until relatively recently.

A comprehensive countrywide information campaign is also planned and an AVRR website is to be launched. This digital platform will contain a form-bank, an online registration portal, an AVRR instructional video, and much more. Information will be provided in all necessary languages. A social media campaign is also muted. All migrants, even those with a residence permit, are encouraged to engage with IOM and learn about AVRR. It is anticipated that information may then filter back into the wider migrant communities via

word-of-mouth. This approach has been motivated, in part, by IOM's efforts to normalise the AVRR message so that potential beneficiaries will no longer need to unnecessarily engage the services of intermediaries, as had been the case up until relatively recently.

More targeted efforts are aimed at the three main migrant communities who are resident in the Czech Republic – Ukrainians, Vietnamese and Mongolians. In an effort to enhance the effectiveness of its general outreach, IOM has recently engaged two native consultants (NCs), one to work respectively with the Vietnamese and Mongolian communities. Native counsellors are flexible in the field and can add much value with their cultural, linguistic and in-country insight and experience they attend cultural events, work sites, hostels and markets in order to raise awareness of the AVRR programme.

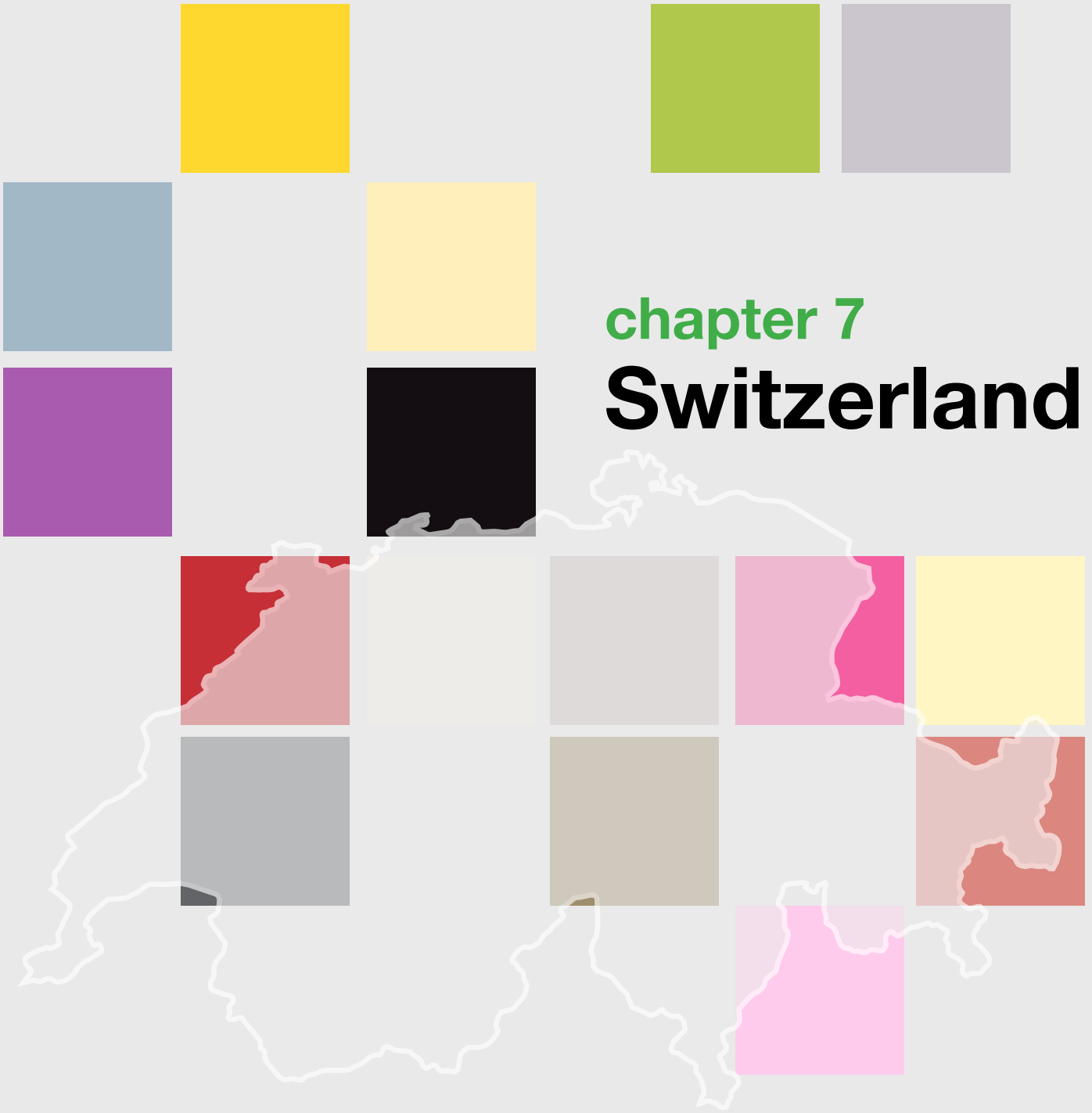
Communities have reacted differently to these approaches. IOM has had a negative experience with some community leaders, particularly the Vietnamese community – who are deemed to be highly organised and insular in their outlook. On the other hand, and unlike the Vietnamese, the Mongolian community is not seen to be withdrawn and organized. They have been easier to work with, but harder to approach. They are more scattered across the country in communities of smaller numbers. IOM makes systematic efforts to detect and approach them. The Ukrainian community has the largest numbers but is not 'organised'. There is no language barrier (the Czech and Ukrainian languages are similar). IOM staff members seek to message them in accommodation facilities, such as in hostels for construction workers. It is hoped that representatives of the Orthodox Church will become involved in this process, in time.

In addition to the office in Prague, IOM recently established two regional counselling offices in most relevant regions (Brno and Plzeň). They have been fully operational for eight months and AVRR outreach. A wide variety of activities is performed, including street work and making contact with regional migrant communities and employers. Work with regional migrant communities is carried out in cooperation with respective native consultants.

6.4 Recommendations

- 6.4.1 There should be no pressure in favour of a voluntary return decision placed on migrants. Decisions should be made wholly by the migrants themselves.
 - 6.4.2 Native and regional consultants act as better and more trusted messengers and should be used to engage with potential beneficiary groups
 - 6.4.3 Information about AVRR should be provided to as many stakeholders as possible. Effective dissemination of information is needed, at every level.
 - 6.4.4 AVRR information must be provided to migrants, regardless of status. Migrants not actively thinking of return may still act as a valuable channel of AVRR information provision to members of their wider migrant communities who may indeed be open to the idea of return but who currently do not have adequate information at their disposal. Word of mouth is everything.
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chapter 7
Switzerland



CHAPTER 7 – SWITZERLAND²²

7.1 Introduction

Switzerland has been the destination of choice for large numbers of labour migrants over the past 50 years. Unsurprisingly, fully one quarter of all employed people in Switzerland now have a foreign passport and the country has one of the highest foreigner-to-total population ratios in Europe (exceeding 23.4%). Many people seek international protection in Switzerland as well. The Federal Office for Migration (FOM) has been granting asylum to an average of 14% of applicants over the past ten years.²²

Furthermore, with the Arab Spring, the number of people seeking protection in Switzerland has risen from 22,000 in 2011 to over 28,000 in 2012. In 2013, Switzerland received 21,465 applications (compared to 956 for Ireland). Switzerland is a country of immigration.

Switzerland has a federal system of government. Responsibilities are divided between actors at national and canton level. Asylum claimants in Switzerland have to register in a federal reception and procedure centre. If still subject to a claim for residency after three months, they are then transferred to a Swiss canton. Cantons are responsible for the accommodation of claimants.

The Swiss government has a liberal asylum regime, but many applications are rejected. This can create difficulties for the authorities as they have to deal with migrants refusing to leave and, in extreme cases, forced return is used. As forced returns are ethically and economically harmful to everybody, the Swiss authorities provide incentives to migrants willing to return home voluntarily in the hope of encouraging rejected asylum seekers and would-be illegal ‘over-stayers’ to leave before they have to be deported²⁴. This does much to structure the nature of AVRR provision in Switzerland. AVRR is favoured in cases where refugee status is refused, and the migrant is required to leave the territory. However, AVRR is also offered proactively to asylum seekers not yet in receipt of a decision but who are nevertheless deemed unlikely to succeed in their case for residency. Such migrants are informed about the return option early in their stay. The return option is available to people with refugee status and to illegal immigrants, as well.

7.2 AVRR in Switzerland

FOM is responsible for the financing of return assistance from Switzerland and has mandated IOM-Berne to implement reintegration assistance programmes for asylum seekers returning voluntarily to their countries of origin (CoO). Additionally, some cantons, NGOs and individuals also mandate IOM to provide return assistance to migrants who might otherwise not benefit from these services.

A number of different programmes are in operation. i) The Voluntary Return Assistance at the Reception Centres programme (REZ) offers comprehensive return services to all Swiss asylum reception centre residents and assures the organization of a safe journey for them. IOM provides return counselling here²⁵. The Return Information Fund (RIF) provides information on return. RIF is implemented through IOM’s worldwide network of offices. SwissREPAT- IOM movements (SIM) organizes return journeys and assists vulnerable persons. Reintegration Assistance Switzerland (R.A.S.) offers reintegration support to returnees. RAS assistance is individualised, funded by FOM and implemented by IOM Bern

22. A comprehensive report on AVRR outreach in Switzerland can be accessed at <http://www.ireland.iom.int/>

23: <https://www.bfm.admin.ch/content/dam/data/migration/berichte/migration/migrationsbericht--2012--e.pdf> [Accessed 17th July 2014].

24: In 2013, 7836 people were forcibly repatriated to their CoO, 450 of whom were escorted by armed police.

25: In 2013, IOM staff in the reception and procedure centres²⁵ counselled a total of 4579 persons. 1582 persons eventually returned directly from the centres. Furthermore, IOM Switzerland assisted 1655 persons with the organization of their return travel, and coordinated the reintegration process of 2278 persons in 73 countries.

via IOM offices in CoOs. Finally, Specific Country Programs are implemented by IOM Bern for migrants from the Western Balkans, Georgia, Guinea, Nigeria and Iraq. Home countries, receiving societies and returnees are equally supported.

Unsurprisingly, most AVRR beneficiaries are asylum seekers in receipt of a negative decision on their application for protection (c.66%, on average). Asylum seekers with current claims tend not to avail of AVRR (c.33%). Refugees do not take this option. In 2012, only 1% of the people who benefited from AVRR were recognized refugees (or temporary admissions).²⁶ As stressed by external evaluators “ AVRR provides very little incentive for [recognized refugees] to return home. More than two thirds of AVRR participants were denied asylum, the last third were still waiting for an answer (request pending).”²⁷ In this regard, Swiss authorities use AVRR more as a method of fostering autonomous departure rather than a method of voluntary return. FOM feels that it is simply less costly to give a financial incentive to a refused asylum seeker rather than financing his/her stay in Switzerland until h/ she leaves, either spontaneously or by force. This clear association of AVRR with a failed attempt to establish residency rights in Switzerland does much to structure AVRR outreach in Switzerland.

7.3 AVRR Outreach In Switzerland

In all cases, the Swiss authorities are cautious not to be seen to be promoting return. Outreach activities are therefore carefully managed, and carried out by FOM, IOM, cantonal migration offices, NGOs, social services and, occasionally, by diaspora organisations.

Most return assistance information is dispensed in either federal reception centres or in cantonal return counselling offices (58.3% of IOM beneficiaries in 2013, in total).

In all cases, the Swiss authorities are cautious not to be seen to be promoting return. Outreach activities are therefore carefully managed, and carried out by FOM, IOM, cantonal migration offices, NGOs, social services and, occasionally, by diaspora organisations. Many potential AVRR beneficiaries commonly obtain information through their own social networks (26.8% of referrals in 2013).

At federal level, and to facilitate the decision-making process, independent (IOM) return counsellors are available at different points in the asylum procedure (1582 people returned from such reception centres in 2013). When an asylum seeker arrives in Switzerland, the authorities ask him/her to report to the nearest reception and procedure centre. As return counsellors have an office in the reception centres, it is easy for them to gain access to potential returnees at this point. Thereafter, caseworkers usually mention the existence of return assistance at set points in the process, particularly to those deemed to have little chance of success. In such cases, the authorities suggest that applicants visit a return counsellor before migrant receives a negative decision on their application. It is in effect a system of triage. Finally, when an asylum claim has been rejected, FOM will share the AVRR flyer with the applicant. As IOM Bern's 2013 Monitoring Report shows, many beneficiaries opt for AVRR at this point, after receiving a negative decision.

Non-IOM return counsellors work in cantonal counselling offices. Between one and five return counsellors usually work in such settings. The actual organisation of counselling varies widely: some focus on return counselling, some actively engage with people who may be interested in return assistance, others conduct activities to ensure asylum seekers'

26. KEK – CDC CONSULTANTS. (2013a)
27. KEK – CDC CONSULTANTS. (2013a)

and refugees' well-being. Furthermore, some migrants may have more trust in organisations that are not closely allied to the State. Following this logic, some Cantons have mandated NGOs to carry out return counselling, such as Red Cross, Caritas, or KKF-OCA. Their work is similar to the work of the cantonal return counsellor with the exception that more coordination between the counselling offices and the cantonal authorities is needed since NGOs normally do not have access to the cantonal information systems and databases.

IOM also conducts networking activities at national level and delivers regular trainings with significant stakeholders (police, asylum authorities, NGO's, social workers). A working group on return assistance is in operation. Information materials are produced and disseminated. Information is also made available on the Internet. Some AVRR programmes are also proposed to victims of trafficking or to undocumented and irregular migrants. In these instances, outreach takes place in a discrete manner. In the case of irregular migrants, outreach is limited in scope to avoid sudden and massive influxes of potential beneficiaries and to limit the abuse of the system. Diaspora organisations are also targeted. This is important. Moreover, many potential AVRR beneficiaries commonly obtain information through their own social networks (26.8% of referrals in 2013). Outreach activities are also carried out by NGO's, social services and the police.

7.4 Recommendations

- 7.4.1 It is important to foster a dual system: return assistance should be fostered as incentive to voluntary or autonomous return on the one hand and to avoid forced return measures, on the other. Swiss information and outreach activities aim to incentivise voluntary return, but do not push for return. A key element of Swiss' information and outreach system is the counselling of potential beneficiaries. Three main outreach systems are used: i) return counselling (IOM and non-IOM staff), ii) individual reintegration measures, tailored to the needs of the returnee, and iii) close cooperation and networking (for example the provision of training and information sessions).
- 7.4.2 Every asylum seeker should be informed about AVRR from as early as possible after the application for asylum
- 7.4.3 AVRR information is important. Advertising is not, as this may lead migrants' to distrust of the service.
- 7.4.14 Counselling should be migrant centred and individualised
- 7.4.5 Consider use of complementary communications (for example WOM) and interpreters or native speakers who can enhance the effectiveness of message delivery
- 7.4.6 Cooperation is needed among those actors invested in the AVRR process, at every stage of the process to this end , a whole of government approach will pay dividends

chapter 8
Belgium



Chapter 8 – Belgium²⁸

8.1 Introduction

Belgium has been a country of immigration for a long time, and over 10% of the population (1,169,064 people) was classified as an immigrant on 1st January, 2012. This foreign population is spread unequally around the country but most are resident in the Brussels-capital Region (371,041). Most are EU citizens (66.4% at the beginning of 2012) but significant numbers of naturalised TCNs, irregular migrants from outside the EEA area and migrants currently seeking international protection (21,406 applicants in 2012) are present as well²⁹.

The Belgian government is promoting better integration of newcomers, but it is also seeking to manage flows of people across its borders. Potentially productive migrants from EU countries and highly-skilled TCNs are being welcomed whilst migrants seeking international protection are being managed in an integrated manner³⁰.

Asylum seekers are managed carefully. In Belgium, such migrants are entitled to reside in a Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (Fedasil) reception centre. 15,455 people were resident in this reception network in 2013. Most reside in such a centre for a period of 12 months, on average. The federal government has a clear stated strategy to manage this form of migration through: i) the use of a 'safe countries of origin list, which has shortened the asylum processing time to 15 days for migrants from a number of named countries and ii) the strengthening of the return measures at its disposal, and Fedasil, together with the Immigration Office, has been favouring the implementation of an AVRR program for rejected asylum seekers and irregular migrants³¹. In short, returns are a favoured managerial tool – “voluntary if it is possible, forced if it is necessary”.

8.2 AVRR in Belgium

The Return and Emigration of Asylum Seekers ex Belgium (REAB) programme first started in 1984. It is managed and implemented by Fedasil, in conjunction with the IOM CO for Belgium and Luxembourg. IOM also provides reintegration assistance funded by the European Reintegration Fund (ERF) and the Vulnerable Cases Fund (since 2006). Caritas also provides such assistance (since 2010).

A total of 4,388 migrants benefited from REAB assistance and returned to their CoO in 2013 (a reduction of 19% on 2012, which was a record year for voluntary returns). Rejected asylum seekers comprised 51% of all applicants. Only 9.5% of REAB returnees were asylum seekers awaiting a decision on their application for residency. In 2013, the main countries of return were Russia (630 returnees), Ukraine (472 returnees), Brazil (330 returnees), Kosovo (209 returnees) and Iraq (196 returnees).

REAB returnees benefit from a comprehensive reintegration package. Basic operational assistance is provided by Fedasil and IOM. This corresponds to logistical support (including return counselling, support and reimbursement of travel documents and ID documents, one-way plane ticket to country of origin, reimbursement of Belgian travel costs, operational movement assistance at the airport, and cash reinstallation grant of 250 euros per adult and 125 euros per minors). In some cases, additional reintegration assistance is provided

28. A comprehensive report on AVRR outreach in Belgium can be accessed at <http://www.ireland.iom.int/>

29. 16.4% of asylum claims were upheld in 2013

30. Asylum seekers are managed carefully. In 2013, the main countries of origin were Afghanistan (8.4% of the total number of applications), Guinea (7.9%), RD Congo (7.7%), and Russia (7.4%). For the third consecutive year, Afghanistan was the main country of origin of asylum seekers in Belgium but the number of applications decreased compared to 2012 (2012: 2.635 applications).

31. Ibid. p.26

through the implementation of tailored individual reintegration schemes upon the migrants' return. These individual reintegration schemes link the different phases of the reintegration process from the pre-departure preparatory phase in Belgium to the post-arrival implementation phase in the countries of origin.

8.3 AVRR Outreach in Belgium

REAB's extensive network of 94 partner organisations covers the entire country. This decentralised and sustainable counselling and information mechanism ensures that all migrants can access the programme easily at each stage of their stay in Belgium. It also provides a choice for migrants trying to access REAB. The network is composed of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), migrant associations, the Belgian Immigration Office (return coaches), Fedasil return cells (return counsellors), local authorities, as well as governmental structures for the reception of asylum-seekers (Fedasil and Red Cross reception centres). The number of partners expands every year as demand for AVRR expands.

On the frontline, migrants are informed by REAB partners about the different AVRR options open to them, often whilst also receiving information about another aspect of life in Belgium³². REAB partners are trusted by migrants as they identify individual specific needs in order to define appropriate and tailored assistance (such as medical care during travel and post-return, reception and identification of accommodation upon arrival in CoO). In addition, partners counsel the applicant on the full terms, conditions and procedures of REAB and are the main points of reference for IOM and Caritas counselors and act as an intermediary between IOM/Caritas and the applicants.

REAB's extensive network of 94 partner organisations covers the entire country. This decentralised and sustainable counselling and information mechanism ensures that all migrants can access the programme easily at each stage of their stay in Belgium. It also provides a choice for migrants trying to access REAB. The network is composed of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), migrant associations, the Belgian Immigration Office (return coaches) The number of partners increases every year as demand for AVRR expands.

IOM provides its REAB partners with support and assistance. Documents are developed and updated on a regular basis. As a result, the partners are able to inform migrants about the REAB programme and refer interested applicants to IOM and Caritas. Migrants are regularly redirected to IOM and Caritas's websites as well.

The REAB network is central to the operational success of AVRR in Belgium. Partner organisations act as effective intermediaries between local migrant populations and specialist service providers. For example, in 2012, most AVRR candidates (2.606 out of 3.526 registered) were referred to IOM by NGO's, followed by the Fedasil Reception centres (1675 of whom 1322 departed). Only 81 migrants, of whom 62 departed, opened their files directly at the IOM Office.

Other outreach activities employed in Belgium include the AVRR B-Connected programme and diverse contacts with diaspora organisations.

32. 60% of all AVRR beneficiaries initially present themselves to a REAB partner in search of information on an aspect of life in Belgium, other than return.

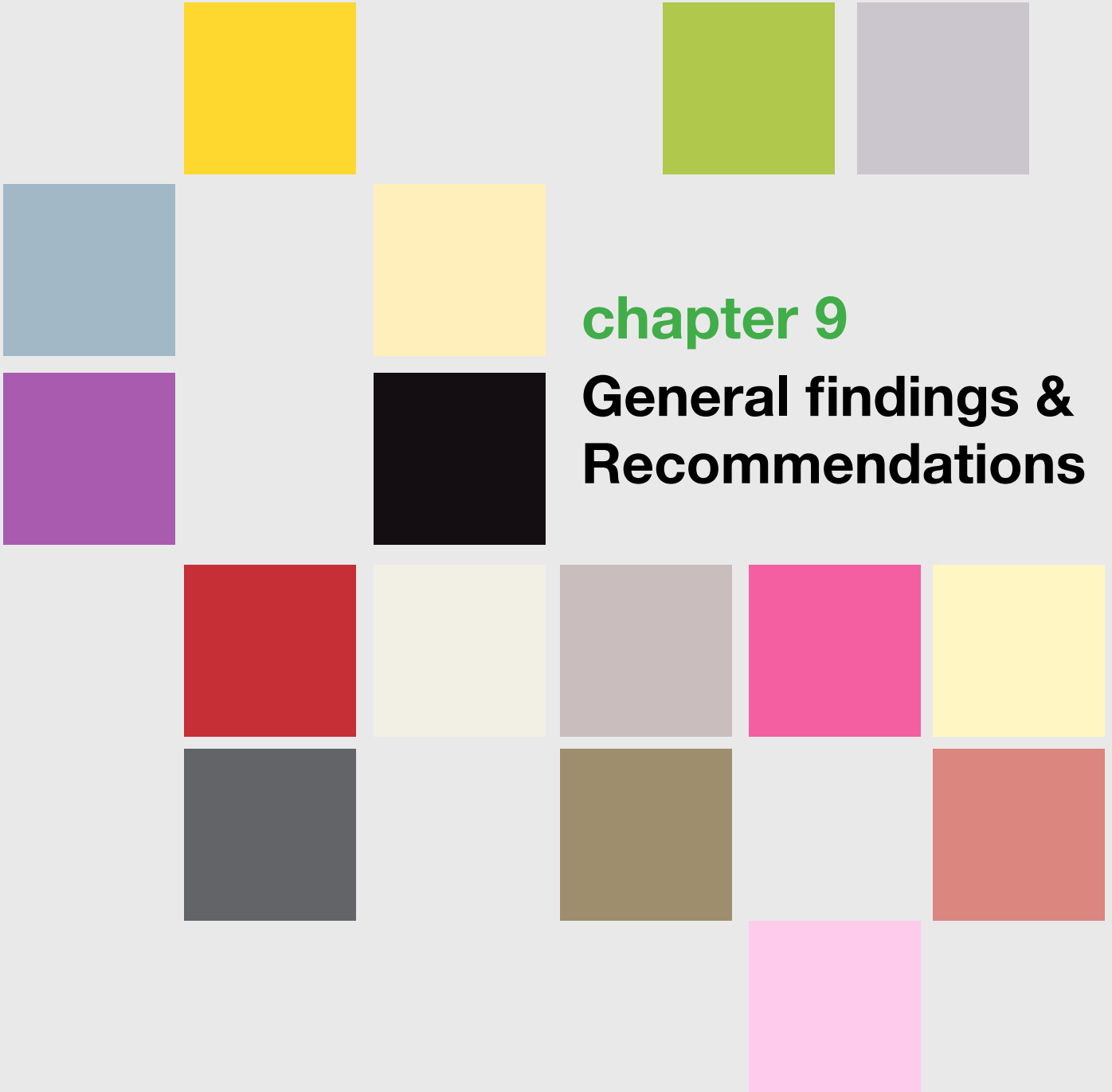
33. IOM (2012), « Strengthening structural contacts with the diaspora in Belgium », Belgium, p.3

The REAB partner network is to be strengthened through the setting up of a return referral mechanism in four key cities (AVRR B-connected). This system will be set up within one of the existing structures (consisting of existing REAB partners). A focal point belonging to one of these existing structures will be identified by IOM in each city. A steering committee will be organized by IOM in each city and will convene on a quarterly basis. It will gather key stakeholders and will aim at giving an overview of the progress made. It is hoped that this structure will allow REAB to better respond to migrants' needs through the AVRR process. Participating cities will each receive a flat-funding contribution. In addition, the capacities of the existing REAB partner networks will be strengthened through a yearly financial contribution allowing partners to implement diverse tasks such as: the hosting of a 'return desk' and the sharing of outreach experiences in general.

Potential beneficiaries including rejected asylum-seekers or irregular migrants are not always aware of the different opportunities available to them. This is particularly noticeable for migrants who are not assisted through the reception network and whose community associations are unaware of AVRR options. Conversely, IOM has noticed that local communities remain one of the main information sources on the return and reintegration assistance option³³. For this reason, IOM CO for Belgium and Luxembourg has undertaken to extend its existing partner network to include diaspora organisations. A pilot project is now being implemented to identify diaspora organisations active amongst potential beneficiaries. Migrants from five communities (Armenia, Georgia, Guinea, Nepal and Mongolia) will be targeted. The impression given by our colleagues and partners during counseling sessions was that migrants from these communities depend on WOM from friends, community centers or trusted NGO workers for return and reintegration information. For this purpose, the project will focus on these communities which are concentrated in Brussels and in other major urban areas. This project started in January 2014 and will run until June 2015.

8.4 Recommendations

- 8.4.1 Many migrants remain under-informed about the potential benefits of the AVRR programme. Reliable information, delivered by a trusted messenger, remains key to reaching potential beneficiaries.
- 8.4.2 Many migrants readily receive information through informal networks and local communities. Word of mouth remains a very important way of disseminating information. A variety of local organisations must be supported so that they can act as effective AVRR hubs at local level. These can then feed into an integrated network of AVRR actors and much misinformation may be avoided
- 8.4.3 A structured "Return Path" is a useful approach for managing asylum claims and processes. Three stages of information provision could be included. Specifically, i) information could be provided to asylum-seekers on registration with the reception network, ii) a return file could be opened on receipt of a negative decision, iii) dedicated return counseling to be provided on confirmation of the obligation to leave the jurisdiction.
- 8.4.4 AVRR tools that help develop a "positive social image" of the voluntary return and reintegration assistance should be supported.



chapter 9

General findings & Recommendations

CHAPTER 9 – CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 Introduction

The aim of this assessment was to identify key lessons and recommendations for the development of a more strategic approach to return management in Ireland through a comparison of current practices and effectiveness's in outreach methodologies. It is envisaged that a more strategic approach will in turn significantly increase referral of the potential AVRR caseload, in particular through the asylum process.

A number of key findings, including best practices and recommendations have been identified to inform and strengthen Ireland's outreach strategy with a key emphasis on: 1) reaching potential beneficiaries in the asylum process; and 2) improving promotion of referral and delivery of return counselling. Strategic insights for careful consideration have also been identified to provide direction and inform potential training needs of both government and non-government service providers by the Government of Ireland and the governments of the six participating European member states.

The assessment finds that direct and indirect forms of messaging impact to differing degrees on different types of migrants, depending on their legal status and location in the destination country. It can be concluded therefore that AVRR information and outreach methods and activities should be developed specifically for potential beneficiaries in 1) in the asylum system 2) in the community or in private accommodation.



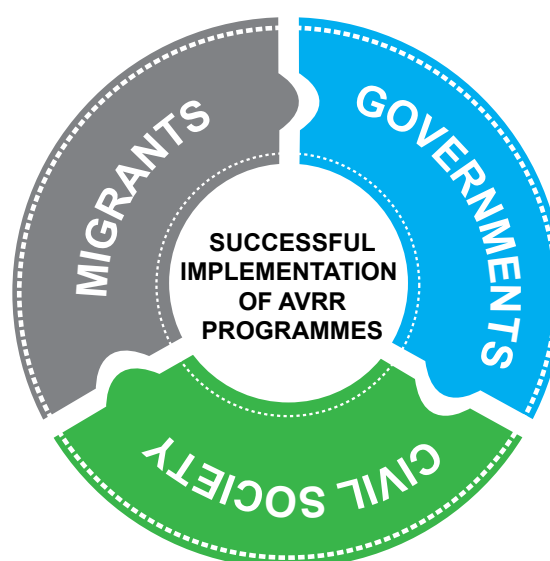
9.2 General Conclusions

In the development of information and outreach activities for voluntary return the assessment has highlighted the importance of placing the needs of potential beneficiaries at the center of the process. The individual country reports' recommendations have underlined the fact that the successful implementation of AVRR programmes requires the cooperation and participation of a broad range of actors, including governments, civil society organisations, and migrants themselves - not just in host countries but also in countries of origin. Building partnerships and networks and including a diverse range of national and international stakeholders is essential to the effective implementation of AVRR – from the pre-return to the reintegration stages. This is important for information and outreach and for the AVRR message ebbs and flows from to ebbs and flows between as word of mouth about benefits, support and quality of services, filters into communities and ebbs and flows from countries of host and origin³⁴. In support of this finding that may exist, carefully considered and targeted information and outreach strategies have an especially key role to play in building trust and understanding with potential beneficiaries and challenging any misinformation about AVRR.

³⁴: Although many AVRR applicants depart with IOM, quite a few also drop-out prior to departure. A further exploration of when and why applicants withdraw from AVRR could help improve the VARP process by addressing the specific reasons for these withdrawals. For example, if the reasons for withdrawal are due to the quality of the counselling, IOM could identify and address these factors (IOM Norway)

9.2.1 Voluntariness

Pivotal to building trust and countering any misinformation is ensuring that the principle of voluntariness remains and is seen to be a precondition for all return activities and that the best interests, dignity and rights of the beneficiary are at the centre of all AVRR activities. As shown, the methods used are many and varied but there is a consensus that outreach in particular should, in the first instance, constitute a respectful movement towards the migrant and that the migrant should be at the centre of any proposed methodology. Secondary to this is to empower the migrant to make a decision as to whether to avail of AVRR based upon a careful consideration of his/her best interests which can be best determined through a relationship based on trust and understanding. This applies to potential beneficiaries both inside the asylum system and to those in the community/in private accommodation, including irregulars.



9.2.2 Trust And Partnership Versus Selling

This finding highlights the importance of effective information sharing and outreach in promoting voluntary return with migrants themselves. An important general finding is that activities that employ an advertising approach - which attempts to ‘sell’ AVRR - are less effective than a beneficiary and partner led strategy that seeks to change attitudes often within a broader and more subtle context. Again it was found that in order for an AVR programme to be effective it has to be able to help a migrant make a rational decision about his/her best interests and more broadly, reach out to the community concerned and earn the trust and confidence of a much wider audience.

9.2.3 Involvement of Civil Society

The assessment has found that there was significant involvement of civil society in AVRR in nearly all participating countries. This was important and informative in the Ireland context where negative attitudes towards voluntary return are found among a number of prominent NGOs. It seems that changes in attitude have been brought about by promoting better understanding of AVRR’s benefits and principles and of its positive role in helping governments and especially migrants themselves manage often very challenging problems. A report issued by UNHCR (2013) highlighted this attitudinal and organisational change towards AVRR. NGOs interviewed reported generally that: “AVR is (a) a more humane option than deportation; (b) enables the individuals concerned to plan and prepare for their return more effectively; (c) enhances the possibility that they will reintegrate successfully in their country of origin; and (d) strengthens public and political support for the institution of asylum” (UNHCR, 2013: 6)³⁵.

35: <http://www.unhcr.org/51f924209.pdf>

36: In addition to Ireland, Norway is an exception. As part of their information and outreach strategy IOM Norway staff visit all the reception centres in the country.

37: Migrants in receipt of a repatriation order are entitled to avail of AVRR in all of the European countries who participated in this project, except Ireland.

Crucially, the assessment has shown that EEA-wide IOM generally takes a more back seat role, providing capacity building and training to government and non-government service providers so that more trusted messengers are interacting with potential beneficiaries on a daily basis. IOM's role remains technical, developing (joint) information campaigns and outreach strategies (including social media) and implementing operational activities between countries of destination transit and origin. In most participating MS, IOM generally is not in contact directly with migrants through outreach³⁶ and in addition to its technical role plays a more managerial role in facilitating an AVRR friendly environment through institutional structures as, for example, through the establishment stakeholder working groups and platform.

Findings and recommendations for strengthening information and outreach are provided for potential beneficiaries i) in the asylum system, ii) in the community/ private accommodation.

9.3 Within The Asylum System

9.3.1 Direct And Popular Messaging

The assessment found that an integrated and structured approach to AVRR information and outreach is more effective in contexts where migrants in receipt of a repatriation order are entitled to avail of AVRR³⁷. In such instances, 'failed' asylum seekers should already be aware of the presence of the AVRR option. However, it was found that to be most effective, these migrants should be messaged directly and regularly. AVRR information is commonly included in any official communications informing an asylum seeker about a negative outcome to their asylum application. The provision of such specific targeted information effectively operationalises a dedicated 'return track'. 'Failed' or current asylum seekers deemed as having a weak case for asylum are proactively messaged about AVRR and are commonly required to attend AVRR counselling. This direct information and outreach practice is then complemented by a consistent engagement with forced return, where required. Individuals who do not engage with the AVRR process, at this point, are open to the full range of sanctions available to the authorities.

9.3.2 Use of Return Path

In Belgium, Asylum seekers whose applications for asylum have been rejected are assigned to specialized return places where they receive intensive return counselling (max 30 days). The return path is an individual (personalized) counselling path offered in reception facilities operated by the reception network of Fedasil in order to return to the country of origin when the asylum application fails. The return path is formalized in a document, signed by the beneficiary of reception that states the rights and obligations of the asylum seeker and provides a timeline for return. Once the asylum procedure is terminated, failed asylum-seekers are allocated an "open" return place and referred to return counselling.

A structured "Return Path" is a useful approach for managing asylum claims and processes. Three stages of information provision could be included. Specifically, i) information could be provided to asylum-seekers on registration with the reception network, ii) a return file could be opened on receipt of a negative decision, iii) dedicated return counseling to be provided on confirmation of the obligation to leave the jurisdiction. (IOM Belgium)

It is mandatory for the return path to commence at the latest five days after a negative decision (refusal of recognition of refugee status and refusal to grant subsidiary protection status) by the Commissioner General for refugees and stateless persons (CGRS) when the applicant will receive information with respect to the possibilities relating to the return path.

9.3.3 Early and Frequent Messaging

AVRR information should be provided and supported structurally and procedurally, as part of a migrant's routine experience of the asylum process so that Information including the benefits of AVRR can be presented as a 'normal' option open to the individual, and not simply as a response to a crisis.

Asylum seekers are best messaged about the presence of the AVRR programme at the point of first contact with reception authorities. This messaging should be non-directive and respectful of the migrant's desire to establish their claim for residency in their destination country. As such, AVRR information and outreach practices employed at this point should simply seek to inform migrants of the return option (as one of a number of options available to them). It should not advertise return or seek to persuade a potential beneficiary to think about return. EEA-wide referral rates suggest that the provision of basic AVRR contact details works well at this point. This early messaging also helps to combat the tendency for potential beneficiaries to be unaware of the programme's existence until generally much later in the system or having moved into the community (and perhaps become irregular).

Earlier provision of information is essential. In so doing, service providers could avoid the need to engage in costly outreach to migrants who are in the later stages of their asylum application and who are already living in the community, often in an irregular manner. Specifically, prior knowledge of AVRR, before receipt of a negative decision on an asylum application may strengthen the perception of AVRR as an option linked to the asylum process in general and not solely a response to a negative solution. (IOM Norway)

Early presentation of the AVRR message should be reinforced at key stages in the migrant's interactions with the authorities during the asylum claim process. Statutory service providers, staff of migration management agencies and NGOs can be used to provide information on voluntary return and are routinely trained in AVRR counselling. In this way, information about AVRR can be made available to migrants along with general services and support available to them whilst subject to their claim for asylum.

9.3.4 Early Engagement Brings Positive Benefits;

Avoids Emotional Anchors

Firstly, such an early engagement can be beneficial in contexts where potential beneficiaries have historically only come into contact with voluntary return and its benefits at a late stage in their interactions with the state, and only after many have begun to establish emotional anchors in their destination country. This is further supported by academic evidence which demonstrates that migrants who have established links with the wider community are less open to the possibility of return to their country of origin (CoO) than those who have not.

Counters Misinformation

Secondly, such early intervention is vital in countering the common tendency for mis-information about AVRR to abound amongst potential beneficiaries. It seems that the longer a migrant spends in their destination country before AVRR information is provided the more likely he/she is to have already been exposed to mis-information, myths and unfounded claims about the nature and benefits of AVRR. Exposure to mis-information fosters contradictory messages which can, in turn, frustrate the effective dissemination of accurate information during information and outreach activities.

AVRR is an Option

Thirdly, in many contexts, the AVRR message is currently too closely associated with a destination country's official managerial response to immigration and not as a response that might impact positively on the potential beneficiary. Country experiences showed that early presentation of the message and careful explanation of the benefits of voluntary return during the migrant experience helps 'normalise' the fact that return (via AVRR) is part of the 'normal' migrant cycle, and not simply a response to difficulty.

Early engagement with potential beneficiaries (most especially with those currently in the asylum process) also allows time for the development of trust between service providers and beneficiaries. Trust in turn, adds significant value to the counselling and return processes and to the overall quality of the return experience. IOM-Switzerland gives strong voice to their experience in this regard when they state that "an effective returns procedure should engage the potential beneficiary as early in the asylum seeking system as possible".

Credibility of Message Deliverer

Decisions made about who delivers the AVRR message deliverer are as important as decisions made about when the message is delivered. The assessment found that early information and AVRR counselling is often and most effectively delivered by reception and migration management authorities themselves including trained counsellors and social workers. Generally, IOM enjoys a secondary role e.g. providing capacity building to government and non-government service providers. NGOs, nationality-outreach-staff and interpreters are also found providing information and counselling and where these are not available, on-line services including skype have been used to provide information in native languages with IOM staff and indeed returnees from CoOs.

Much effort is expended seeking to engage with migrants who would potentially benefit from participation in such a returns programme, particularly those irregulars living outside the system (reflected in the fact that in 2013, 57% of all referrals to IOM came from migrants themselves, on their own initiative or as a result of information gained by word of mouth, or from a civil society organization. (IOM the Netherlands)

9.4 Outside the asylum system, in the community

IOM Netherlands usefully defines outreach as a movement towards the migrant, aimed at raising awareness of return as a viable option.

For asylum seekers inside the system, the message may already have been delivered during their stay in Reception Centers. However, a significant number of potential beneficiaries (either asylum seekers or irregular migrants) are not subject to a claim for international protection or may reside outside official accommodation centres. These groups are therefore generally difficult to access. In such instances, a more nuanced and indirect approach to information and outreach is followed.

The assessment found that this type of outreach is resource heavy and costly in terms of time and money. However, it is an essential part of the AVRR process and most IOM missions actively engage in such indirect messaging with the aim of fostering an AVRR-friendly environment in the community and with diasporas. Three levels of activity are commonly followed: i) Passive information is provided in public space and in the media, ii) dedicated outreach workers are trained and deployed and iii) gate-keepers and gate-keeping organisations are sensitised, trained and supported.

9.4.1 Targeted Messaging

Background messaging is commonly used. Media campaigns are developed and launched and targeted projects are supported. However, the evidence suggests that the sole use of passive AVRR information provision, such as that delivered through blanket advertising with information materials is not the most effective method in reaching the audience. Rather, it is found that potential beneficiaries tend to be more receptive to AVRR information when such information is available from a number of sources, and particularly if it is delivered by a trusted messenger. Most missions are cognizant of this fact and actively engage in a range of indirect forms of outreach. For irregulars the least trusted messenger is the government, with the most trust being members of their own community through informal communication networks i.e. word of mouth (WoM).

The REAB network is central to the operational success of AVRR in Belgium. Partner organisations act as effective intermediaries between local migrant population's and the specialist service providers. For example, in 2012, most AVRR candidates (2.606 out of 3.526 registered) were referred to IOM by NGO's, followed by the Fedasil Reception centres (1675 of whom 1322 departed). (IOM Belgium)

Furthermore, many organisations active in the delivery of AVRR programmes recognise the fact that channels of information flow informally between diaspora communities established in destination countries and migrants who share their nationality but who are either currently seeking to establish a claim for residential status in that country or residing irregularly in that territory. This finding has implications for how and where information campaigns should be considered and are potentially most effective.

38. Through networks, outreach strategies should seek to encourage and support stakeholders, service providers NGOs and diasporas to contribute to the process of assisted voluntary return; 'develop outreach plans for the communities most concerned; develop awareness raising campaigns promoting assisted voluntary returns involving the communities and diasporas concerned; make full use of publicity materials (translated into all appropriate languages) advertising in national and local papers, radio and television' and favour tailored approaches to assisted voluntary return programmes with individual or family plans (Council of Europe 2010). Comprising – partners are found both inside and outside the reception system. To perform the necessary REAB activities and ensure the possibility of migrants to easily access the programme at each stage of their stay in Belgium, I

9.4.2 NGOs are Critical Partners

Gate-keepers and gate-keeping organisations, such as local service providers and NGOs are central to the indirect approach. In many respects, EEA-wide practices demonstrate that the success of indirect information and outreach is determined by who delivers the message as much as by the nature of the message itself and most countries work in conjunction with a network of motivated and funded partner organisations. Outreach workers commonly seek to interact with potential beneficiaries in locations where migrants congregate. However, it seems that when most effective, the AVRR message is simply presented as one of a range of supports available to the potential beneficiary. In Germany for example, outreach workers recognise that the return option is simply a possibility to be presented to potential AVRR beneficiaries and not the sole goal of the interaction with the migrant. A return councillor may refer a migrant to medical services or social services whilst also being in a position to provide advice and counselling on voluntary return. Outreach, in this way is more than simple contact around a return message and outreach workers are often trusted actors known and familiar to the local community. Data from IOM-Belgium support this approach. Sixty percent of Belgian AVRR referrals come from people who were initially motivated to consult with a REAB partner for other forms of advice and support. As with the direct approach during the asylum process this approach has the added advantage of effectively de-dramatizing much of the AVRR issue and placing it more firmly in the mainstream of migrant service provision.

IOM-Netherlands for example, only provides very basic contact details in their information materials but seek to build on this through a pattern of very detailed and nuanced outreach in the community. To facilitate this many different actors are mobilised in support of the AVRR message. What is clear is that government stakeholders, for example, tend not to be trusted as messengers, IOM is deemed to be a more trusted messenger but non-governmental organisations are trusted the most. In short it can be concluded that NGO involvement in the delivery of the AVRR message ensures 'much more effective information channels, gaining more trust and reaching the target migrant groups more easily'.

9.4.3 Build a Network

The findings clearly show that the AVRR message is most effectively disseminated when it is supported by a broad coalition of invested organisations and stakeholders. To this end, fostering a decentralized and extensive AVRR network allows targeted communication channels to reach out to potential beneficiaries, thus avoiding the risk of passing a generalizing and misleading message to the migrant community as a whole. Messages for specific communities can also be more effectively disseminated through a decentralised approach, ideally using nationality counsellors (below).

With the exception of Ireland, all participating missions can draw (to a greater or lesser degree) on a network of government agencies, civil society organisations and community-level groups in support of AVRR³⁹. IOM Belgium, for example can draw on the support of 94 partners, whilst there are over one thousand such partner organisations active in Germany. AVRR programmes currently operational in Norway, the Czech Republic, Netherlands and Switzerland can similarly rely on the support of many such partners.

39. The Czech Republic's return centre approach provides a coordination platform for AVRR, bringing relevant stakeholders together. It aims to secure a broad awareness of AVRR amongst the target group, ensuring easy access to return counselling and the professional processing of the AVRR caseload.

40. Current provisions may soon be subject to change however. Ireland's oft-muted flagship attempt to draft a comprehensive migration bill - the International Protection Bill - is due to be enacted in 2015. It is hoped that this piece of legislation will include a streamlined asylum applications procedure (or single track system). Should this come to pass, a major impediment to the early provision of AVRR messaging will have been removed.

These organisations act as trusted intermediaries in the provision of AVRR information and in turn ensure as wide coverage as possible, providing multiple points of entry for potential beneficiaries.

9.4.4 Use Nationality Councillors

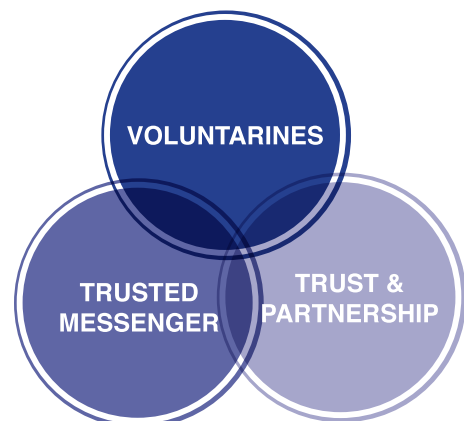
The assessment found that the most effective trusted voices were nationality councillors (NCs) employed to reach members of their own communities. For example, the Netherlands experience suggests that many African migrants, for example, feel more comfortable speaking face-to-face about return with members of their own community and diasporas. IOM Czech Republic also found these positive benefits with deployment of Vietnamese counsellors. Nationality councillors can and do bring added value in a large number of ways, for example by making use of their personal contacts and networks but most importantly perhaps in providing objective information about return and challenging rumours and misinformation. In turn NCs also receive much first-hand information about for example vulnerability issues being experienced by irregular migrants including identifying new categories. This bottom up approach is important for identifying needs and trends and for informing project strategy and policy development.

9.4.5 Establish a Platform

Lastly, the evidence suggests that, to be most effective, a multi-faceted approach to the provision of AVRR information and outreach needs to be supported in the policy space. AVRR practitioners should be actively engaged in the formulation of return strategies in each national context, through for example the establishment of a stakeholder working group/ coordinating mechanism. Such platforms are common in many European contexts and a number of models that seek to bring all potential 'migration-chain' stake-holders together show promise and best potential. The 'return centre' model, as practiced in the Czech Republic is of particular interest, as is Belgium's REAB network³⁹. The establishment of a national coordinating body supported by local partners can ensure the institutional sustainability, continuity and cohesion of AVRR activities and raise awareness and change attitudes about AVRR with previously disinclined stakeholders.

9.5 Recommendations for Strengthening Outreach in Ireland.

The policy landscape in which Irish AVRR programmes operate is significantly different to those in the EEA. At present, there is no single procedure and migrants seeking international protection are assessed for the range of different residential statuses open to them (refugee status, subsidiary protection status, and leave to remain status) in a sequential manner. As a result, applicants routinely spend a considerable time in the asylum system, mostly in the Direct Provision system. In this context, the direct messaging of asylum seekers is conceptually difficult and challenging. Ireland's VARRP programme for asylum seekers is particularly constrained from delivering its basic AVRR message



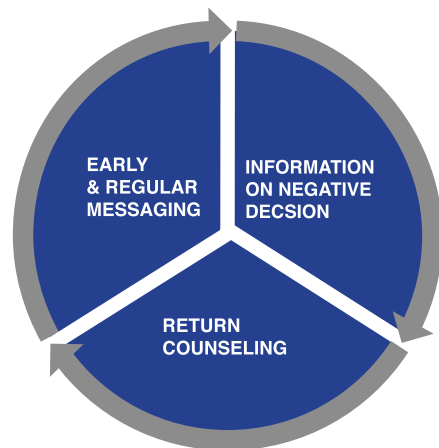
early as it is highly sensitive to consider informing migrants about the AVRR option early, before each potential beneficiary is assessed for the full range of statuses allowing them to stay in Ireland.⁴⁰

The assessment has underlined the fact that the successful implementation of AVRR programmes requires the cooperation and participation of a broad range of actors, including migrants, civil society organisations and the government. No such network of motivated partner organisations currently exists in Ireland. IOM is the sole provider of information and outreach both inside and outside the system and many significant NGOs remain wary of the very concept of return. At the present time IOM Ireland is increasing its efforts to facilitate a positive engagement with all partners including civil-society. Given the present policy environment and until the expected passage of the 'single procedure', Ireland is best placed to consider the following EEA-wide practice.

9.6 In The Asylum System

Misinformation about AVRR abounds - both in the asylum system and in the community. To effectively reach asylum seekers, the Irish authorities should consider embedding and placing the AVRR message to best-effect, at all points of Ireland's migrant processing procedure. This should happen from the point the migrant first enters the Irish asylum system and through the various stages of appeal:

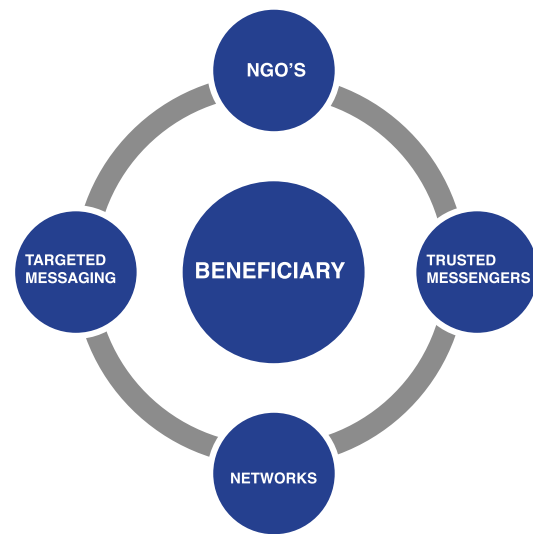
- 9.6.1 When claims are lodged consider placing AVRR information (including media based) at the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner (ORAC).
- 9.6.2 Following a negative recommendation from ORAC, the Refugee Appeal Tribunal (RAT) should consider providing information about AVRR. Referral to AVRR counseling should also be considered.
- 9.6.3 After referral to the Reception and Integration Agency *(RIA) consider placing dedicated nationality counsellors at the Baleskin Reception Centre.
- 9.6.4 Within the Direct provision accommodation centers, individual and passive outreach should be replaced with structured presentations and AVRR media events using NCs.
- 9.6.5 As residents in DProv are in fact de facto members of the community, outreach in DProv should be complemented and reinforced with outreach and information campaigns and networking with NGOs, communities and diasporas.



9.7 In The Community

The AVRR message does not reach potential beneficiaries via the NGO sector. More attention should be given to improving information dissemination so that message delivery can be more effective. Particular emphasis should be placed on positioning the message so that it can filter back through informal information networks, including those operating trans-nationally.

The value and benefits of AVRR must be impressed on all stakeholders. With the aim of strengthening AVRR outreach in the community there is a need to improve communication, coordination and partnership between government/ IOM and organisations working with migrants including asylum seekers and irregulars.



The following is suggested:

- 9.7.1 Drawing on EEA-wide practices, consider providing capacity building and training on AVRR to both government and non-government service providers. Training should highlight the benefits, principles and procedures of AVRR.
- 9.7.2 To foster a more inclusive and informed approach to AVRR, consider establishing a migration task-force drawn from all stakeholders, including NGOs active in Ireland. This task force would provide an important platform for sharing information about return as well as facilitating improved cooperation and coordination across a range of migrant related issues.
- 9.7.3 Develop and launch a communications campaign to re-launch IOM as a migrant friendly organization. Consider the development of supporting tools that can be used in outreach and by sensitised stakeholders. Highlight IOM's work internationally so that civil-society is informed on the mandate and broad range of the organization.
- 9.7.4 To improve communication, coordination and partnerships, consider engaging the services of more outreach workers from particular targeted communities. Nationality councillors would act as more trusted messengers with potential beneficiaries, NGOs, communities and diasporas.

APPENDIX 1

Matrix: Methods of Information and Outreach in the Seven Participating Member States

QUESTIONS:

1. Is counselling on voluntary return of (ex) asylum seekers provided for in law or legislation in your country? And is voluntary return counselling mandatory?
2. Is counselling on voluntary return integrated into the reception facilities?
3. How and when is the option of voluntary return raised? Are there fixed key moments (inside and/or outside the reception facilities, during and/or after the asylum procedure) and who is responsible for providing information?
4. Country-specific recommendations for improving information and outreach.

1. Belgium



Q1. Is counselling on voluntary return of (ex) asylum seekers provided for in law or legislation in your country? And is voluntary return counselling mandatory?

Yes, the law amending the legislation on the reception of asylum seekers dd. 19th January 2012 has made changes to the Reception Act dd. 12th of January 2007. One of the most important changes concerns the introduction of the return path (Article 6/1 of the Reception Act).

Return Path

Asylum seekers whose applications for asylum have been rejected are assigned to specialized return places where they receive a maximum of 30 days counselling

The return path is an individual (personalized) counselling path offered in reception facilities of the reception network of Fedasil in order to facilitate return to the country of origin and same para Once the asylum procedure is terminated. The return path is formalized in a document, signed by the beneficiary of reception that states the rights and obligations of the asylum seeker and provides a timeline for return. Once the asylum procedure is terminated, the failed asylum-seekers are allocated an “open” return place and referred to return counselling.

It is mandatory for the return path to commence at the latest 5 days after a negative decision (refusal of recognition of refugee status and refusal to grant subsidiary protection status) by the Commissioner General for refugees and stateless persons (CGRS) when the applicant will receive information with respect to the possibilities relating to the return path.

Q2 Is counselling on voluntary return integrated into the reception facilities?

Yes, from the moment an asylum application is lodged, return counselling becomes an integral part of the services provided to all asylum seekers in all reception facilities. The return path is divided into two main phases 1) voluntary return counselling while the asylum procedure is still ongoing and 2) voluntary return counselling in a return facility.

Through the return path, asylum seekers receive tailored voluntary return counselling in all reception centres during the course of their asylum procedure. This counselling is an integral part of the individualized and permanent (ongoing) social guidance and is provided by a trained social worker.

Q3 How and when is the option of voluntary return raised? Are there fixed key moments (inside and/or outside the reception facilities, during and/or after the asylum procedure)? What methods are used? Who is responsible?

A. During the asylum procedure in the regular reception facilities for asylum seekers – there is a fixed approach.

At the Immigration office.

When: Counselling is provided when applying for asylum at the immigration office

Method: Brochure information about AVRR (Fedasil & IOM)

Responsible: Immigration office (IO)

At the reception centre

When: During intake at the reception facility

Method: explanation of AVRR (including reintegration support); explanation of the return path including assignment to a return facility in case of a negative outcome in the asylum procedure.

Responsible: Social worker at the reception facility (During the examination of the asylum application the subject of AVRR can be raised)

Refugee status refused

When: Refusal of recognition of refugee status and refusal to grant subsidiary protection by the Commissioner General for refugees and stateless persons

Method: The AS receives notification from the IO of an order to leave the territory along with a second brochure about AVRR

Within five days of refusal

When: Within 5 days after the refusal of recognition of refugee status and refusal to grant subsidiary protection status) by the Commissioner General for refugees and stateless persons (CGRS) – from this point the return path becomes mandatory

Method: the AS is actively encouraged to think about his/her future prospects, including the option of voluntary return; s/ he is informed about the possibilities offered by the programmes for voluntary return (IOM). – this exchange is formalized in a document (part one of the return path plan that is kept in the social file of the AS)-

Responsible: Social worker

One month after appeal

When: One month after appeal with the council for Alien Law Litigation against an unfavourable decision from CGRS

Method: Building on an on-going exchange / discussion

Responsible: Social worker.

Following confirmation of Negative decision

When: after the Council for Alien Law Litigation confirms the negative decision of the CGRS + assignment to a return facility

Method: the social worker informs the ex-asylum seeker about the transfer to the return facility and explains the Return Path (including counselling).

The AS is asked to sign part two of the return path plan (by signing this document the ex-asylum seeker acknowledges that s/he has been informed of the continuation of his return path and takes note of the exchange of information that will take place between the reception structure, Fedasil and the Immigration Office

A copy of this document is kept by the reception structure, one is sent to the assigned return facility and one copy is given to the ex-asylum seeker) - the ex-asylum seeker can decide voluntarily if s/he wants to return voluntarily and has 5 days after the assignment to register at the return facility (the only facility where he still has a right to reception for a specific amount of time before s/he has to leave the Belgian territory), in any case s/he must leave his current reception structure

Responsible: Social worker

B. After the asylum procedure in the return facilities organised by Fedasil for ex-asylum seekers

In the Return facility

When: On arrival and start of the return counselling

Method: a) counselling information: during the intake in the return facility information on the last part of the return path.

Office b) **identification:** an identification sheet is filled out for every adult family member and is passed on to the liaison officer who verifies the data c) **start-up of a return file with all relevant information and the status of current residence procedures:** the liaison officer of the Immigration Office is informed of ongoing procedures – the officer makes sure that these procedures are treated with priority by the Immigration Office

Responsible: Social worker of the return facility (this social worker is responsible for the social and the procedural accompaniment as well as the return counselling)

After 15 days

When: Return counselling and evaluation of the return path (evaluation on day 15)

Method: a) **return counselling:** - the ex-asylum seeker is actively informed and sensitized about the possibility of voluntary return - obstacles to voluntary return are identified and the social worker examines how they can be addressed b) **evaluation of the return path:** the path is evaluated together with the ex- asylum seeker, the social worker and the liaison officer of the Immigration Office - the goal is to determine whether voluntary return is realistic and whether the ex-asylum seeker is actively cooperating. (signed demand for voluntary return, steps to obtain valid travel documents, no introduction of new residence procedures like a new asylum demand)

Responsible: Social worker of the return facility & ex-asylum seeker Immigration liaison officer

At the end of the return path

When: End of the return path

Method in case of cooperation on the part of the ex-asylum seeker: the social worker will continue to actively support the ex-asylum seeker in taking the necessary steps to realize the voluntary return (if the execution time of the order to leave the country expires, the right to reception will come to an end, but the period of the order may be extended by the Immigration Office in case an application for voluntary return is filed and a realistic plan for return is put into place) b) **in case of non-cooperation on the part of the ex-asylum seeker:** the focus shifts from voluntary towards forced return, the Immigration Office takes steps to prepare a forced return. Two days before the expiration of the order to leave the country (and the right to stay in the return facility); the Immigration Office can give instruction to the local police to summon the ex-asylum seeker to the police office in view of his removal of the territory. If the resident does not respond at the end of the legal stay in the return facility, the Immigration Office may give the command to the local police to retrieve the person involved from the return facility

Responsible Social worker Liaison officer of the Immigration Office

Q. 4 Country-specific recommendations

- As can be seen a, structured “Return Path” is a useful approach for managing asylum claims and processes. Three stages of information provision could be included. Specifically, i) information could be provided to asylum-seekers on registration with the reception network , ii) a return file could be opened on receipt of a negative decision, iii) dedicated return counseling to be provided on confirmation of the obligation to leave the jurisdiction.

Outside The System

- Many migrants remain under-informed about the potential benefits of the AVRR programme. Reliable information, delivered by a trusted messenger, remains key to reaching potential beneficiaries.
- Many migrants readily receive information through informal networks and local communities. Word of mouth remains a very important way of disseminating information. A variety of local organisations must be supported so that they can act as effective AVRR hubs at local level. These can then feed into an integrated network of AVRR actors and much misinformation may be avoided
- AVRR tools that help develop a “positive social image” of the voluntary return and reintegration assistance should be supported.

2. Germany

Q1. Is counselling on voluntary return of (ex) asylum seekers provided for in law or legislation in your country? And is voluntary return counselling mandatory?

No, there is no legal framework – either for counselling migrants on voluntary returns nor assisting voluntary returns in general.

General overview:

Due to decentralized structures the 16 Federal States (e.g. Bavaria, Berlin, North Rhine-Westphalia) are legally obliged to provide social and medical welfare and financial assistance for migrants (e.g. asylum seekers, trafficked persons, persons with temporary stay). This comprises in particular reception and welfare assistance during their stay in Germany. In terms of providing counselling on return issues there are a number of legal provisions which define the responsibilities of the governmental and regional authorities.

Regional level (Federal States):

Regarding § 61 residence act (Aufenthaltsgesetz) the Federal States shall provide counselling on return for persons who are ordered to leave the territory.. This means that there is neither a legal claim/obligation for counselling nor a claim to provide any financial assistance for voluntary returns. In practise however all Federal States provide a sufficient budget of financial assistance in terms of counselling on voluntary return. The focus is on strengthening voluntary returns in order to realise a quicker departure than a forced return and to avoid long lasting expenditures on social welfare.

b) Federal level:

§ 75 Nr. 7 residence act contains the provision that the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (Governmental body, Nuremberg) coordinates all programmes and initiatives on voluntary returns. As the Federal States are (financially) do not have the capacity to manage returns, the Federal Government assists the Federal States significantly in this field on the basis of REAG/GARP.

With the basic voluntary return program “REAG/GARP” (since 1979, funded by the Federal Government, Federal States and European return fund / AMIF) for all returnees travelling costs are granted when they decide to opt for voluntary return. In terms of counselling migrants on voluntary return neither the Federal States nor the Federal Government has a legal obligation to provide any measures/assistance for returnees or counselling agencies.

There is however a common understanding among all public authorities (and non- governmental agencies as well) that counselling is essential in realising voluntary return. So all state bodies (foreign offices) and private, ecclesiastical and charitable organizations (e.g. Caritas, Diakonie, Red Cross) work collaboratively and provide counselling. Counselling is available nationwide.

Q2 Is counselling on voluntary return integrated into the reception facilities?

No, counselling is not an integral part in reception centres. Asylum seekers have only a short stay (ca. three months) in reception centres before they are distributed to other accommodation facilities (mostly flats, family apartments) in urban boroughs and villages. During this term they actually wait for their interview in terms of the asylum procedure only and will be apart from that adequately supplied by the reception administration and social organizations.

Asylum seekers can contact counselling organizations concerning return matters with full access to all information on possibilities provided. In this early stage of arriving in the country of host the interest to take consideration on a return again is on a lower level despite knowing that the asylum claim might fail.

After the final (negative) asylum decision and accordingly the order to leave the country most returnees turn to a counselling centre to discuss their individual case and ongoing procedure. At this (late) stage it becomes an integral part for the returnee.

Q.3 How and when is the option of voluntary return raised? Are there fixed key moments (inside and/or outside the reception facilities, during and/or after the asylum procedure) and who is responsible for providing information?

- The option of voluntary return is only raised after receiving a deportation order
 - The option of voluntary return is raised when the asylum application has eventually failed (this is an unappealable decision) and the deportation order has been issued to leave the country by a pre-determined date.
- Prior to these asylum seekers have no reason to seek counselling.⁴¹

Q4 Country-specific recommendations

- AVRR programmes should seek to establish contact with potential beneficiaries as early as possible, to allow sufficient time for migrants to receive adequate non-invasive information and for trust in AVRR to be fostered
- Such outreach could take place at specific points in a migrant's stay. These include direct outreach possibilities at initial and further reception facilities for asylum seekers and irregular migrants, where outreach could be conducted through topical group information sessions and workshops, or through individual meetings with migrants.
- Other potentially positive interventions include return counselling centres that enable potential returnees to drop by whilst they are dealing with questions of their status in Germany in general.
- Possible outreach interventions include information campaigns aimed at people who have access to potential applications as well as the creation of networks of cooperation with all possible organizations and individuals engaging with the target group.

3. Netherlands



Q1. Is counselling on voluntary return of (ex) asylum seekers provided for in law or legislation in your country? And is voluntary return counselling mandatory?

No
1) No to both questions.

Q2 Is counselling on voluntary return integrated into the reception facilities?

Yes
Yes

Q.3 How and when is the option of voluntary return raised? Are there fixed key moments (inside and/or outside the reception facilities, during and/or after the asylum procedure) and who is responsible for providing information?

The Netherlands prefers voluntary return over forced return. All return interviews with asylum seekers are conducted by the national counsellors of the Repatriation and Departure Service (R&DS). Possibilities of voluntary return will be addressed and information on the implementing civil society organisations/ IOM will be shared.

The asylum seeker will also be encouraged to contact the civil society organisations/ IOM. This approach is not only introduced in the receptions centres, but in the detention centres (administrative detention) as well.

Key AVRR intervention points during the return process

- The asylum seeker receives a negative decision on his asylum application. Information on IOM is incorporated in the negative decision and the asylum seeker is referred to IOM.

- After receiving the negative decision made by the Immigration and Naturalisation Service (INS) the R&DS conducts its first return interview with the asylum seeker. In this interview information on voluntary return will be shared with the foreign national.
- Another return interview will be organised by the asylum seeker after the asylum seeker has lodged an appeal against the negative decision. The purpose of this interview is to inform the foreign national on the consequences of the possibility that the appeal could be rejected. All options / possibilities re; voluntary return will be shared with the asylum seeker.
- Once the appeal has been rejected, a further return interview will be organised. The consequences of such an appeal will be explained and the option to leave the Netherlands voluntarily will be addressed again.
- The asylum seeker will be given 28 days to organise his departure himself (voluntarily). During these 28 days return interviews will take place continuously. After the 28 days the individual is subject to removal.

Q4 Country-specific recommendations

- Outreach does not stand alone but is a part of the whole AVRR process. One of IOM's strong points is the presence of IOM missions in CoOs for assistance after arrival. However, every returnee can signal that he/she is not receiving the assistance he or she was expecting. True or false, rumors or misinformation can be spread easily and should be challenged as quickly as possible.
- Outreach is more than contact in the context of return. Some migrants will be happy to talk to an IOM counselor as they already know what assistance they need. Others will take time to decide. Sometimes a migrant will only want to talk about the difficulties of life. A migrant with health problems will appreciate being referred to a trustful medical doctor. A migrant in need of advice will be glad to be referred to a migrant organization speaking the same language or to a counselor of the same religion. Contact on any level and on many issues will help foster a better relationship and builds trust. This may or may not lead directly to the return of the migrant but it will definitely establish the IOM counselor as a valuable contact.
- Word of mouth is important. Most migrants will be pleased to get written information, preferably in a language they can understand. However, most information on IOM on its value and trustfulness is disseminated by word of mouth, from person to person. It is therefore important to have reliable personal contacts, to maintain high quality services and importantly keep promises.

4. Norway

Q1 . Is counselling on voluntary return of (ex) asylum seekers provided for in law or legislation in your country? And is voluntary return counselling mandatory

No. Counselling on voluntary return of (ex) asylum seekers is not provided for by law, but it is provided for in circulars/practice memos.

Voluntary return counselling is mandatory after receiving a first refusal on an application and also after receiving a refusal on appeal.

Q2 Is counselling on voluntary return integrated into the reception facilities?

In the majority of the reception centres for asylum seekers UDI has employed return counsellors. Counselling is provided to all asylum seekers living in the reception centres (also unaccompanied minor asylum seekers) who voluntarily wish to discuss their plan.

The main target group for counselling is asylum seekers who have received a rejection letter on their asylum claim

Q.3 How and when is the option of voluntary return raised? Are there fixed key moments (inside and/or outside the reception facilities, during and/or after the asylum procedure) and who is responsible for providing information?

- The option of voluntary return is raised as soon as possible at the transit reception centre by staff at the reception centre and IOM representatives.
- Voluntary return is also raised by the Norwegian Organisation for Asylum Seekers (NOAS) during the first week in the reception centre. A government officer/caseworker from the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration will talk about voluntary return during the asylum interview. Information about voluntary return will continue to be provided during the stay in the reception centre.

Q4 Country-specific recommendations

- Earlier provision of information is essential. In so doing, service providers could avoid the need to engage in costly outreach to migrants who are in the later stages of their asylum application and who are already living in the community, often in an irregular manner. Specifically, prior knowledge of AVRR, before receipt of a negative decision on an asylum application may strengthen the perception of AVRR as an option linked to the asylum process in general and not solely a response to a negative solution.
- The system of “training of trainers” should be strengthened and supported. This programme allows IOM staff to access key people and organizations working with migrants and provide them with accurate information about AVRR. In so doing, IOM can ensure that AVRR information is potentially disseminated to possible AVRR beneficiaries living in the community by as wide a group of people as possible, including people migrants’ may already trust. This could further improve the image and therefore the impact of the AVRR programme.
- Although many AVRR applicants depart with IOM, quite a few also drop-out prior to departure. A further exploration of when and why applicants withdraw from AVRR could help improve the VARP process by addressing the specific reasons for these withdrawals. For example, if the reasons for withdrawal are due to the quality of the counselling experience or unexpected developments, IOM could identify and address these factors

5. Czech Republic



Q1 . Is counselling on voluntary return of (ex) asylum seekers provided for in law or legislation in your country? And is voluntary return counselling mandatory?

No.

Q2 Is counselling on voluntary return integrated into the reception facilities?

No.

Q. 3 How and when is the option of voluntary return raised? Are there fixed key moments (inside and/or outside the reception facilities, during and/or after the asylum procedure) and who is responsible for providing information.?

Within the system

- Detention centres / asylum camps
- A proactive approach is taken to the identification of potential AVRR beneficiaries in Detention centres and asylum camps (c10% of total AVRR caseload).
- AVRR is actively offered to potential beneficiaries at this level. But, practitioners do not have access to official lists. IOM rely on information on potential beneficiaries being passed to them by statutory agencies. Information can come in the form of detainee lists, categorised by nationality, lists of vulnerable cases, or detainees who express an interest in AVRR.
- On refusal of permission to stay
- Migrants in receipt of a departure order are directly referred to IOM but, it is not obligatory for such a migrant to contact IOM.

Wider patterns of information and outreach

- 'Walk-ins' are common. First contact can occur at any stage of a migrant's stay in the country. IOM encourage migration to come to the IOM office for counselling, even if AVRR is not an option being considered. There are two reasons for this - i) even migrants with long term residency can be given an 'obligation to leave the country' and ii) migrants in direct contact with their wider communities can be a valuable channel of communication into their wider national groups.
- IOM also engage with diaspora communities through 'own-country' outreach workers, through the use of two regional counselling offices, through the media and through their website.

Q4 Country-specific recommendations

- There should be no pressure in favour of a voluntary return decision placed on migrants. Decisions should be made wholly by the migrants themselves.
- Native and regional consultants act as better and more trusted messengers and should be used to engage with potential beneficiary groups
- Information about AVRR should be provided to as many stakeholders as possible. Effective dissemination of information is needed, at every level.
- AVRR information must be provided to migrants, regardless of status. Migrants not actively thinking of return may still act as a valuable channel of AVRR information provision to members of their wider migrant communities who may indeed be open to the idea of return but who currently do not have adequate information at their disposal. Word of mouth is vital in reaching migrants.

6. Switzerland



Q1 . Is counselling on voluntary return of (ex) asylum seekers provided for in law or legislation in your country? And is voluntary return counselling mandatory?

No AVRR is not mandatory. It is however recommended that asylum seekers attend an AVRR counselling office – even when in receipt of a deportation notice.

Q2 Is counselling on voluntary return integrated into the reception facilities?

Yes, AVRR counselling is delivered as part of a wider engagement with migrant needs. Migrants are encouraged to attend for counselling but it is not mandatory. A wide variety of information disseminators are common. Dedicated return counselling offices are widely funded. But, importantly, there is a wide engagement with AVRR amongst many different civil society organisations and statutory providers.

Q. 3 How and when is the option of voluntary return raised? Are there fixed key moments (inside and/or outside the reception facilities, during and/or after the asylum procedure) and who is responsible for providing information?

Overview

As a rule, the Swiss authorities do not promote return. Outreach activities are managed, and carried out by FOM, IOM, cantonal migration offices, NGOs, social services and, occasionally, by diaspora organisations.

However, emphasis is given to the provision of adequate information. For example, a pillar of Swiss return counselling is accessibility – those charged with the dissemination of AVRR information are required to be accessible and ‘open to discussion’

In this regard, a key element of Swiss’ I&O system is the counselling of potential beneficiaries. Three main outreach systems are used: i) return counselling (IOM and non-IOM staff), ii) individual reintegration measures, tailored to the needs of the returnee, and iii) close cooperation and networking (for example the provision of training and information sessions).

A. The provision of AVRR information to those within the system

Most return assistance information is provided in federal reception centres and cantonal return counselling offices. Independent (IOM) return counsellors are available at different points in the asylum procedure.

At federal level

1. At points of first contact (reception and procedure centres). Return counsellors have an office in these reception centres. It is important to note that asylum seekers are effectively limited in their ability to move outside these centres (due to their generally remote and rural locations). Return counsellors tend to have easy access to potential beneficiaries here.
2. Caseworkers usually mention the presence of AVRR at the first ‘identification meeting’ held with claimants.
3. After this, caseworkers reinforce the existence of return assistance at set points in the process, particularly to those deemed to have little chance of success. (Applicants deemed to have

little chance of success are encouraged to visit a return counsellor before they receive a negative decision). Claimants are encouraged to meeting with IOM staff at this point.

4. Finally, when an asylum claim has been rejected, FOM will share the AVRR flyer with the applicant and social services/law enforcement recommend that the individual visit a return counselling office. Many beneficiaries opt for AVRR at this point.

At canton level

The presence of AVRR is well defined (at Canton level)

1. Non-IOM return counsellors work in cantonal counselling offices. Each canton finances their own return counselling office. The actual organisation of counselling varies widely: some focus on return counselling, some actively engage with people who may be interested in return assistance, others conduct activities to ensure asylum seekers' and refugees' well-being. But, AVRR is well advertised.
2. Some Cantons have mandated NGOs to carry out return counselling, such as Red Cross, Caritas, or KKF-OCA.
3. Canton counselling offices tend to have their own websites advertising their practices and procedures.

B. Wider information practices

1. IOM conducts networking activities at national level and delivers regular trainings with significant stakeholders (police, asylum authorities, NGO's, social workers).
2. A working group on return assistance is in operation.
3. Information materials are produced and disseminated. Information is also made available on the Internet.
4. Some AVRR programmes are also proposed to victims of trafficking or to undocumented and irregular migrants. In these instances, outreach takes place in a discrete manner. In the case of irregular migrants, outreach is limited in scope to avoid sudden and massive influxes of potential beneficiaries and to limit the abuse of the system.
5. Diaspora organisations are also targeted.
6. Moreover, as many potential AVRR beneficiaries obtain information through their own social net works, outreach activities are also carried out by NGO's, social services and the police.

C. Wider capacity building at federal level

1. The FOM and IOM cooperate on an especially created 'working group on return assistance communication'.
2. IOM's website contains much general information on AVRR in Switzerland.

Overall, there is a pro-AVRR environment in Switzerland. For example, many civil society actors are aware of AVRR and will disseminate AVRR information to potential beneficiaries when they come to light.

Q4 Country-specific recommendations

- Every asylum seeker should be informed about AVRR from as early a point in their experience as possible. AVRR information is important. Advertising is not, as this may lead migrants' to distrust the system;
- Counselling should be individualised
- Consider use of complementary communications (for example WOM) and interpreters or national speakers can enhance the effectiveness of message delivery
- Close cooperation is needed among those actors invested in the AVRR process, at every stage of the process
- A whole of government approach will pay dividends
- It is important to foster a dual system: return assistance should be fostered as incentive to voluntary or autonomous return on the one hand and to avoid forced return measures, on the other

7. Ireland



Q1. Is counselling on voluntary return of (ex) asylum seekers provided for in law or legislation in your country? And is voluntary return counselling mandatory?

No it is not provided for in legislation; 'Ex-asylum' seekers, in receipt of a deportation order, are not entitled to avail of AVRR in Ireland

Q2 Is counselling on voluntary return integrated into the reception facilities?

'Ex-asylum' seekers, in receipt of a deportation order, are not entitled to avail of AVRR in Ireland.

Q.3 How and when is the option of voluntary return raised? Are there fixed key moments (inside and/or outside the reception facilities, during and/or after the asylum procedure) and who is responsible for providing information?

Overview

Voluntariness is a core consideration. AVRR is only discussed at the behest of a potential beneficiary. No proactive messaging is provided in Ireland.

All engagements with AVRR must therefore be voluntary and be supported by accurate and up-to-date information. Consequently, IOM-Ireland focuses its efforts on the provision of non-directive information to as wide a range of potential beneficiaries as possible, without advocating for AVRR, in and of itself.

A Information provided to those currently within the asylum procedure –

1. Asylum seekers resident in Ireland's only reception centre – Baleskin Reception Centre – are advised on the presence of IOM-Ireland's AVRR programme. IOM-Ireland staff members attend the centre and provide this information. The presence of AVRR programmes is further presented on information posters and flyers. AVRR counselling is not provided at this point.

2. Government staff do not advocate for AVRR with asylum seekers.
3. Posters and flyers are present in Ireland's 32 Dprov accommodation centres. IOM staff regularly attend these centres and provide counselling when a potential beneficiary requests it of them.
4. IOM staff also interact with accommodation centre staff / other service providers (eg educational officers) in the hope of further penetrating the message in the local environment.

B Wider patterns – information presented to the community and to key service providers, in support of the AVRR message

1. IOM staff attend a regular series of 'inter-agency' meetings, along with other key service providers and statutory agencies. These meetings are briefed on the progress of Ireland's AVRR programmes.
2. Service providers and migration-focused civil society organisations are visited and informed about the presence of the AVRR programme.
3. IOM continually reinforce the already close working relationship it has with ORAC and is a partner in a nationwide series of 'inter-agency meetings'. IOM staff also meet with embassy officials and provide staff training for the Irish police force - An Garda Síochána. In this way, service providers and stake-holders are presented with up-to-date information on the conduct of AVRR which it is hoped, will help in the formulation of an informed and AVRR-friendly network of policy makers and service providers in Ireland.
4. MELOs and migrant communities groups can be targeted as well. Q4 Country-specific recommendations

Q4 Country-specific recommendations

In the Asylum System

Misinformation about AVRR abounds - both in the asylum system and in the community. To effectively reach asylum seekers, the Irish authorities should consider embedding and placing the AVRR message to best-effect, at all points of Ireland's migrant processing procedure. This should happen from the point the migrant first enters the Irish asylum system and through the various stages of appeal:

- When claims are lodged consider placing AVRR information (including media based) at the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner (ORAC).
- Following a negative recommendation from ORAC, the Refugee Appeal Tribunal (RAT) should consider providing information about AVRR. Referral to AVRR for counselling should also be considered.
- After referral to the Reception and Integration Agency *(RIA) consider placing dedicated nationality councillors at the Baleskin Reception Centre.
- Within the Direct provision accommodation centres, individual and passive outreach should be replaced with structured presentations and AVRR media events using NCs.

- As residents in DProv are in fact de facto members of the community, outreach in DProv should be complemented and reinforced with outreach and information campaigns and net working with NGOs, communities and diasporas.

In the Community

The AVRR message does not reach potential beneficiaries via the NGO sector. More attention should be given to improving information dissemination so that message delivery can be more effective. Particular emphasis should be placed on positioning the message so that it can filter back through informal information networks, including those operating trans-nationally.

The value and benefits of AVRR must be impressed on all stakeholders. With the aim of strengthening AVRR outreach in the community there is a need to improve communication, coordination and partnership between government/ IOM and organisations working with migrants including asylum seekers and irregulars. The following is suggested:

- Drawing on EEA-wide practices, consider providing capacity building and training on AVRR to both government and non-government service providers. Service providers who are best placed to and trusted to disseminate the AVRR message should be identified and their capacities to delivery the message improved.
 - To foster a more inclusive and informed approach to AVRR, consider establishing a migration task-force drawn from all stakeholders, including NGOs active in Ireland. This task force would provide an important plat form for sharing information about return as well as facilitating improved cooperation and coordination across a range of migrant related issues.
 - Develop and launch a communications campaign to re-launch IOM as a migrant friendly organization. Highlight IOM's work internationally so that civil-society is informed on the mandate and broad range of the organization.
 - To improve communication, coordination and partnerships, consider engaging the services of more outreach workers from particular targeted communities. Nationality councillors would act as more trusted messengers with NGOs, communities and diasporas in particular with reaching irregulars.
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