



EMN Ad-Hoc Query on Management system related to assisted voluntary returns: structure and organizations of the responsible authorities at national level

Requested by Italian NCP on 21st June 2017

Return

Responses from Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Sweden, United Kingdom, Norway (21 in total)

Disclaimer:

The following responses have been provided primarily for the purpose of information exchange among EMN NCPs in the framework of the EMN. The contributing EMN NCPs have provided, to the best of their knowledge, information that is up-to-date, objective and reliable. Note, however, that the information provided does not necessarily represent the official policy of an EMN NCPs' Member State.

Background information:

With the purpose of enhancing the knowledge and the exchange of good practices, among the Member States, concerning the return implementation policies, it would be interesting to acquire information concerning the Member States' internal organization in terms of compositions and functions - as far as the management of the return activities is concerned; it would be advisable to focus, in particular, on the possible best practices (for ex. in terms of legislation, operational procedures, eventual involvement of private support bodies and so on) used for the effective implementation of assisted voluntary returns).

ITALY

In Italy, the Authority responsible for the implementation of assisted voluntary returns (AVR) is the Ministry of Interior – Department for Civil Liberties and Immigration. At central level, a Unit within the Department of Civil Liberties and Immigration of the Ministry of Interior is competent for planning and implementing activities within AVR programs, as well as for coordination, supervision and monitoring of the whole AVR implementation procedure. This procedure is also implemented at the decentralized level through the joint activity between “Prefettura” and “Questura”. Human resources dedicated to this issue amount to 5 persons: 1 Head of Unit (Deputy Prefect), 2 administrative officers, 1 interpreter/linguistic officer, 1 external migration expert. Staff however also includes people working in “Prefettura” and “Questura” that manage all files. The central Unit doesn't directly manage AVR programs' actions, but directly entrusts the relevant management to organizations and entities, with expertise in the field of migration and return, selected by means of specific calls for proposal (so-called projects' successful tenderers). In Italy, the main entity which, works in this field, is IOM, in addition to other specialized agencies. 6 AVR projects are currently active in Italy: 5 of them are funded with AMIF Funds 2014-2020, and 1 is funded with National Funds. The activities provided for in the framework of any project are the following: Identification of the potential returnees eligible for the AVR Programme in accordance with the AMIF provisions; Accompanying to the departure for returnees eligible for this measure by means of counselling by specialized staff, information and cultural mediation services; Definition of the individual reintegration plan for any person/family group concerned; Pre-departure assistance; Organization and assistance for the return journey; Provision of a pre-departure contribution for the first accommodation (amounting to Euro 400); Implementation of the reintegration plan and specific assistance on-the-spot defined in the individual reintegration plan; Ex post monitoring of reintegration, in order to evaluate the plan's result.

Third country nationals eligible for assisted voluntary return measures are identified by means of desk activities and local information actions regarding the AVR measure (i.e. “info-days”), in the framework of the activities carried out by the project national beneficiaries. In addition, AMIF funds 1 project for the

development of an *Institutional Network on Assisted Voluntary Return*, which provides for information/awareness raising activities and training activities on the measure, as well as 1 project for launching a Campaign of Institutional Communication on AVR. Counselling activities are implemented in the framework of activities entrusted to the AVR project beneficiaries, through counselors and specialized staff, devoted to the information and awareness raising activities.

Pre-departure activities are implemented through beneficiaries of active AVR projects, which contact the consulates of third countries, for issuing travel documents. Airline ticket booking is implemented through the beneficiaries of the active AVR projects which buy air tickets through travel agencies.

Reintegration and monitoring activities in the country of origin are implemented through the definition of an individual reintegration plan funded by “in kind” grants (between Euro 1.500 and Euro 2.000 for each single returnee or head of family). The plan is developed through a personalized approach, which takes into account the characteristics as well as the needs of the person/family group concerned and which defines an individual reintegration project as well as the specific assistance which is required for its implementation. Reintegration activities in the country of origin are included in a monitoring report drawn up by the beneficiaries of the AVR projects.

In Italy, the Authority responsible for assisted voluntary does not deal with forced returns. Police Department of the Ministry of the Interior is competent for the management of forced returns. In relation to the AVR measures, this Office coordinates the activities carried out at local level by the “Questure”, which are competent for checks requested to issue the authorizations to the AVR measure of third country nationals eligible for the measure.

In Italy legislative, operational best practices and/or instruments (for ex. the IT platform) and/or experiences exist, for enhancing return policies. In this regard, criteria for implementing the AVR programs as well as access procedures for third country nationals were established through the Ministerial Decree dd. October 27th 2011. An IT platform was implemented for the managing AVR programmes, by fostering a telematic dialogue between the Ministry of Interior at central level, and “Prefettura” and “Questura” at local level. This system enables to manage on-line the programs’ access procedures (application, relevant documents and information). The “Prefettura” informs thereof the competent “Questura”; the latter ascertains that there are no cases falling within exclusion from the return programme, as provided for by Art. 14 ter par. 5 of the Leg. Decree 286/98 and that the applicant either has a valid identity document or that his/her identity has been ascertained in spite of lack of documents. In case of positive checks, Prefecture admits the person concerned to the AVR programme and informs even in case of negative checks thereof, without delay, the competent “Questura” as well as the entity competent for the implementation of the project. The entity competent for the project’s implementation informs “Prefettura” about the successful return as well as about the eventual withdrawal application. The IT platform enables to carry out the constant monitoring of all the started AVR files, to check the number of submitted applications and of those which still have to be authorized, the number of effective returnees. In case of procedure difficulties or any kind of delays, the system also enables to trace the causes of the problem and to proceed in order to find a solution.

Questions

1. In your Member State, which is the Authority responsible for the assisted voluntary returns (for ex. Ministry, Agency, and so on)?
2. Which is the Authority’s structure? Is it a centralized Authority – that is, are all assisted voluntary return activities managed by only one Authority at central level, or is it a decentralized management, with operational Authorities at local level?
3. How many human resources and which professional roles are involved in the Authority’s activity?
4. Which tasks/functions does it carry out: does it directly manage third country nationals eligible for assisted voluntary return or are the relevant activities outsourced to third parties by means of public calls for proposal (for ex. involvement of International Organizations, NGOs, so on)?
5. Are the activities directly managed by the relevant Authority; in which way are they organized? In particular: - how are third country nationals eligible for assisted voluntary return measures identified? - how are counselling activities carried out? - how are pre-departure activities implemented? - how is airline ticket booking implemented? - how are reintegration and monitoring activities in the country of origin implemented?

6. Does the assisted voluntary return managing Authority also deal with forced returns? Yes () No ()
6.1 If YES, which is this Authority? 6.2 If NO, pls. explain which is the Authority dealing with forced returns and how is it connected with the Authority dealing with Assisted Voluntary Returns?
7. Do legislative, operational best practices and/or instruments (for ex. the IT platform) and/or experiences exist in your Member State, which enhance the implementation of the return policies?

MAIN FINDINGS/Responses

1. Which is the Authority responsible for the assisted voluntary returns (for ex. Ministry, Agency, and so on)?

Respondents have different type of authorities that are responsible for return programmes, see the full list in the Annex (Table 1).

2. Which is the Authority's structure? Is it a centralized Authority – that is, are all assisted voluntary return activities managed by only one Authority at central level, or is it a decentralized management, with operational Authorities at local level?

- a) In some countries, all assisted voluntary return activities are managed at the central level: BE; FI, HU; IE; NL, PT, SK; SW, UK. In the cases mentioned above however the following countries carry out programmes also with OIM and/or local partners (NGOs, cities, etc.): *BE, NL, PT, SK, LU*. In *FI* return programmes are organised by reception centres. In *SW* some return activities are centralised and others are managed at local level.
- b) In other countries, voluntary return is both at central and decentralised levels. In *AT*, the Federal Ministry of the Interior and the Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum are centralized authorities. However, the Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum has regional offices in the provinces. In *FR*, the OFII is a decentralized entity with 31 territorial directorates (28 in metropolitan France and 3 in overseas territories) competent for processing applications for return assistance as well as for promoting this process locally. In *DE*, there are multiple authorities, both at the federal and local/state level who deal with assisted voluntary return.
- c) Finally, in some countries it is exclusively the OIM that carries out return programmes: EE, LV, LT, MT, SI.

3. How many human resources and which professional roles are involved in the Authority's activity?

Countries where human resources are up to a maxim of 4 full time staff: *AT* (2 persons); *EE* (4); *LV* (2); *LT* (2); *ML* (2), *PT* (3), *SI* (2-3). In *FI* (1), however on a project-base 16 employees are supporting reception centers' case workers in assisted voluntary return issues.

Countries where human resources are beyond the number of 5 full time staff: In *FR* (6) at the central level, but in regional directorates, travel agencies etc. OFII can count on a broader number of employees; in *LU*: the Return Department is composed of 15 persons including the Director. There are 5 persons involved with voluntary returns (Director, Responsible of International Relations, 2 staff members who organise voluntary returns and one staff member who is in charge of the statistics). In *SW* the SMA has over 30 reception units, most of which work with voluntary return; in *UK* the Voluntary Returns Service team is organised along normal Home Office structure, strictly delineated according to grade (for specificities see below).

In certain countries, voluntary return appears cross-cutting and data on human resources less specific. In *IE* the Repatriation Unit of the Department of Justice and Equality is staffed by 80+ civil servants, although all are not involved in voluntary return; in the case of *DE*, because of the multitude of actors concerned with the topic of voluntary return, a reliable statement on the scope of human resources and the professional roles involved cannot be given; in *NL*, there are 600 people working at the Repatriation and Departure Service, spread across the country.

Regarding the specific professional roles:

PT indicated that while all SEF's officials are prepared and can perform all tasks, in the framework of ARVoRe VI, co-funded by AMIF and SEF, IOM has 3 full-time dedicated staff: 1 AVRR focal point; 1 reintegration focal point and 1 operations assistant and 3 part-time staff: 1 project manager, 1 financial manager and 1 operational assistant.

In the **NL** the Repatriation and Departure Service has positions along the whole spectrum from controllers, departure supervisors, policy officers and directors.

The **SK** outlined that in AVRR projects team consists of: 1) *Project Coordinator*, 2) *Coordinator of Operations*, 3) *Coordinator of Reintegration* and 4) *Operational assistant*.

In **SW**, each reception unit in SMA is staffed by a team (or several teams) of case officers, decision makers, team leaders and unit managers. The two centralised national units currently have the following staff: a) The Unit for Return Co-ordination – 13.5 case officers, 3 administrative assistants, 1 personnel assistant, 1 economic assistant, 3 experts, 2 team leaders, 1 unit manager, b) The Unit for Travel Co-ordination – 13 case officers, 2 experts, 2 team leaders, 1 unit manager.

In the **UK**, the Voluntary Returns Service team consists of 5x Administrative Assistants, 58x Administrative Officers, 37x Executive Officers, 16x Higher Executive Officers and 7x Senior Executive Officers, led by 3x Grade 7 managers. This is headcount and includes current vacancies, accurate to the end of July 2017. The Grade 7 managers report to a Grade 6 manager, who reports to the member of the Senior Civil Service responsible for National Returns Command – which deals with both voluntary and enforced returns. International matters relating to reintegration are managed by the Home Office Voluntary Returns Service team in association with the ERIN project.

4. Which tasks/functions does it carry out: does it directly manage third country nationals eligible for assisted voluntary return or are the relevant activities outsourced to third parties by means of public calls for proposal (for ex. involvement of International Organizations, NGOs, so on)?

- A) In four cases tasks are managed directly: **AT; FR; SW; UK.**
- B) In several countries relevant activities are partly outsourced: **BE, HU, FI; DE, IE, LU; NL; NO; PT**
- C) In the following countries, relevant activities are completely outsourced: **EE, LV, LT, MT, SI, SK.**

More specifically regarding tasks and function carried out:

In **AT**: consultation on return assistance is provided by the Human Rights Association Austria and the Caritas. The decision on the provision of return assistance is taken by the Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum.

In **BE**: Fedasil devolves part of its operational work to intergovernmental organizations (e.g. IOM), international organizations (e.g. CIB) and local partners in Belgium (cities, NGOs, local social services, etc.). Fedasil has a convention with the Cities of Ghent, Ostend and Antwerp. Fedasil carries out the following functions: 1) *Communication*: Fedasil has a convention with several Cities. 2) *Counselling*: Fedasil concluded a convention with a social service in Antwerp where a native counsellor is dedicated to native counselling towards irregularly staying (Moroccan) citizens with a view to pro-actively discussing return options and guiding/referring them to the Fedasil Return Desk in Antwerp. 3) *Operational implementation of the return travel*: in some exceptional cases, Fedasil will organize the return travel itself.

In **FI**: the Finnish Immigration Service is responsible on management, planning, and monitoring of the voluntary return system. Reception centers deal with assisted voluntary return cases and IOM Helsinki organizes the travel arrangements for return.

In **FR**: the OFII manages the whole French programme for return assistance, with no participation of any third party. Out of France, regarding reintegration, the OFII delegates the technical support of project holders

to civil society organisations (especially associations, in order to involve local actors) and in some cases to international organisations (Caritas, IOM, regarding the ERIN programme in which the OFII participates). The OFII representations out of France or the Paris office manage the reintegration programme (project audit, audit of providers, drafting and signature of conventions, statistics).

In **DE**: since there are a multitude of actors involved in the field of voluntary return, there is no single authority to manage third country nationals. However, governmental agencies, both on federal and on state level, have access to a central database on foreign country nationals (Ausländerzentralregister). This applies to the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees and the foreigner's registration offices of the federal states.

In **HU**: the Aliens Policing Directorate of the IAO evaluates and decides upon the possibility of participating in the return programme. The return is arranged by the IOM in close cooperation with the IAO.

In **IE**: the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of the Department of Justice and Equality, in conjunction with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), offers voluntary assisted return and reintegration programmes for asylum seekers, failed asylum seekers and other illegally present migrants.

In **LU**: a scheme for the assistance of voluntary returns and of reintegration to third-countries with the exception of the Balkans countries (including Kosovo since 1 December 2016) is made available by means of the Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration from Luxembourg Programme (AVRR L), which is handled by the IOM. The Return Department organises directly the voluntary returns by bus to the Balkans countries.

In **MT**: IOM Malta directly manages the activities of AVRR – identification of returnees, consultation, filing of applications, procurement of travel documents etc.

In **NL**: the Repatriation and Departure Service coordinates the departure of foreign nationals who are not entitled to stay in the Netherlands. Together with other government agencies and social services, the goal is to ensure that foreign nationals return to their countries as independent individuals with positive prospects. The guiding principle is that foreign nationals are always given the opportunity to leave voluntarily, with or without our assistance. The Repatriation and Departure Service subsidizes IOM and several NGOs that can assist with informing, advising, preparing and supporting in the framework of voluntary return and reintegration in the country of origin.

In **PT**: after the interview by IOM staff and/or Counsellors the voluntary return request is addressed, by IOM, to DCID through email and includes an interview form, copy of the travel or identification documents and other documents useful to perform this analysis such as travel authorization, etc. To analyze an application request, DCID consults persons and documents databases, such as SIS / Interpol Data base and National Data Bases of Portuguese Immigration Service and Ministry of Justice. When necessary, in individual cases, other Immigration Services, Liaison Officers and Courts are consulted.

In **SK**: after the positive decision on AVR, all other activities related to AVR are carried out by IOM while it cooperates with the Border and Alien Police units regarding the legal status of a foreigner in the territory of the Slovak Republic and also regarding transport within Slovakia, registration of the foreigner during departure through the external border into the national information system (especially at the Kosice airport and the border between the Slovak Republic and Ukraine).

In **SW**: MA directly manages third country nationals eligible for assisted voluntary return.

In **UK**: Voluntary Returns Service deals with all aspects of the return.

5. **Are the activities directly managed by the relevant Authority; in which way are they organized? In particular: - how are third country nationals eligible for assisted voluntary return measures identified? - how are counselling activities carried out? - how are pre-departure activities implemented?- how is airline ticket booking implemented?- how are reintegration and monitoring activities in the country of origin implemented?**

This question is split in various sub-questions which touch upon the following themes:

A) Eligibility Criteria

In most countries eligible criteria are fixed by law. In one countries eligible third country nationals for return are mostly asylum seekers (**FI**); in others eligibility criteria are extended to any migrant residing illegally in the country, or to migrants who wish to return but don't have the means (**BE; FR, HU, LV, MT; PT; SI, SK, SW, UK**). There is also the case of eligibility to specific countries of origin (**LU**). In all cases return has to be voluntary and informed.

In **BE**: Fedasil has developed eligibility criteria whereby the access to the return and reintegration packages depends on the migrant's status: the home country (visa free or not), administrative status in terms of asylum and vulnerability. The eligibility assessment of the migrant to the AVR programme proceeds via the return counsellors themselves and is based on general eligibility criteria. Background checks about the migrant (e.g. involvement in criminal issues) are in principle not conducted to define the eligibility of the migrant to AVR. The quality control of the eligibility of the migrant to AVR proceeds via: 1°) return counsellor 2°) the service provider (IOM/CIB) involved 3°) Fedasil itself via its financial control cycle (sample based).

In **FI**: as the third country nationals eligible for assisted voluntary return are mostly asylum seekers they are mostly customers in reception centers. After a negative asylum decision and/or a return decision police discusses with the asylum seeker and asks about his /her plans concerning (voluntary) return. If he/she wishes to return voluntarily he/she can apply for voluntary return assistance from reception center. If he/she says he/she is not willing to return voluntarily police starts preparing for forced return. Reception centers social workers also inform their customers about the possibility of voluntary return and assistance that is available.

In **FR**: the criteria for return and reintegration support and the amount of allowances are fixed by an order of the ministry of Interior and clarified through an instruction of the General Director of the OFII. Any foreign national residing illegally in France or whose asylum application was rejected can benefit from the return assistance, provided s/he has been residing for at least 6 months in France. Lastly, a lot of foreign nationals contact directly the OFII offices to obtain some information and apply for return assistance. The OFII regional directorates have to proceed with the application, based on required criteria for eligibility (irregular situation) and ineligibility (for example holding a residence permit in one EU member State).

In **HU**: Third country national is eligible for the programme... - if wishes to return voluntarily; - if has an expulsion decision; - if has no financial means to cover the costs of return; - based on the deliberation of the IAO (does not pose of threat to flight security).

In **LV**: eligible persons are identified by addressing rejected asylum seekers in both centers - closed and open - and providing them information. Additionally relevant foreign embassies and consulates are regularly informed. Also State Border Guard refers potential cases to IOM.

In **LU**: eligibility of third-country nationals include: A) individuals whose country of origin is a Balkan country (including Kosovo). B) other third-country nationals that can apply to the AVRR-L programme. The third country national who: during the procedure of international protection decides to withdraw his/her application for international protection and to return voluntarily to his/her country of origin; who was ordered to leave the territory under the relevant provisions of the Law of 18 December 2015 on international protection and temporary protection (Asylum Law), who is detected as an irregular migrant residing in Luxembourg and who decides of his own will to return voluntarily to his/her country of origin.

In **MT**: the target group of the RESTART VI project – TCNs who are eligible to apply for AVRR in Malta – is the following: non-EU nationals who have not yet received a final negative decision in relation to their request for international protection in Malta; non-EU nationals enjoying the right to stay, legal residence and/or international protection, or temporary protection in Malta; non-EU nationals who are present in Malta and do not or no longer fulfil the conditions for entry and/or stay in Malta. The return decision has to be

voluntary and informed. In each case, IOM Malta requests clearance from MHAS before proceeding with the AVRR arrangements.

In the **NL**: eligibility criteria are decided through the Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND), the police and the Royal National Marechaussee.

In **PT**: TCNs can be identified directly by IOM, when they come to seek information at IOM office or indirectly if they seek support throughout the Network of partners. Together with this first contact, a quick assessment related to eligibility is made before register the case on AVRR database and seeking SEF clearance for voluntary return. Applicants for asylum who have not yet received a decision; asylum-seekers whose requests have been definitively rejected; asylum seekers or beneficiaries of international protection who wish to return to their country of origin; illegal and other foreigners who doesn't want or doesn't gather conditions to stay in Portugal are eligible to benefit from ARVoRe VI.

In **SI**: According to the agreement between the Police and IOM, all activities taken by IOM are priory confirmed by Centre for Foreigners which is within the Police responsible for the implementation of the programs. The Centre of Foreigners is actually a detention facility for third country nationals who has been issued a return decision and for whom a risk of absconding exists. During the return process the foreigners are informed by IOM about the AVRR programs. They are mainly promoted for vulnerable categories but does not exclude other returnees.

In **SK**: eligibility criteria are defined in bilateral AVR agreement, only rejected asylum seekers and irregular migrants may apply for assisted voluntary return.

In **SW**: those returnees who lack the means to pay for their own travel are identified during the return counselling process carried out by the local reception units. Those eligible for cash support and for in-kind support through the ERIN program are also identified during the return counselling process. Cash support and in kind support are only available to those returning to certain countries. Return counsellors inform those returning to relevant countries of the possibility of applying for support and take in applications from returnees. All applications are then sent to the Unit for Return Co-ordination which decides which returnees are eligible for support measures.

In **UK**: Third county nationals eligible for assisted voluntary return are identified in the following ways: i. Through direct engagement by front facing officers who work for the wider Home Office (for example, work in communities, enforcement activities and promotion of voluntary return at immigration reporting centres); ii. Through communications work (posters, leaflets, availability of a hotline, information sent with immigration decisions).

B) Counselling activities

In most cases counselling activities is intended through a proactive approach, and through a well defined counselling strategy. The topic of voluntary return is often raised by the authorities to the international protection seeker since the beginning of the procedure. Information material is handed out that contains information about the voluntary return. Information and counselling is organised in individual either by OIM or competent authorities. In one case, the **UK**, counselling activities are not carried out through the competent authority, and it is the interested individual who must approach third parties for advice and support.

In **EE**: information on assisted voluntary return and reintegration program is provided through different procedures and channels (e.g. through counselling services, within the asylum and return procedure). In case the third country national is interested to join the assisted voluntary return and reintegration program the officials of PBGB contact directly the representatives of IOM. Similarly IOM is doing outreach to reception and detention facilities, diplomatic corps and diaspora communities.

In **FI**: counselling for AVRR is available in reception centers from social workers.

In **FR**: the OFII advisors on return proceed with the instruction of the administrative situation of the foreign national and depending on it, approves or rejects the return assistance. Return assistance is not a right and can be refused because of a legitimate reason (for example because of the migration pathway of the migrant, his/her financial situation, etc.). Processing a return assistance application implies several individual interviews with the migrant and the return advisor. These interviews aim at preparing the return from a psychological, administrative and logistic standpoint and also inform the migrant on the reintegration assistance.

In **DE**: return counselling is offered both by governmental authorities and by NGOs.

In **IE**: the key emphasis is on consolidating and strengthening the information and outreach approach, networking at a grassroots level, increasing awareness amongst diaspora groups and diaspora/community leaders, continuing and building upon link up visits with IOM staff in key countries of return, and developing a strong analytical model / tool for analysing reintegration feedback.

In **LU**: from the moment a foreigner has lodged an asylum application, return counselling becomes an integral part of the accompaniment offered to asylum seekers in all reception facilities. The topic of voluntary return is raised by the authorities to the international protection seeker since the beginning of the procedure. A brochure is handed out by the Directorate of Immigration that contains information about the voluntary return. Information sessions are regularly organized by the OIM in the international protection seekers reception centers.

In **MT**: AVRR counselling is carried out by IOM Malta at the IOM Malta office, closed and open centres, hospitals (e.g. mental health hospital) or other places, based on the needs of the AVRR applicants. All counselling sessions are confidential. In case needed, during counselling, AVRR applicants can also be linked to IOM staff in countries of origin (e.g. to discuss their reintegration plans).

In the **NL**: the first contact points are the departure supervisors. The departure supervisor supports the foreign national in preparing for departure.

In **PT**: awareness raising and information sessions are organized at local level by OIM, in partnership with Counseling and Information Network focal points. Other activities related to production of visibility materials are produced by external service providers contracted by IOM. IOM always looks to involve other partners such as academia who will produce the study on reintegration.

In **SI**: for TCN who enter the program all next activities for their return are organised by IOM (counselling, reservation of tickets, assistance in transit areas, reception in home country, reintegration activities, etc.).

In **SK**: concerning AVRR counselling activities, IOM operates AVRR green line 5 days a week, runs an AVRR web site, promotes AVRR through social media such as facebook, provides AVR counselling directly in its premises, regularly meets with consulates and embassies staff and inform them about the AVRR programme as well as regularly visits asylum and detention facilities and inform the target group in detail on services provided within return and reintegration support.

In **SW**: return counselling is carried out by case officers working in reception units located all around Sweden. When a returnee receives a decision that they are to leave Sweden and return to their country of origin, their case is allocated to a return counsellor. The return counsellor is responsible for meeting with the returnee, informing them that they are obliged to leave Sweden and informing them of the time limit for them to leave. They are given information about support measures available, where relevant. They are also informed of the consequences of failing to leave Sweden within the given time limit.

In **UK**: counselling activities are not carried out through the Voluntary Returns Service. If individuals require such activities then they are at liberty to approach third parties for advice and support.

C) *Pre-departure activities and airline ticket booking*

Pre-departure activities include various interventions: outreach, information dissemination, counselling, pre-departure assistance including travel arrangements, departure assistance and coordination with IOM Missions in countries of origin. In almost all countries that provided a response, IOM is responsible for providing ticket booking and pre-departure activities except for **FR**, **SW** and the **UK**. In particular:

In **FI**: IOM Helsinki helps the returnee to obtain travel documents if needed. It also makes the travel arrangement from Finland to return country and assists the returnees in Helsinki Airport upon departure. Local IOM assists the returnees in transit and in return country.

In **FR**: once the assistance return application is validated, it is sent electronically to the travel agency in Roissy or to another travel office, which books the flight. Once confirmed, the migrant meets for the last time the advisor in the OFII regional directorate to be issued his/her administrative sheet and flight plan. S/he will have to meet with the travel agent who will accompany him/her in the luggage registration process and will give him/her up the money allowance (in cash) in the departure lounge.

In **IE**: under the Voluntary Assisted Return and Reintegration Programme (VARRP), and the Irregular Voluntary Assisted Return and Reintegration Programme (IVARRP), flights home are paid and where required, the IOM will assist in securing travel documents and give assistance at the airport at departure and arrival.

In **LU**: In the AVRR programme IOM provides: assistance for obtaining travel documents (i.e. it covers the fees and the travels that the applicant has to do to the embassy of the country of origin in Brussels); transport from Luxembourg to their village of origin (includes booking of the airport transportation); assistance at the Luxembourg International Airport and at the transit airport; medical escort in case it is required.

In **LV**: IOM staff meets with applicants, provide counselling and obtain travel documents, if necessary. In case persons have no means, IOM provides room in a hostel and small amount of money for food. IOM also does the airline, train or bus ticket purchase and transfer the returnee from Asylum Center to airport.

In **MT**: pre-departure activities include outreach, information dissemination, counselling, pre-departure assistance (travel arrangements, including facilitation of issuance of travel documents, purchase of flight tickets, arrangement of transit and arrival assistance and onward transportation if needed, as well as medical escorts, if needed), departure assistance (including disbursement of the EUR 200 pre-departure cash allowance), and coordination with IOM Missions in countries of origin.

In the **NL**: the departure supervisor is in contact with the foreign national and helps the foreign national in preparing for departure. In addition, there is a booking department that arranges the flight, and an international affairs directorate that is in touch with the third country and arranges the necessary travel documents. This is done by the booking departments or by IOM/NGOs.

In **PT**: tickets are booked directly by IOM using the most direct and economic route. IOM books AVRR flights using AMADEUS and/or through a local agreement with TAP.

In **SK**: pre-departure activities are carried out based on the individual needs of migrants, IOM staff meets the migrant in closed or open MoI premises, or migrants visits IOM staff at IOM premises. Activities include ensuring of travel documents, mediation of contact between consulate and migrant, assistance with state authority contact upon request and individual multiple return counselling provided if needed. Food, health care, clothes or other items are provided based on the individual needs.

In **SW**: airline tickets are booked by the Unit for Travel Co-ordination. This is done via a travel agency which the SMA has a contract with. The unit for travel co-ordination also makes arrangements for medical and other escorts where necessary.

In **UK** Any pre-departure activities and airline ticket bookings are organised through the Voluntary Returns Service, including obtaining travel documents. Approval of plans for use of the reintegration package

through the structured support available through ERIN are given by the VRS once the individual has returned and had the opportunity to discuss plans with a reintegration partner in country.

D) Reintegration and monitoring activities in the country of origin

Most reintegration and monitoring activities are put in place through IOM or ERIN network. In particular:

In **BE**: national reintegration programme (almost worldwide coverage) are prepared and implemented via IOM or CIB, or via ERIN SA programme if applicable. Monitoring in country of return is reported by IOM/CIB via financial/narrative reporting and monthly monitoring list.

In **FI** reintegration assistance in country of return is implemented through ERIN (in-kind assistance) or IOM Helsinki / local IOM (in-cash assistance). Monitoring activities are not included in return and reintegration system at the moment.

In **FR** regarding reintegration, the OFII proposes 3 kinds of assistance: assistance for social reintegration (emergency support regarding the housing needs, health, children education), assistance for reintegration through employment and/or vocational training, or through the creation of a business. These 3 levels of support exist in 30 countries either through a bilateral agreement managed by the OFII, or through the ERIN European programme. In all cases, the OFII works with local providers who are in charge of accompanying the beneficiaries (for employment and business creation support) and managing the financial assistance granted to the beneficiary.

In **IE**: persons availing of the Voluntary Assisted Return and Reintegration Programme (VARRP), and the Irregular Voluntary Assisted Return and Reintegration Programme (IVARRP), can apply for reintegration assistance to allow them to start up a business or enter further education or training when they are back in their country of origin. This takes the form of an 'in-kind' rather than a cash payment. In addition to the two IOM programmes referred to above, the Department of Justice and Equality also assists people who are illegally present in the State and wish to return home voluntarily by covering the cost of the flight, if necessary, and assisting in securing travel documents.

In **LU**: reintegration aid in the country of origin of the returnees is provided, but since this aid in kind is available for a duration of six months it is difficult to follow the success of the reintegration process in this short period of time.

In **LV**: reintegration and monitoring is done by IOM Office in third country. The Return Department organises directly the voluntary returns by bus to the Balkans countries.

In the **NL**: the Repatriation and Departure Service provides reintegration support to foreign nationals that are returning voluntarily. In addition, foreign nationals that are returning to their country of origin can make use of the ERIN network. The Repatriation and Departure Service does not monitor foreign nationals that have returned.

In **MT**: Reintegration assistance is provided upon return, in countries of origin, with the support of local IOM Missions. Since the assistance is in-kind, based on the returnee's reintegration plan, payments are made directly to the suppliers of the required goods and/or services. Reintegration monitoring is carried out whenever feasible, usually approx. 6 months after the provision of reintegration assistance, by IOM Missions in countries of origin (should a visit to the returnee prove not feasible, monitoring can also be conducted over the phone).

In **PT**: reintegration and monitoring in country of origin are implemented in coordination with IOM missions based on needs identified in pre-departure phase for each reintegration beneficiary. In the specific case of Brazil (more that 80% of AVRR caseload from Portugal) besides IOM mission support there is a network of partners assisting and monitoring reintegration cases in main states of return.

In SK: Migrants are provided with detailed explanation on step by step return process, departure, transit and arrival airport assistances as well as reintegration help after return. Due to advantageous agreements concluded between IOM and 41 airline companies, airline booking is done in house through the system Amadeus. IOM can thus better manage the return process in terms of logistics and finance. Reintegration, monitoring and evaluation processes are implemented through IOM offices located in countries of origin.

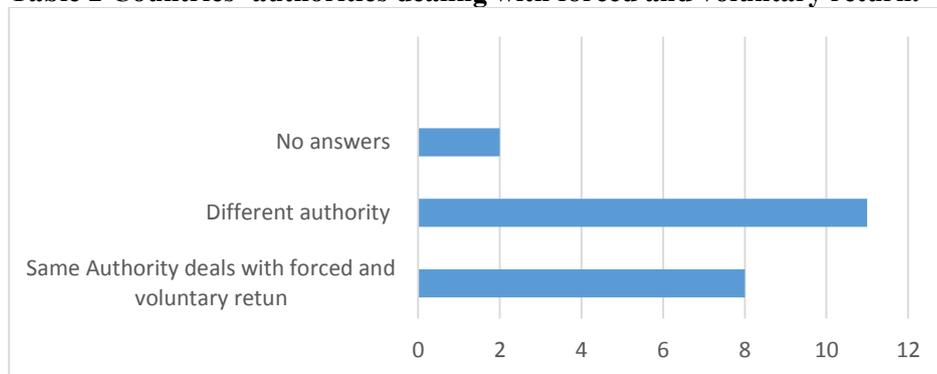
In SW: in terms of reintegration support, there are no pre-departure activities. All reintegration measures, including the preparation of business plans, are implemented post-departure. All of the SMA's in-kind reintegration efforts are currently being channelled through the ERIN program. The ERIN program includes monitoring of the reintegration activities. Through the ERIN program, the SMA offers reintegration support to those returning to 7 selected countries: Afghanistan, Iraq, Morocco, Nigeria, Pakistan, Russia, Somalia.

In UK: Reintegration activities are carried out either through ERIN (where possible), in which case reintegration is delivered with the assistance of reintegration partners (typically NGOs) in the country of return, or (if the returnee is returning to a country not covered by ERIN) directly through the Voluntary Returns Service. Where ERIN is not available, the VRS team provide a start card which is preloaded with the total reintegration package. For a small number of countries, the start card is not an option; in these cases, cash is provided directly to the returnee at the point of departure).

**6. Does the assisted voluntary return managing Authority also deal with forced returns?
Yes () No ()**

Out of the 21 respondents, 8 countries replied YES (**AT, HU, IE, LU, NL, SK, SI, UK**), 11 countries replied NO (**BE, EE, FI, FR, DE, LV, LT, MT, NO, PT, SW**). 2 countries did not provide answers (**HR, CZ**).

Table 2 Countries' authorities dealing with forced and voluntary return.



6.1 If YES, which is this Authority?

AT: According to Art. 3 of the Act Establishing the Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum the Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum does also deal with forced returns.

HU: Aliens Policing Directorate of the IAO.

LU: Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, through the Return Department of the Directorate of Immigration.

NL: the Repatriation and Departure Service

SK: the Bureau of Border and Alien Police of the Police Force Presidium. IOM does not carry out forced returns.

SI: the Centre for Foreigners is the responsible authority within the Police to carry out forced returns. Nevertheless, the centre favours voluntary return and promotes the AVRR programs to TCN who have

been issued return decision. The counselling and other activities related to AVRR programs are carried out by IOM.

UK: the Immigration Enforcement directorate of the Home Office, however, arranged by a different team that deals with voluntary return.

6.2 If NO, pls. explain which is the Authority dealing with forced returns and how is it connected with the Authority dealing with Assisted Voluntary Returns?

BL: Belgian Immigration Office is the Authority responsible for the forced returns. Fedasil and the Belgian Immigration Office are two distinct entities but since 2011 both fall also under the authority of the State Secretary in charge of Asylum & Migration. Fedasil and the Belgian Immigration Office collaborate closely through: Return path: liaison officers of the Immigration Officers are dedicated to the open reception places in the reception structures and have an operational cooperation with the return counsellors (common case handling); Sefor (project aimed at informing and monitoring foreigners who are issued an order to leave the territory and are not living in a reception structure): regular contact/communication between return counsellors/desks and Sefor Liaison Officers.

EE: Estonian Police and Border Guard Board has power to issue and enforce return decisions. In case the third country national is interested to join the assisted voluntary return and reintegration program the officials of PBGB contact directly the representatives of IOM.

FI: Police is responsible of forced returns. Both Finnish Immigration Service and Police are agencies under the Ministry of Interior

FR: OFII only manages voluntary returns. Forced returns are managed by department prefectures, under the ministry of Interior authority (same as for OFII).

DE: Most actors involved in voluntary return don't deal with forced return. The foreigner's registration authorities of the federal states are an exception, since they are responsible for every aspect of return that concerns persons without a German citizenship, including forced return.

LV: Forced return is carried out by State Border Guard. State Border Guard and IOM Riga Office have signed cooperation agreement, which prescribes conditions for cooperation between both authorities, for example, State Border Guard shall inform irregular migrants about AVRR programmes.

LT: Migration department under the Ministry of the Interior takes decisions regarding forced returns. Police and State border guard service under the Ministry of the Interior implement forced returns.

MT: The Malta Police Force deals with forced return.

NO: Forced returns are managed by the National Police Immigration Service.

PT: in Portugal SEF is the Institution responsible by all activities connected with forced return Policy. As already explained intervention on AVRR results from a longstanding partnership between IOM and SEF.

SW: the Swedish Police deals with forced returns. All returnees' cases are initially managed by the SMA. If the returnee absconds or it otherwise becomes clear that they are not willing to return voluntarily, their case will be transferred from the SMA to the Swedish Police. The Swedish police also enforce returns for those who have received an expulsion order as a result of a criminal conviction.

7. Do legislative, operational best practices and/or instruments (for ex. the IT platform) and/or experiences exist in your Member State, which enhance the implementation of the return policies?

Best practices specifically listed below can be clustered along five major area of implementation. These include: a) existing legislation; b) creation and delivery of better information on return opportunities, reintegration, including the possibility of receiving this information through native counsellors; c) innovative

instruments/tools which can include the use wiki tool, information portal, hotline; d) cooperation agreements with various partners; e) evaluation and procedures.

For a full list of specific best practices, see Table 3 in ANNEX.

ANNEX

TABLE 1	
<i>Country</i>	<i>Responsible agencies</i>
AUSTRIA (AT)	Federal Ministry of the Interior and the Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum
BELGIUM (BE)	Fedasil (Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers)
CROATIA (HR))	NO established system of assisted voluntary return
CHECK REPUBLIC (CZ)	<i>No responses for wider dissemination</i>
ESTONIA (EE)	Estonian Ministry of the Interior, carried out by IOM and co-funded by the EU Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and by the
FINLAND (FI)	The Finnish Immigration Service (www.migri.fi)
FRANCE (FR)	The French office for immigration and integration (OFII) which is a public administrative body, operator of the ministry of Interior
GERMANY (DE)	There is no central agency who manages assisted voluntary return single-handed. The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge) manages several programmes, some Federal States (Bundesländer) offer regional programmes to assist persons who want to return to their country of origin voluntarily. At the local level, the foreigner's registration offices (Ausländerbehörden) or the welfare agencies (Sozialämter) deal with the most important aspects of voluntary return.
HUNGARY (HU)	The Immigration and Asylum Office has a partnership agreement with International Organization for Migration.
IRELAND (IE)	Repatriation Unit of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service of the Department of Justice and Equality
LATVIA (LV)	IOM Riga Office.
LITHUANIA (LT)	IOM Vilnius office. Migration department under the Ministry of the Interior takes decisions regarding return.
LUXEMBOURG (LU)	Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, through the Return Department of the Directorate of Immigration.
MALTA (MT))	IOM Malta in partnership with the Ministry for Home Affairs and National Security
THE NETHERLANDS (NL)	The Repatriation and Departure Service operates on behalf of the Ministry of Security and Justice and belongs to the Directorate General for Migration. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the Dutch Council for Refugees and other non-governmental organisations

	(NGOs) are also helping migrants to voluntary return in a worthy manner.
NORWAY (NO)	Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) is the responsible authority. The logistics have been sub-contracted to IOM.
PORTUGAL (PT)	The Portuguese Immigration and Border Service (SEF) which depends on the Ministry of Interior, and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).
SLOVAK REPUBLIC (SK)	The Bureau of Border and Alien Police of the Police Force Presidium (within the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic) which cooperates with International Organization for Migration (IOM) which is the only organisation carrying out the AVR in the Slovak Republic
SLOVENIA (SI)	IOM is the responsible authority for the Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration programs in Slovenia upon a contract with the Police (Ministry for Internal Affairs).
SWEDEN (SW)	The Swedish Migration Agency
UNITED KINGDOM (UK)	The Home Office is the government department responsible for all returns, both enforced and voluntary.

TABLE 3	
Country	Best Practices
AUSTRIA (AT)	Please see Chapter 7 of the Austrian national report for the EMN study on the return of rejected asylum seekers (2016), p. 44, available at www.emn.at/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/The-return-of-rejected-asylum-seekers-from-Austria.pdf .
BELGIUM (BE)	<p><i>Legislative basis:</i> the return path for persons staying in reception centers.</p> <p><i>Operational best practices:</i> (i) structural cooperation with cities (to embed information sharing on AVR and identify target groups/needs at the local level), (ii) return desks (to make the programme easily accessible), (iii) cooperation with NGO's (to make the programme more credible towards frontline workers, target groups), (iv) continuous reinforcement of return counsellors (e.g. via country specific information sessions, trainings concerning how to address the option of voluntary return as an alternative towards the target groups, possibility to participate to monitoring missions in countries of return, etc.).</p> <p><i>Instruments:</i> (i) online reintegration monitoring tool, (ii) wiki-tool for return counsellors with specific countries of return information (bottom-up approach based on information from monitoring missions & in future possibility also via EURLO).</p>
CROATIA (HR))	NA
CHECK REPUBLIC (CZ)	NA
ESTONIA (EE)	NA
FINLAND (FI)	NA
FRANCE (FR)	Centers for preparation to return (CPAR in French) have been opening in France. As of end of June 2017, 8 CPAR are already opened and several others are planned to open soon. These are open centers where irregular migrants (rejected asylum seekers, foreign nationals with no residence permit) who can benefit from return assistance are protected or assigned to residence, pending the process of their return assistance application. These centers aim at simplifying the national accommodation process for asylum seekers (where rejected asylum seekers reside). The objective of these centers whose management is delegated to the operator, is to strengthen the support for voluntary return through the presence of social workers and of OFII agents. If the voluntary return project fails after 45 days, the forced return is organized by French authorities.
GERMANY (DE)	In order to give a better overview on the field of voluntary return, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees has implemented a <i>return hotline</i> , where basic information on voluntary can be given. In 2017, an online information portal (https://www.returningfromgermany.de/) has been launched, which gives interested persons easy access to a large amount of information on support programmes for voluntary return and the conditions in countries of origin. It is also possible to search for counseling centres all over Germany. Please note that while the information given on the portal is extensive, it does not feature every single programme or counseling centre, only those the Federal Office for Migration

	and Refugees has information about. As explained above, there may be more programmes supporting voluntary return being conducted by NGOs or on local level by the agencies of the federal states.
HUNGARY (HU)	General Laws on Immigration (Act II of 2007 on the Admission and Right of Residence of Third-Country Nationals; 114/2007 Gov. Decree on Implementation of Act II of 2007 on the Admission and Right of Residence of Third-Country Nationals), Lower level legislation: 26/2007. (V. 31.) IRM Implementing Decree of Regulation on deportation, Operational Cooperation between the Police and IAO, IAO takes part at international level in FRONTEX, EURLO, EURINT platforms (cooperation agreements).
IRELAND (IE)	The recently introduced International Protection Act 2015 provides for the introduction of a single application procedure for international protection, which is specifically aimed at addressing the length of time persons spend in the protection process. The new procedure will streamline and speed up the processing of protection applications and will significantly reduce the length of time that persons spend awaiting a decision on their protection application. This in turn will mean that those with no right to be in the country will become the subject of Deportation Orders sooner than might otherwise have been the case.
LATVIA (LV)	There are legislative, operational best practices and instruments (for example, the Register of Returned Foreigners and Entry bans, cooperation agreement between IOM and State Border Guard), which enhance the implementation of the return policies.
LITHUANIA (LT)	IOM Vilnius has a Memorandum of understanding with the State border guard service. The document outlines cooperation arrangements between these institutions in implementing AVRs. The cooperation provides for smooth and expedite handling of cases.
LUXEMBOURG (LU)	Counseling activities: from the moment a foreigner has lodged an asylum application, return counselling becomes an integral part of the accompaniment offered to asylum seekers in all reception facilities. A flyer in ten languages published by the OIM explaining the program is distributed. Information sessions are regularly organized by the OIM in the international protection seekers reception centers. The OIM assures a weekly permanence in Luxembourg, in their office outside the reception centers. The information concerning the voluntary return program is in principle given, either by information sessions, individual counselling by OIM and NGO's (i.e. Red Cross, Caritas ASTI, CLAE,).
MALTA (MT))	National legislation lays down the return procedures and the rights of prospective returnees; moreover Maltese authorities make use of IT mechanisms such as IRMA to enhance coordination efforts at operational level amongst various stakeholders on return and readmission.
THE NETHERLANDS (NL)	Direct contact (face to face) between the TCN and helping organisations is very important. Therefore the R&DS works with case managers who stay in close contact with the TCN. IOM and NGO's also invest in this direct contact. Speaking in the same language and having a similar background could also help in creating direct contact with the TCN; gaining their trust. IOM therefore also works with the so-called native counsellors.
NORWAY (NO)	NA
PORTUGAL (PT)	All legal instruments, practical guidelines, applications forms can be consulted on Return Portal, with a link to IOM.
SLOVAK REPUBLIC (SK)	NA

SLOVENIA (SI)	NA
SWEDEN (SW)	<p>There is some legislation which enhances the implementation of return policies. The SMA publishes internal guidelines for case officers as well as application forms and other information regarding return on the SMA's internal intranet. The SMA also uses a centralised internal database to share information and best practices in relation to return. Information about return, travel documents, orderly reception for minors and support measures in relation to the most common countries of origin is collected and stored in the database and is continually updated. All staff working with voluntary returns throughout Sweden have access to this. This is an extremely valuable tool for working with return since it allows us to ensure that up to date information about return to specific countries is accessible. It also allows us to ensure that policies in relation to return are implemented uniformly throughout the organisation. Having a centralised national unit for obtaining travel documents allows us to ensure that we have a single point of contact for embassies and foreign authorities in relation to travel documents. This allows us to build relationships with embassies and foreign authorities and ensure we have good communication channels. It also helps us to implement the readmission agreements with various countries. A centralised unit for travel co-ordination has allowed us to build up efficient procedures for booking airline tickets and arranging escorted journeys. It also allows us to co-ordinate return operations via Frontex flights more easily since we have one unit which has an overview of all return cases throughout the country and can therefore identify where there is a need for a specific return operation. The centralised decision-making process in relation to cash and in-kind support measures for voluntary returnees allows us to ensure consistency of decision-making when it comes to decisions about eligibility for these measures.</p>
UNITED KINGDOM (UK)	<p>The Voluntary Returns Service has many years of experience in organising voluntary returns, either unilaterally or in association with partner organisations, and the programme has also been regularly evaluated since 2002. Additionally, the team regularly shares information bilaterally with other European Member States on processes, procedure and organisation of voluntary returns. Best practice identified through all of these workstreams is used regularly by the management team to inform and improve practice and procedure.</p>