

EMN INFORM

Overview: Incentives to return to a third-country and support provided to migrants for their reintegration

1. KEY POINTS TO NOTE

- ★ This EMN Inform presents the results of the review, carried out by the EMN Return Expert Group¹ (EMN REG), of **96 programmes implemented by 27 Member States**² to assist migrants to return and to support their reintegration.
- ★ The total budget for these programmes amounts to around **133 million Euro for a standardised period of twelve months of implementation**. These programmes are, on average, financed **55%** by the European Return Fund and **45%** by the national budgets.
- ★ The **amounts** of the in-cash allowances and of the reintegration packages granted to migrants **vary significantly across Europe**:
 - the maximum amount of the in-cash allowance at the point of departure/after arrival varies from 40 Euro in **Czech Republic** and 50 Euro in **Portugal** to 3,750 Euro in **Norway** for a minor and 3,300 Euro in **Sweden** for an adult.
 - the equivalent in Euro of the in-kind assistance in the country of return varies from 500 Euro in **Bulgaria** and 600 Euro in **Latvia** to 5,000 Euro in **Spain**³ and **Germany** and 6,000 Euro in **Norway**.
- ★ Programmes supporting voluntary return and reintegration are a key component of return migration management. Over the period 2009-

2013, **the proportion of assisted voluntary returns out of the number of returns effected, has increased from 14% to 33%** in 22 Member

States⁴. In 2013, the ratio between voluntary departure and forced return in the EU was about 54% of forced returns, 40% of voluntary returns and 6% not specified⁵.

- ★ The number of **EU Member States' joint reintegration projects is increasing**. It should improve both the cost-efficiency and the quality of the reintegration support provided to migrants.
- ★ **More in-depth monitoring and evaluation of the programmes as well as an investigation into a possible reconciliation of in-cash allowance and in-kind assistance across the EU** would reinforce the efficiency and the coherence of the EU Return policy.

2. INTRODUCTION

Member States implement several greatly diverse programmes to encourage illegally staying migrants to return to a third-country through fair and transparent procedures that fully respect returnees' fundamental rights.

In accordance with the Return Directive, **return decisions commonly provide for a 30-day period of voluntary departure within which migrants have to leave the European territory at their own expense**. However, not all migrants subject to this obligation have at their disposal either the financial resources or the will to voluntarily depart from the EU and to pay for it themselves, especially not those who spent all their savings to undertake a long journey to Europe.

¹ The EMN REG includes contact points in each Member State (except Denmark). Norway also participates. The EMN inform is based on information collected via the EMN Ad-Hoc Query tool and other EMN sources.

² For the purpose of this document, the term "Member States" means: All 28 Member States except Croatia and Denmark but included Norway.

³ It indicates the maximum of a cash grant running from 1000 to 5000 euros per project of productive return.

⁴ For further explanations about the calculation, see footnote 27.

⁵ According to Frontex 2014 risk analysis data.

According to EU Return policy, **voluntary return is the preferred option**. It is commonly considered as more respectful of the migrants' fundamental rights and more cost-effective than forced return. It can also prove effective in overcoming the reluctance of many third-countries to cooperate with the removal and return of their nationals.

Against this background, Member States have developed programmes to encourage voluntary departure (including from detention) and to support reintegration in the country of return of migrants removed or who voluntarily departed.

Whilst some Member States have a long history of implementing voluntary return and reintegration schemes (e.g. Germany has implemented such programmes since 1978, and Belgium since 1984), others have started developing such programmes more recently. Following the adoption of the Return Directive and with the support of the Return Fund, such programmes have become more widespread across the EU. As a result, only Croatia has not yet developed any programme to support the return and reintegration of irregular migrants.

This EMN Inform is based on **the review of 96 programmes implemented by 27 Member States**⁶ to support return and reintegration, which can be subdivided into:

- ★ **48 Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR) programmes;**
- ★ **7 programmes which target (only) migrants placed in administrative detention** in view of their return;
- ★ **41 reintegration programmes** to specific third-countries or ad hoc programmes for targeted categories of third-country nationals (TCN).

This EMN Inform identifies the actors involved in funding, implementing and receiving assistance. It draws an overview of the different forms of incentives to return and of reintegration assistance provided across Europe. It finally assesses the impact of these programmes on the overall development of the EU Return Policy and highlights the challenges for the coming years.

3. ACTORS

3.1 Who provides funding to support return and reintegration of third-country nationals?

The total budget for a standardised period of twelve months of implementation of the 96 programmes under scrutiny amounts to around **133 million Euro**. These programmes are, on average, financed **55%** by the European Return Fund and **45%** by the national budgets.

a) Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR) programmes

Between 1st January 2013 and 1st July 2014⁷, **26 Member States** (except **CY**) implemented 48 AVR programmes for a period of twelve months⁸.

The total budget of the **48 AVR programmes** amounts to around **105 million Euro**. The national budgets for these programmes vary from less than 200,000 Euro in **Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia** and **Slovenia** to 10 million Euro in **France**, 13 million Euro in **Greece** and 29 million Euro in the **United Kingdom**⁹.

32 out of the 48 AVR programmes are 75% financed through the Return Fund, with the remaining 25% covered under national budgets. Only a few Member States contribute 50% or more from their national resources to the budget of their AVR programmes (50% in the **United Kingdom** and **Germany**, 76% in **Belgium** and **Ireland**¹⁰, and up to 100% in the **Netherlands** and **Sweden**).

b) Programmes targeting (only) migrants placed in administrative detention in view of their return

Between 1st January 2013 and 31st December 2014, **6 Member States (AT, CY, EE, HU, RO and SI)** are implementing or have implemented 7 programmes for a period of twelve months that target (only) migrants placed in administrative detention in view of their return.

The total budget of these **7 programmes** amount to around **3,2 million Euro**. The budget for these programmes varies from 12,600 Euro in **Estonia** to 1,5 million Euro in **Austria**. On average, European Funds and national budgets finance these programmes for respectively 60% and 40%.

c) Reintegration programmes to specific third-countries or for targeted categories of TCNs

9 Member States (AT, BE, DE, FR, HU, NL, NO, SE and UK) are implementing or have implemented 41 reintegration programmes to specific countries or ad hoc projects for targeted categories of TCNs for a range of different time periods but, in most cases, for a period of one year¹¹ as from 1st January 2013¹² and ending at the latest on 31st December 2015¹³.

The total budget for a standardised period of twelve months of implementation of these **41 programmes** amount to around **24 million Euro**. The annual

⁷ Except 1 programme in BG and 1 programme in IE until 31/12/2014; 2 programmes in EL and CZ and 1 programme in IE until respectively 30/06/2015 and 28/02/2015.

⁸ 40 out of 48 programmes were/are implemented for 12 months, 4 programmes for 12 to 18 months, and 3 programmes for 6 to 12 months.

⁹ 21,1 million Euro for the general AVR programmes and 8,2 million Euro for a specific programme for the voluntary return of foreign national offenders who have served or are serving a custodial sentence.

¹⁰ Average of 75%: 100% national contribution for VARRP-IRE and 50% national contribution for VARR - Vulnerable Irregular Migrants

¹¹ 21 programmes are/were implemented for 1 year, 5 for 1 year and a half, 13 for 2 to 4 years and 3 for less than 1 year.

¹² All programmes started after 1/01/2013, except 5 programmes which started in 2012.

¹³ All programmes ended before 31/12/2015 except 2 programmes, (one in 2016 and the other in 2017).

⁶ All Member States except Croatia and Denmark but included Norway.

budget varies from 1 million in **Germany** to 6 million in **Norway**.

On average, these reintegration programmes are 28% financed through the Return Fund, with the remaining 72% covered under national budgets. For example, the **United Kingdom** and **the Netherlands** finance respectively 100% and on average up to 63% of the total costs of these programmes under their national budget. Norway, as a non-EU Member State, exclusively finances all its programmes under its national budget.

3.2 Who implements these programmes?

The main actors implementing voluntary return and reintegration programmes include: International organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and authorities responsible for the enforcement of immigration and return legislation.

★ The **International Organization for Migration (IOM)** implements 35 out of the 48 AVR programmes, in 22 Member States¹⁴.

In addition to IOM, national authorities also implement AVR programmes in **Poland, Czech Republic, Greece** and **Malta**.

In some Member States (**AT, BE, ES, IT, NL** and **UK**), the NGO community is actively involved in the implementation of the programmes. These include, for example, *Caritas (AT, BE)*, *Verein Menschenrechte Österreich* and *Verein Menschen Leben (AT)*. In the **United Kingdom**, the NGO *Refugee Action* is the main implementing body.

★ Except in **Austria** where the programme is implemented by NGOs, the 6 other programmes, supporting the return of migrants placed in administrative detention (only), are implemented directly by the national authorities.

★ IOM is the main service provider implementing 21 out of the 41 reintegration programmes targeting specific third-countries or ad hoc programmes for targeted categories of TCNs. In **Belgium, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom** and **Sweden**, some projects are also implemented by local NGOs and Foundations such as *Caritas, the Danish Refugee Council* or *Weldo*.

In **France**, all national programmes are exclusively implemented by a public entity: the OFII (Office Français de l'Immigration et de l'Intégration).

3.3 Who are the beneficiaries?

53,639 migrants were assisted to return to a third country under one of the 48 AVR programmes (10 352 in **Germany** and 17 in **Estonia**)¹⁵ and **3,391** migrants under one of the 7 programmes for migrants placed in administrative detention¹⁶ over their one year period of implementation.

¹⁴ AT, BE, BG, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, SE, SK.

¹⁵ Figures of 2013. EL, HU and RO did not provide this information for all their programmes. The figures provided by CZ, EL and IE are provisional.

¹⁶ The figure provided by AT is provisional.

Given that many reintegration programmes toward a specific third-country or ad hoc programmes for targeted categories of TCNs are still being implemented and the implementation periods are so diverse, no relevant information about the number of beneficiaries is yet available for these programmes.

The eligibility criteria relate to:

a) *The legal status of the migrants*

AVR and reintegration programmes are predominantly open to TCNs who have no legal ground to stay on the EU territory.

In all Member States, asylum seekers, if they withdraw their application, and/or rejected asylum seekers are eligible for return assistance. Applicants for international protection are usually informed about this possibility at an early stage of the asylum procedure. Several Member States (**BG, CZ, ES, LT, NL, PL** and **UK**) have designed specific AVR programmes tailored for this category of migrants.

In 18 Member States¹⁷, refugees and/or subsidiary protection holders are also eligible to at least one of their programmes.

In a few Member States, voluntary return programs are also accessible to legally staying migrants (**ES, PT**) or to those who have a tolerated status (**DE, SK**) or were, for instance, granted a right of temporary residence on humanitarian grounds (**DE, LT**).

b) *The personal situation of the migrants*

Voluntary return programmes are mainly set-up to cater for the need of vulnerable persons.

Under many programmes, Member States provide them a higher in-cash and/or in-kind assistance compared with other categories of migrants to cover for instance their medical needs (See section 4 below).

4 Member States (**EL, ES, LT** and **IE**) are implementing programmes tailored specifically to meet the needs of vulnerable TCNs¹⁸.

The United Kingdom is implementing a specific programme for the voluntary return of foreign national offenders who have served or are serving a custodial sentence.

Belgium, Sweden, Norway and **the United Kingdom** implement, for instance, specific reintegration programmes for victims of trafficking or unaccompanied minors.

c) *The fact that migrants are in administrative detention*

6 Member States (**AT, CY, EE, HU, RO** and **SI**) have developed specific programmes to incentivise the voluntary departure of migrants placed in administrative detention.

In 12 Member States¹⁹, at least one AVR scheme is also open to this category of migrants.

¹⁷ AT, BG, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, IE, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PT, SI, SK, UK, NO.

¹⁸ *Vulnerable persons: "means minors, unaccompanied minors, disabled people, elderly people, pregnant women, single parents with minor children and persons who have been subjected to torture, rape or other serious forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence" (Article 3(9) of the Return Directive).*

20 out of the 41 specific reintegration programmes implemented in **AT, BE, NL, SE** and **UK** are open to migrants who were administratively detained in view of their return.

d) *The nationality of the migrants*

★ General voluntary programmes and programmes targeting (only) migrants placed in detention are usually open to nationals of all third-countries.

In **Belgium**, in-cash allowance is, however, not granted to TCNs originating from Kosovo or who are permitted to enter their territory without a visa. In **Luxembourg** and **Germany**, in-cash allowance is not granted to TCNs from Macedonia, Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, and Bosnia Herzegovina (West Balkan countries) because the nationals of these countries benefit from the visa-free regime for entering the EU. In the **Netherlands**, TCNs from Macedonia, Belarus, Georgia, Russia (Dublin cases) are also not eligible under their AVR programmes. In **Norway**, citizens from an OECD country or from Kosovo, Georgia, Belarus, Russia (Dublin cases) and some other countries, cannot receive financial support.

In **Italy**, some AVR programmes are tailored to nationals from Tunisia, Ghana, Niger, Ecuador and Columbia.

★ By nature, specific reintegration projects are only open to migrants returning to pre-determined third countries. The top-four third-countries in which migrants receive a specific reintegration support are: **Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nigeria** and **Iraq**.

The review of Member States' statistics provided in the context of this EMN Inform indicates that more TCNs benefit from in-cash incentives at the point of departure as opposed to the full package of reintegration support provided in the country of return. For instance, in **Latvia** and **Lithuania**, only 30% and 20% of the most vulnerable returnees are offered reintegration assistance.

4. OVERVIEW OF THE DIFFERENT FORMS OF INCENTIVES TO RETURN AND REINTEGRATION ASSISTANCE

Under the 96 national programmes, Member States offer three types of assistance: in-kind assistance prior to departure (4.1); in-cash assistance at the point of departure/after arrival (4.2); in-kind assistance in the country of return (4.3). Moreover, Member States are also implementing a growing number of joint cooperation projects (4.4).

The type of the assistance is usually decided on a case-by-case basis depending on the situation of the migrants. The present EMN Inform displays the equivalent in Euro of the maximum assistance that may be provided under the different programmes.

4.1 In-kind assistance prior to departure

AVR programmes commonly cover the costs for the following type of in-kind assistance prior to departure²⁰:

- ★ Information and counselling to migrants;
- ★ Support to obtain travel documents;
- ★ Internal transportation in the Member State (for instance, to go to the airport);
- ★ Transportation to the country of return.

AVR programmes may also cover the costs of accommodation (**AT, BE, BG, CZ, EE, LT, PL** and **SK**), food (**BE, EE, LT, PL** and **SK**) or legal counselling (**BG, ES, IT, LT** and **PL**) prior to departure. If not, these additional types of assistance may be financed under another budget line. For instance, **Sweden** finances accommodation under the Swedish Migration Board general budget.

Specific programmes for TCNs in administrative detention do not cover for the costs of in-kind assistance prior to departure, except in **Austria** where the programme is implemented by NGOs. This assistance is therefore covered by the general national budget.

Under the 41 reintegration projects, in-kind assistance prior to departure is limited to information and counselling to prepare the reintegration project.

4.2 In-cash assistance at the point of departure/after arrival

Out of the 96 programmes under scrutiny, all Member States, except **Ireland** and **Sweden**, provide in-cash allowance at the point of departure or after arrival under all or at least one of their programmes.

On average, minors may receive **582 Euro** while adults may receive **628 Euro**²¹.

The maximum amount of the in-cash allowance varies from 40 Euro in **Czech Republic** and 50 Euro in **Portugal** to 1,700 in **Sweden** and up to 3,750 Euro in **Norway** for a minor and to 2,250 Euro in **the Netherlands** and 3 300 Euro in **Sweden** for an adult.

Half of the 26 Members States concerned grant between 100 Euro and 400 Euro to minors and between 100 Euro and 500 Euro to adults.

The large differences are due to the fact that all Member States do not aim at supporting the same needs of the migrants. Some Member States give a small allowance to cover the **expenses during the travel and immediately after arrival**, while others provide a more substantial allowance to also support **the reintegration of the migrants in the country of return**.

Under AVR programmes, migrants do not receive more than a few hundred Euro to cover the first needs during the travel and immediately after arrival. Only **the Netherlands, Spain** and **Germany** provide a fixed allowance for the travel and an additional start-

¹⁹ BE, BG, EL, FI, HU, LU, LV, MT, NL, NO, RO, SK.

²⁰ At least under one of the AVR programmes per Member States in case the Member States implement several programmes in parallel.

²¹ This calculation is based on the information displayed in table 1. Average = total of the maximum in cash allowance for minors/adults /26 Member States (except HR and IE).

up/reintegration in-cash allowance upon arrival. In **Finland** the additional in-cash allowance is an alternative to in-kind assistance.

In cases where Member States have developed a specific programme for migrants in detention, the amount of the incentives at the point of departure is, in general, lower than under the AVR schemes except in **Cyprus** where there is no AVR programme.

The highest allowances are granted by **Norway** and **Sweden** in the context of their reintegration projects to a specific third-country. Higher in-cash allowance under an AVR programme generally compensates the absence of in-kind assistance after arrival (**SI**).

Table 1 provides an overview of the maximum in-cash allowance that may be granted to a returnee per Member State (in Euro):

MS	All ⁽¹⁾	VP ⁽²⁾	Minors	Adults	F/M ⁽³⁾
AT	-	-	370 /250 ⁽⁴⁾	370 /500 ⁽⁴⁾	M
BE	-	-	125	250	F
BG	100	-	-	-	F
CY	1000	-	-	-	M
CZ	40	-	-	-	F
DE ⁽⁵⁾	-	-	100	200	F
	-	-	+750	+750	M
EE	700	-	-	-	M
EL	400	-	-	-	F
ES ⁽⁵⁾	50	-	-	-	F
	400	-	-	-	M
FI ⁽⁵⁾	-	200	100	200	M
	-	+1800	+500	+800	M
FR	-	-	250	500	F
HR	-	-	-	-	-
HU	100	500	-	-	F
IE	-	-	-	-	-
IT	100 /400 ⁽⁴⁾	-	-	-	F
LT	-	200	100	200	F
LU ⁽⁶⁾	-	-	300/400	300/500	F
LV	100	-	-	-	F
MT	-	-	600	200	F
NL ⁽⁷⁾	-	500	100	500	M
	-	+1 750	+880	+1750	F
NO	-	-	3750	2500	M
PL	-	715	200	200	M
PT	50	-	-	-	F
RO	125	-	-	-	M
SE	-	-	1700	3300	M

SI	1000	-	-	-	M
SK	140	-	-	-	F
UK	625	-	-	-	F

(1) "All" indicates that the same amount is paid to any returnee irrespective of characteristics such as age or vulnerability.

(2) VP: Vulnerable persons within the meaning of Article 3(9) of the Return Directive

(3) F= the in-cash allowance is fixed across recipients; M = the amount indicated is the maximum amount that can be provided.

(4) Maximum amount granted under general AVR programmes/ Maximum amount granted under programmes tailored for specific third-countries.

(5) 1st row: Basic allowance/ 2nd row: start-up/reintegration allowance

(6) Higher amount is only for asylum seekers who withdrew their application or rejected asylum-seekers.

(7) 1st row: Basic allowance/ 2nd row: top-up only for former asylum seekers.

4.3 In-kind assistance in the country of return

Out of the 48 AVR programmes, 31 programmes delivered by 20 Member States provide in-kind reintegration assistance after arrival²². By nature, all 41 reintegration programmes to a specific country or for targeted categories of migrants implemented by 9 Member States²³ also cover the costs for in-kind assistance in the country of return.

A majority of Member States set a maximum budget for each single beneficiary. The equivalent in Euro of the maximum in-kind reintegration assistance amounts, on average, to **1,790 Euro** for a minor and **2,100 Euro** for an adult²⁴.

The equivalent in Euro of this assistance varies from 600 Euro in **Latvia** and 500 Euro in **Bulgaria** to 5,000 Euro in **Spain** and **Germany** and 6,000 Euro in **Norway**.

Alternatively or in addition, some Member States (**AT, BE, FR, IE, LU, PT** and **SE**) also set a budget per project or family, ranging from **1,000** to **7,300** Euro.

15 AVR programmes and 21 reintegration programmes are open to migrants in administrative detention but these migrants do not necessarily receive the same assistance. For instance, **the Netherlands** dedicates more funding to assist migrants who voluntarily returned (1,500 Euro) than for those removed by force (1,000 Euro) in four of its programmes.

The aim of reintegration support is to ensure **effective reinsertion into society and a sustainable return**. As of the AVR programmes or reintegration programmes to specific countries, in-kind assistance is mainly provided for the following activities:

- ★ Assistance upon arrival (welcome, information and guidance on the project by the service provider);
- ★ Ad-hoc assistance for vulnerable persons including for instance medical assistance, medicines, orientation and information on the health system in the country of origin;
- ★ Education and/or training (except **EL**);
- ★ Business start-up (except **CZ, RO**);

²² AT, DE, FR, NL, NO, SI do not provide reintegration assistance under their general voluntary return programmes.

²³ AT, BE, DE, FR, HU, NL, NO, SE, UK.

²⁴ This calculation is based on the information displayed in table 2. Average for minors = total of the maximum in-kind allowance for minors/21 Member States; Average for adults = total of the maximum in-kind allowance for minors/23 Member States.

- ★ Equipment/furniture (except **ES, FR, LT, RO** and **UK**);
- ★ On-the job training/support for employment (except **EE, ES, FR** and **RO**);
- ★ Accommodation (**AT, BE, BG, DE, CZ, EE, FI, LU, LV, NL, NO, RO, SE, SK, UK**) and administrative and/or legal assistance (**BE, BG, DE, ES, HU, IT, LU, NL PL, RO, SE, SK**)

Table 2 provides an overview of the equivalent in euros of the maximum in-kind reintegration assistance that migrants participating in these programmes may receive (in Euro):

MS	Per family/projects	Per adult	Per minor
AT	4000		
BE	1 500	700/1200 ⁽¹⁾	350/850 ⁽²⁾
BG	-	500	500
CZ	-	1000	1000
CY	-	-	-
DE	-	5000	5000
EE	-	1400	1400
EL	-	1500	1500
ES	-	5000	5000
FI	-	1300	650
FR	7000	-	-
HR	-	-	-
HU	-	3000	3000
IE	1 000	600	600
IT	-	1100	1100
LT	-	1900/2500 ⁽¹⁾	480
LU ⁽³⁾	1000/5000	500/3000	-
LV	-	600	600
MT	-	2800	-
NL		1500/1000 ⁽⁴⁾	2500 ⁽⁵⁾
NO ⁽⁶⁾		6000/1250	6000/1250
PL	-	2400	1100
PT	1500	-	-
RO	-	903	903
SE	7300	2500	2500
SI	-	-	-
SK	-	1400/2100 ⁽¹⁾	1400/2100 ⁽²⁾
UK ⁽⁷⁾	-	1870	1870

(1) per adult/per vulnerable adult

(2) per minor/per vulnerable minor

(3) Higher amount for asylum seekers who withdraw their request and rejected asylum seekers

(4) maximum amount for voluntary returnees/forced returnees

(5) in case of an underage child that return voluntarily with a family

(6) maximum amount for vulnerable persons/ forced returnees

(7) figures reflect on the AVR programme; in-kind assistance may also be provided under specific reintegration projects.

4.4 Joint EU MS co-operative reintegration projects

On top of all these national programmes, the number of reintegration projects carried out at the level of the EU is increasing. The main projects were/are:

★ **ERI (European Reintegration Instrument)** - The ERI project has run from 1 June 2012 to 28 February 2014. The participating Member States²⁵ have assisted over 560 returnees (both voluntary and non-voluntary) to Afghanistan, Azerbeidzjan, Russia, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan and Morocco with a project budget of nearly € 1.6 million.

The ERIN project (European Reintegration Network) is a follow-up of the successful ERI project. Together with the participating European States²⁶, reintegration projects (both for voluntary and non-voluntary returnees) will be implemented in 12 third-countries/areas including, for example, Afghanistan, Iraq, Somaliland and Somalia. The Joint Procurement Team (JPT), a technical expert team, is responsible for the tender procedure which is on-going. The implementation of the reintegration projects is foreseen as of 1st January 2015.

★ **France and Germany** have also developed two common reintegration projects to Kosovo and Armenia (**RACOB and URA 2**). The focus in this project is on reintegration into the labour market and assistance with business start-ups. Up to 120 returnees shall benefit from this project.

Several of these projects were/are co-financed as Community actions under the Return Fund. Member States involved in these projects usually consider that such approach would improve both the cost-efficiency and the coherence of the reintegration support provided to migrants by each Member State.

5. IMPACT

★ **Assessing the impact of programmes supporting the return and reintegration of TCNs on the EU return policy is a challenge** for two reasons:

- **many factors influence return figures**, including in particular the security situation in the world, influx numbers, court decisions with regard to return decisions, a lack of cooperation from the non-EU country of origin or transit (e.g. problems in obtaining the necessary documentation from non-EU consular authorities) and a lack of cooperation from the TCNs concerned (i.e. he/she conceals his/her identity or absconds).

- there is currently **no obligation for Member States to collect data on voluntary returns** and so there is no harmonised procedure for recording the data. As a result, not all Member States were able to provide

²⁵ NL, BE, FR, DE and SE.

²⁶ BE, FR, FI, DE, NL, NO and UK.

statistics on the type of returns and statistics may give a distorted picture.

★ However, this EMN Inform shows that programmes and initiatives to assist return are key **components of return migration management**.

In practice, **voluntary return becomes the preferred option for many Member States**.

The number of migrants that return voluntarily has increased over the past five years:

- the total number of assisted voluntary returns in 22 Member States²⁷ has increased from **28,521** in 2009 to **50,340** in 2013²⁸. Over the period 2009-2013, the proportion of assisted voluntary returns out of the number of returns effected, has increased from **14%** to **33%**²⁹.

- In 2013, the ratio between voluntary departure and forced return in the EU was about **54% of forced returns, 40% of voluntary returns** and 6% not specified³⁰.

- A correlation between the number of migrants returned and the number of migrants assisted to return can be established. While the number of returns has increased from 11,900 to 28,000 in **Germany** between 2009 and 2013, the number of migrants assisted to return has increased from 3,107 to 10,251. A correlation is even more obvious in Member States which have set up AVR programmes only recently. In **Greece**, the number of assisted voluntary returns has increased from 0 to 9 300 between 2009 and 2013 and the number of returns increased from 20,000 to 26,000³¹.

★ Statistics show however, that **there is a significant gap between the persons issued with a return decision and those who as a consequence have left the EU**. Over the period 2009 to 2013, the total number of returns decisions issued across the EU has consistently been more than double the number of returns implemented. In 2013, Member States issued **429,875 return decisions** while in the meantime only **197,580 pending return decisions were effected**³².

AVR & reintegration support projects may encourage cooperation from return countries and play an important role to overcome the afore-mentioned difficulties. This is illustrated by the EMN Inform on "*Practical approaches and good practices in return and reintegration to Afghanistan and Pakistan*", two countries to which Member States experience

challenges in effecting forced returns. For instance, while in 2008, Greece effectively returned only 30 Afghanis and 80 Pakistanis, in 2013, it respectively returned 735 and 4,835 migrants from these third-countries mainly through its AVR programme³³.

6. CHALLENGES

The main achievement of the Return Fund is that **programmes encouraging return and supporting reintegration are in place in almost all Member States**.

In light of the significant gap between the number of decisions issued and the number of decisions implemented, the main objective is now to **ensure that all these programmes better contribute to the effective enforcement of return decisions and to an increase of the share of voluntary departure**. In this context, three main challenges were identified:

★ **The disparities among the return and reintegration programmes are a potential source of "return shopping" in Europe**. Evidence is anecdotal but this is an aspect of AVR that EMN REG will investigate further.

★ **In-depth monitoring and evaluation of the programmes as well as an investigation into a possible reconciliation of in-cash allowance and in-kind assistance across the EU** would reinforce the efficiency and the coherence of the EU Return policy. So far only few initiatives by the United Kingdom, Belgium (Common Support Initiative (CIS)) and France have been undertaken to monitor and evaluate AVR programs and the impact of the in-cash and in-kind assistance.

There is currently a lack of EU common indicators to better assess return and reintegration programme performance, this will be addressed by the EMN REG.

★ **Joint EU MS reintegration projects demonstrate that enhanced cooperation at EU-level would improve both the cost-efficiency (economy of scale on the administrative costs) and the quality of reintegration support provided**. They should therefore be further developed in the future and EMN REG will report on their results/impact.

7. FURTHER INFORMATION

This EMN inform is based on the information provided to EMN REG by MS about all the return and reintegration programmes implemented across Europe. The EMN REG will keep this information regularly updated to better assess the trends.

You may obtain further details on this EMN Inform and/or on any other aspect of the EMN, from: HOME-EMN@ec.europa.eu.

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²⁷ All Member States except CZ, DK, FR, IT, SL, ES.

²⁸ Figures extracted from the figures provided in the factsheet of the EMN REG directory.

²⁹ Please note that to calculate this ratio, the statistics on the number of return decisions implemented are extracted from the Eurostat database while the number of Assisted voluntary returns is provided by the individual Member States from their own, diverse sources. There may be discrepancies because some categories of migrant (e.g. asylum seekers and refugees) may be represented among figures for the number of people returned but may not have been subject to an order to leave.

³⁰ According to Frontex 2014 risk analysis data

³¹ Source: EMN REG Directory

³² Source: Eurostat data.

³³ Source: EUROSTAT and EMN REG directory country factsheet.