



# IOM COUNTRY OFFICE FOR BELGIUM AND LUXEMBOURG

## NEWSLETTER JANUARY – JULY 2016

January – July 2016



### Migration in the 21st Century: reflections & prospects for 2050



IOM DG William Lacy Swing together with UN Special Representative for International Migration, Peter Sutherland, Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Didier Reynders, and Permanent Representative of Belgium to the UN in Geneva, Ambassador Bertrand de Crombrughe de Picquendaele

The Director General of IOM, Ambassador William Lacy Swing, participated in the conference "Migration in the 21st Century: reflections and prospects for 2050" at the Palais d'Egmont in Brussels on 17 May 2016.

This conference, organized by the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, coincides with the celebration of the 65th anniversary of IOM and the Belgian presidency of the IOM Council.

Pictures of the event are available on our [Flickr album](#), and a short video report can be accessed [here](#).

For more info, visit [our website](#)

### Voluntary Return to Iraq

On 1 February, IOM Belgium and Luxembourg & IOM Iraq, in close coordination with their national counterparts, assisted 106 Iraqi nationals to return voluntarily from Belgium to Baghdad under the Belgian Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration programme managed by Fedasil.

The group consisted of 93 men, 13 women and 17 children, who travelled with their respective family members (eight families in all). Onward transportation was provided for several migrants, in coordination with travel agencies, to ensure they arrived safely at their final destinations.

Once home, the returnees benefitted from reintegration assistance, which includes micro-business support, temporary accommodation, job placement and provision of essential household goods. In 2015, more than 3,000 Iraqis received assistance to return to Iraq from 14 different European countries. Assisted voluntary returns from Belgium to Iraq have increased significantly since late summer 2015. Of 3,870 people who voluntarily returned from Belgium in 2015, 1,014 returned to Iraq.



IOM staff assisting Iraqi returnees at the Brussels National Airport. Photo: IOM.

Nour Ahmed, a mother of three young children, who spent five months in Belgium, said: "We left Iraq thinking that we could find more security for our children in Belgium. We took a dangerous migratory route. We had so much in Baghdad, but we did not have a stable situation. In

Belgium we had a place to stay, but did not find the opportunities we had hoped for. We are very happy to be back in Iraq in order to restart our lives with the support of IOM.”

[Read on](#)

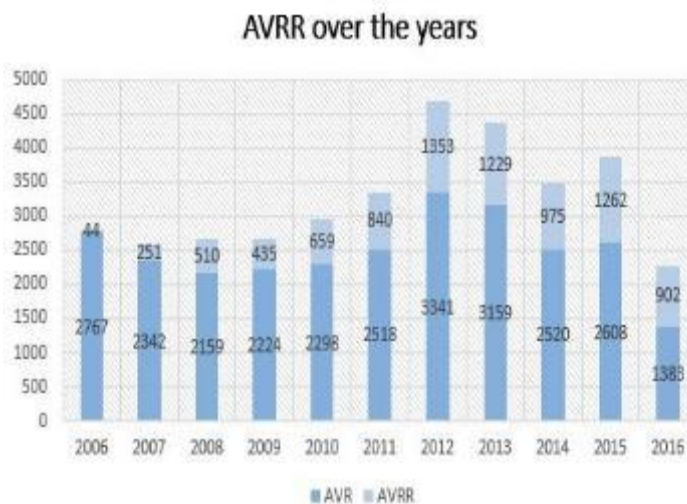
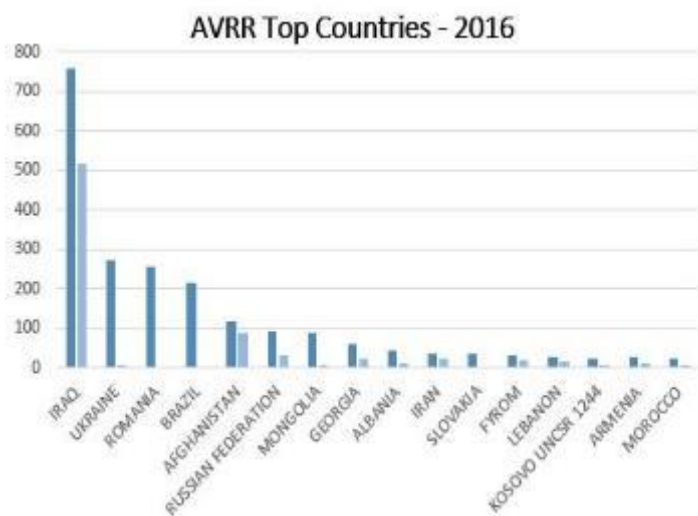
## Voluntary Return Partner Meetings June 2016

During the week of 13-17 June 2016, within the framework of the Voluntary Return and Reintegration program, IOM and Fedasil met with the different NGO partners who are counseling migrants wishing to return to their home country. These provincial meetings allowed for vivid discussions on:

- updated criteria for access to the program
- statistical data on return and reintegration during the first half of 2016;
- operational aspects regarding the organization of the return;
- ongoing country-specific reintegration assistance through projects such as MAGNET II; Nigeria RESTART; Job Placement in Georgia, Armenia, the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan; the MoTuSe project for increased assistance in Morocco, Tunisia and Senegal;
- new reintegration projects launched in DRC Congo, Afghanistan and in the Balkans
- new communication tools & stories of return
- assistance to vulnerable groups such as victims of trafficking
- and personal feedback on recently held monitoring missions to Ghana, Senegal and the Russian Federation

The meetings were very practical & interactive and allowed partners to discuss, in smaller groups, particularities of the program, interesting experiences, as well as challenges and difficulties encountered during the assistance provided to returning migrants.

A full report of the meetings will be sent out by email to all partners.



## Info session on Voluntary Return

On 23 June, IOM Belgium assisted Fedasil during an interactive information session about the reintegration component of AVRR for outreach towards migrants and asylum seekers residing in a temporary reception structure managed by G4S in Ghent.

Based on the overview of good practices and stories, participants agreed that reintegration assistance is a key aspect for a sustainable return.

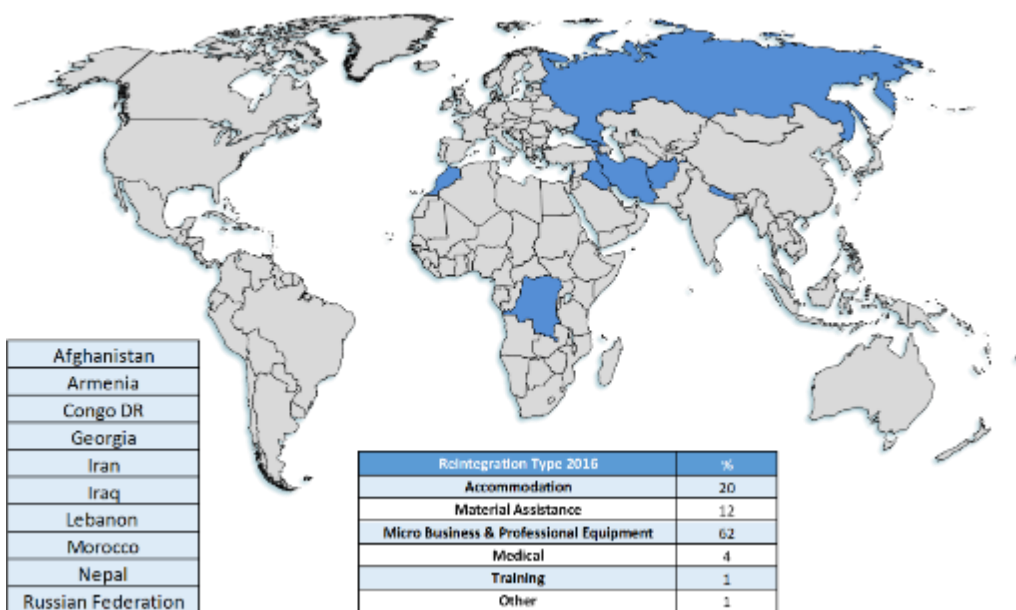


## Reintegration support provided by IOM in 2016

Early 2016, reintegration support became a vital part of the Voluntary Return program in Belgium, implemented by both IOM and Caritas with the support of Fedasil. After only six months, 902 migrants already benefitted from this support - via IOM - to make their reintegration possible (40% of all returnees).

The before mentioned support consists of pre-departure counseling, a small cash grant at the airport and material assistance via our global IOM partner network. Migrants returning with IOM use their reintegration support primarily for income-generating activities (61% of the total budget). These are mainly launching an independent activity and finding a job. In support of these activities, IOM puts a clear focus on certain vulnerabilities ensuring that the provided assistance fits the context of the country of origin, envisaging a sustainable reintegration.

### Reintegration Expenditure 2016 – Main countries



## Tailored reintegration assistance for Afghan returnees

The summer of 2015 has markedly influenced the European migration context with 200.000 Afghan asylum seekers in Europe. In Belgium, the number of Afghan asylum seekers quadrupled from 2014 to 2015\*.

While we are only witnessing a slight increase of Afghan returnees in 2016, IOM is anticipating an eventual increase in the number of Afghans returning in the coming years, as these new arrivals begin to complete asylum processing procedures. As a result, IOM in collaboration with Fedasil, developed a country specific project for Afghanistan offering a tailored reintegration assistance to the beneficiaries returning to their home country with an effort to assist these migrants in finding durable solutions for reintegration.

This assistance includes temporary accommodation provided in Kabul, using shelters to facilitate an easy transition to a more sustainable home. In case migrants have certain health concerns, they can also benefit from medical follow-up in addition to the traditional AVRR assistance with cash grant, psycho-social follow up and an in-kind reintegration package. In Afghanistan, local consultants will also provide business training. More information and guidance with regards to job placement, educational and vocational training will also be provided by the different IOM offices.

From a longer term perspective, this project will have a beneficial influence to the development of local communities. IOM, together with its local NGO partners, intends to do so by setting out synergies between beneficiaries and innovative community level initiatives. During the following months an AVRR expert from IOM Afghanistan will visit Belgian reception structures for multiple purposes. On the one hand, to help local IOM Offices to identify and understand the challenges and difficulties of Afghan migrants. On the other, the expert will provide migrants with first-hand information on voluntary return, reintegration opportunities, the process and good practices as well as provide advice where needed.

\*Source: CGVS/CGRA - Number of Asylum Seekers from Afghanistan in Belgium (2014: 2331 / 2015: 8308).



An Afghan Returnee in front of his fast-food shop. Photo: IOM

## Reintegration Stories

Within the framework of the Belgian Voluntary Return Programme and the B-Advanced project supported by the EU AMIF, IOM Belgium had the opportunity to closely monitor returnees from Iran, Iraq, Russian Federation, Morocco and Georgia in their reintegration processes.

This monitoring not only provided useful information on the support given but - equally important -, it also allowed for individual beneficiaries to speak about their personal experiences when reuniting with family and starting a new chapter of life back in the home country.

[Scroll through our website](#) to read these highly personal stories.

## New Travel Guide for Returnees

A newly updated travel guide including a handy checklist for migrants returning through the Voluntary Return Programme was developed in 20 different languages and printed in English, French and Dutch. All leaflets will be put on the IOM & Fedasil websites.



Click [here](#) to download the English, French and Dutch versions.

## Assisting unaccompanied migrant children



Altin, an Albanese migrant, was only 16 years when he came to Belgium. Upon his arrival, Fedasil appointed him a guardian and provided a residence. However after a few weeks, he started to feel homesick and decided going back would be the best option. Accordingly, his legal guardian contacted IOM in Brussels. Soon an appointment with all involved actors was scheduled and IOM Tirana contacted Altin's mother to make sure she would be ready to take care of her son and to help and support him throughout the reintegration process.

Upon his arrival in Tirana, IOM Albania was waiting for him together with his mother and two uncles. One week after his return, Altin contacted IOM Tirana to refine his reintegration project. Not having a proper degree, IOM Tirana suggested that he'd go back to school but Altin had something else in mind, he wanted to start working immediately.

His lack of educational background, combined with the fact that Altin's family already has land resulted in the decision to buy sheep. The mother already had previous experience with taking care of sheep so she could teach her son and help him. Six months after his return, Altin is very happy about his choice of activity. He takes care of the sheep and lambs with his mother. Every week they go around the market to sell meat and milk. This activity provides them with enough income for both.



Altin at home taking care of his sheep (photo: IOM)

Click [here](#) for more information

## Info sessions legal guardians June 2016

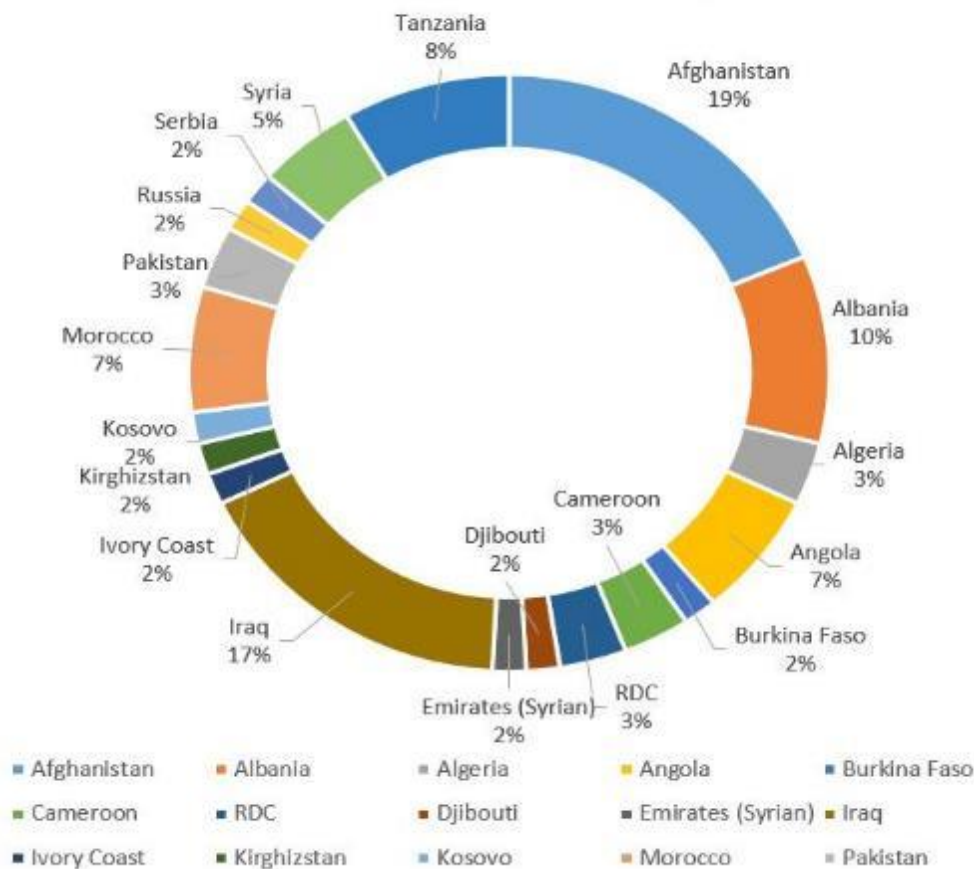
In June 2016, IOM, Caritas and Fedasil organized their yearly joint info sessions for legal guardians of Unaccompanied Migrant Children (UMC).

These sessions allow guardians to learn more about voluntary return and reintegration. Two sessions were already organized in both Ghent and Brussels where respectively 20 and 10 legal guardians participated.

The sessions started with Fedasil providing a thematic and methodologic explanation of 'how and when to talk about voluntary return with UMCs, followed by IOM and Caritas presenting practical assistance and detailing corresponding reintegration stories.

In September 2016, two more sessions will take place.

UMC assisted per country



## Assistance to persons with medical needs

By the end of June 2016, 8 migrants with heavy medical needs have returned with a medical escort. 2 other migrants with medical needs were escorted with the assistance of a social escort. In addition to their medical problems, they had orientation problems and therefore could not travel alone and needed someone to guide them during the trip.

One of those returnees was Meryem, who was six years old when she arrived in Belgium in 2014, together with her father. Meryem suffered from a neonatal brain palsy. This was one of the main reasons why her father had decided to come to Belgium, leaving his wife and eight other children behind. After their asylum request was negatively received, Ahmed decided to go back to Djibouti in February 2016.

Together with IOM Brussels, a plan was developed for reintegration tailored to her medical situation. The family received three special wheelchairs from the treatment centre, which are extremely expensive in Djibouti. As Meryem's situation was severe, special arrangements needed to be made with the airline.

After arriving back in Djibouti, Ahmed started a business selling electronic material. He now earns enough to support his family and to provide the needed medical care for Meryem.



*Meryems father in his new shop (Photo:IOM)*

---

## Voluntary return from Luxembourg



A Kosovar returnee used a part of the reintegration package to purchase a multi-cultivator tractor for production of vegetables (Photo: IOM)

From 1 January to 30 June 2016, IOM assisted 123 migrants in Luxembourg to return to their respective countries of origin; the highest number of returns from Luxembourg since the start of our AVRR programme in 2009.

Out of the assisted returnees, 47 persons returned to Kosovo UNSC 1244 which remains the first country of destination followed by, 38 returnees to Iraq. 92 persons were eligible for reintegration assistance.

Upon request, returnees were received and assisted by IOM at the airport in their country of origin and onwards transportation to their final destination was arranged.

For more information on reintegration from Luxembourg click [here](#).



## Return and reintegration assistance to Victims of Trafficking

On 12 May, Payoke vzw - a specialized center for Victims of Trafficking (VoTs) located in Antwerp and longtime partner of IOM - organized an info session for its partners on the topic of Voluntary Return and Reintegration.

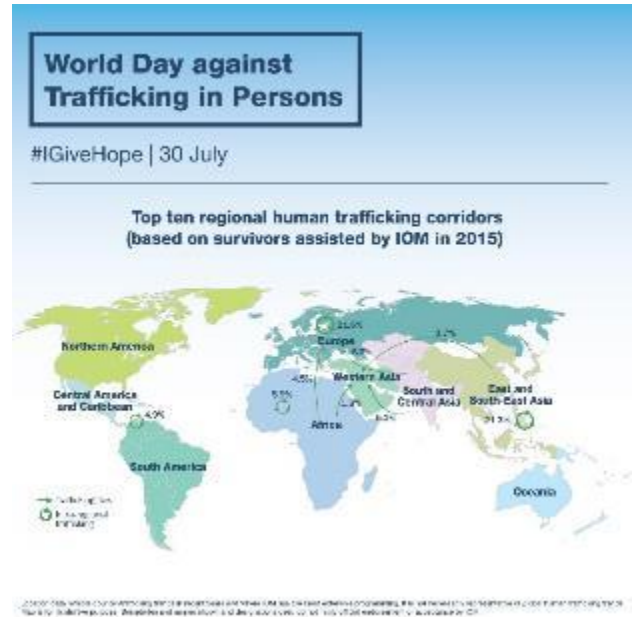
All participants are in contact, or work directly with victims of trafficking and included health care workers, and representatives from organizations like Boysproject, Asmodee, or vzw Integratie en Inburgering Antwerpen.

IOM provided a general overview of the Belgian Voluntary Return and Reintegration Programme, which was of particular interest because of the opportunities it can give to victims of trafficking when discussing their future prospects.

A more in-depth discussion was held on the application procedure for voluntary return, and in particular the risk assessment component as a key aspect in the organization of a sustainable return for victims of trafficking.

Several country-specific projects such as the Job Placement initiative or the “Piloting Comprehensive Return and Reintegration Assistance for Hungarian Victims of Trafficking” implemented by IOM Hungary were also presented. The latter allows Hungarian VoTs who are returning from Belgium to benefit from extra reintegration assistance. A vivid Q&A session followed the presentations.

Click [here](#) for more information.



## Resettlement to Belgium and Luxembourg

In 2016, **Belgium will resettle 550 refugees** within the structural resettlement programme. During the first six months of the year, **184 Syrians have already arrived** from Lebanon. The coming weeks and months, several other arrivals are scheduled from Jordan, amongst others. To ensure that people are fit to fly and that they do not pose a health risk towards other passengers nor receiving communities, IOM carries out a pre-departure health screening based on a medical protocol developed by Fedasil. Additionally, IOM assists Fedasil in providing pre-departure cultural orientation training and familiarizes the refugees with the travel process

Within the 1:1 Resettlement scheme between the EU and Turkey, Belgium will resettle Syrian refugees from Turkey as well. The selection missions as well as the cultural orientation took place in June and IOM is currently coordinating and organizing the transfer of these refugees.

Click [here](#) to read more about the Belgian governments' work on Resettlement



Following the EU-Turkey agreement of March 2016, **Luxembourg committed to resettling 244 refugees over the course of 2016-2017**. IOM signed a framework agreement with the Luxembourgish government to facilitate the upcoming selection missions for resettlement taking place in 2016 and 2017, to provide pre-departure assistance and travel assistance to the selected refugees. During the 1st semester of 2016, two selection missions have already taken place in Istanbul and Ankara. So far **27 persons have been assisted** in their resettlement process to Luxembourg in May 2016.

Click [here](#) for more information



## Resettlement Mission to Lebanon

IOM Belgium and Luxembourg organized a joint field visit with Fedasil to Lebanon in view of preparing the resettlement of refugees to Belgium. The majority of the Syrian refugees to be resettled are located in Lebanon.

This visit was a good opportunity to see IOM's resettlement activities and capacity in the country. Additionally it provided a good insight of the challenges linked to the process. The Belgian delegation met with representatives from the Belgian Embassy and UNHCR. They also paid a field visit to the Beqaa valley where they visited an informal refugee settlement close to the Syrian border.

## Skills2Work

Skills2Work is an EU-supported project focusing on labour market integration of recognized refugees in the following EU Member States: Belgium, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and the United Kingdom



It studies and supports questions related to preliminary conditions for an early and successful labour market integration for beneficiaries of international protection. Within the project, supporting capacities of competent authorities, service providers and employers are closely examined to facilitate the early access to the labour market as well as skills-based job-matching in particular.

As focal point for private sector engagement, IOM Belgium and Luxembourg conducts stakeholder meetings & consultations with relevant partners for national research publication highlighting best practices, obstacles, and regulations & procedures for the recognition of skills of refugees, promoting their employment on the Belgian labour market.

Additionally, within the project, several success stories showcasing good practices in terms of skills recognition, matching and verification in Belgium will be published.

Labour market integration of migrants and refugees is essential to the overall successful integration both from the perspective of individuals as well as societies.



## Info sessions on Migration Crises, Humanitarian assistance and Migration & Development



In April, Mr. Valon Halimi, interim Officer in Charge and Head of the Migrant Assistance Unit, spoke during a debate “Fled, survived, safe?” organized by the Rode Kruis Vlaanderen on the occasion of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of reception in Overpelt for some 150 participants. The debate with panel members such as Dr. Lieve Swinnen, Prof. Lucia De Haene, and Prof Johan Wets was moderated by VRT journalist Mrs. Phara De Aguirre following her interview of 2 unaccompanied migrant children – a young woman from Congo and a young man from Afghanistan – who were recognized and granted protection in Belgium.

Come May 2016, Valon Halimi was again invited by the Rode Kruis Vlaanderen, this time to speak during a course on International Humanitarian Law about on mixed migration flows, popular migration routes and recent facts & figures. Aside from the global perspective, Valon also told his personal migration story

presenting an alternative way of looking at migration offering precise examples from the Balkans region. Finally he also detailed the mandate and actions of IOM in the Belgian Federal Voluntary Return and Reintegration programme, targeted country-specific approaches as well as the importance of respecting the human rights of migrants and refugees opting for Voluntary Return.

On 8 June 2016, IOM gave an info session to a group of 30 volunteers of the Croix-Rouge de Belgique in Brussels. During this session, migration trends for 2015, migration routes and current crises, advancing key facts, data and possible recommendations as well as IOM activities in humanitarian emergency responses, in Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration programs and in sensitizing actions on migration, diversity and inclusion were presented. During this session many of the volunteers engaged in lively discussions illustrating their questions and remarks with concrete examples from their own personal experience.

Throughout the first semester of 2016, IOM Belgium representatives were also invited as thematic speakers during the day sessions on migration organized within the different “Info cycles” organized by the Belgian Technical Cooperation (BTC/CTB). In these 1, 5 hour sessions, for both French- and Dutch-speaking participants, an overview of the current migration dynamics, trends including key facts and figures was given and IOM activities in the field of Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration, Humanitarian assistance, Resettlement & Migration and development activities were presented.

---

## Documentary: The Invisible City – Kakuma

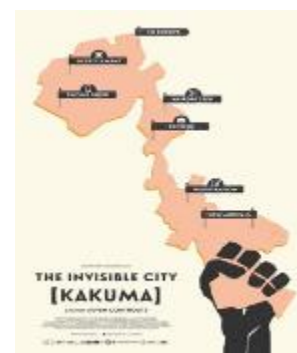
Following the premiere of The Invisible City - Kakuma in Hasselt on 20 April, IOM participated in several screenings in Ghent and in Brussels in May and in June, taking part in the debates and Q & A moments with experts such as Ilse Derluyn (Universiteit Gent, CCVS) and Bogdan Vanden Berghe (11.11.11), talking about resettlement, the psychosocial well-being of children living in vulnerable situations and other legal avenues for protection.

This must watch documentary by Lieven Corthouts shows the daily life, the thoughts, hopes and dreams of 3 unaccompanied migrant teenagers in the Kakuma refugee camp in the North-West of Kenya; one of the fastest growing cities of the region where some 182.000 refugees and migrants from South-Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Congo and a series of other neighboring countries live and co-exist.

Can Kakuma camp really offer a future? Or is it just a waiting room, where the only option is to plan your journey to Europe? Check out the trailer <https://vimeo.com/164064320>

**More info on screenings:** [The Invisible City / Kakuma](#)

In addition, a cross-media project called “[Find me in Kakuma](#)” on unaccompanied minors and family reunification in the Horn of Africa was created and includes a [mobile search app for refugees](#) in Africa.



## #iamamigrant campaign: 20K of Brussels



On May 29<sup>th</sup>, a team of sporty colleagues of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations - UNRIC joined forces for the third consecutive time to compete in the [20km of Brussels](#), bringing the [#iamamigrant](#) campaign to the public's attention in this year's edition.

Over 20 participants from IOM Brussels CO, IOM Algiers, UNRWA, UNRIC, UN Habitat, UNDP as well as some external supporters of the campaign ran and/or walked on Sunday, achieving some excellent results but more importantly underlying the need to change the predominantly negative perceptions and discourse about migrants.

Several team members received very positive feedback on the message we were circulating inspiring us to repeat this effort in next years' race with an even bigger team running and walking in support of migrants worldwide.

Through this annual event, IOM and the UN again seized the opportunity to challenge the relentless negative perceptions of and prejudices towards migrants, fighting xenophobia and racism and countering anti-migrant sentiment, stereotypes and hate speech in politics and society. An action truly necessary in times of unprecedented mobility and unseen negative attitudes towards migrants and migration in general.



i am a migrant



[Hussein](#): "My mind had already travelled before I decided to move from Iraq to Brussels."

Visit <http://iamamigrant.org/>

Want to contribute to the [#iamamigrant](#) campaign? Check out how [here](#)

## Interesting IOM Publications

- [AVRR 2015: Key highlights](#)
- [2015 Global Migration Trends: Factsheet](#)
- [Fatal Journeys Volume 2. Identification and Tracing of Dead and Missing Migrants](#)
- [Migration Initiatives 2016: Migration Governance and Sustainable Development](#)
- [Egyptian Unaccompanied Migrant Children: A case study on irregular migration.](#)



For the latest Mediterranean Update data on arrivals and fatalities visit:

<http://migration.iom.int/europe>

#MigrationEurope

---

For more information, contact the IOM CO Belgium and Luxembourg's Communications team [here](#)