Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR)

AVRR Statistics

From Belgium
From February to the end of August 2018, the IOM Country Office for Belgium and Luxembourg (CO Brussels) facilitated 1902 returns to 86 different countries, with Ukraine, Georgia and Romania as main countries of return. Out of these departures, 499 persons received reintegration support from CO Brussels, in particular returnees to Georgia, Iraq and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Most of the returnees are single men between the age of 26 and 50. These figures also include 261 children who returned with, and in few cases without, their parents or legal guardians.

While the general number of AVRR is lower than in previous years, CO Brussels has noticed an increase of requests from vulnerable cases to benefit from the AVRR programme, i.e. migrants with health concerns and (ex-)Unaccompanied Migrant Children (UMC). In order to give a tailor-made response, CO Brussels increased its external counselling capacities and presence in the field and is implementing activities targeting the specific needs of vulnerable migrants.

From Luxembourg
CO Brussels facilitated 89 returns from Luxembourg between February and the end of August 2018. The top countries of return during that period were UNSC resolution 1244-administered Kosovo and Georgia. Of the 83 returnees, 46 were eligible to reintegration assistance.
Strengthening the NGO AVRR partner network

In order to continue strengthening its NGO AVRR partner network, IOM is meeting bilaterally with every NGO partner to answer the questions they might have and review the procedures and operational guidelines of the programme. Seven bilateral meetings have already taken place. Operational meetings per region are also part of the strategy. One operational meeting has already taken place organized on 3 July in Liège, in the office of the NGO Cap Migrants.

Return of Unaccompanied Minor Children (UMC)

CO Brussels assisted 19 (ex-)UMC from February to the end of August 2018 to return voluntarily to their home country. 11 were boys and 8 were girls. Half of the beneficiaries were aged-out minors. Albania remains the main country of return with 8 cases. 17 returned with in-kind reintegration assistance to their country of origin, while 2 did not want to. Moreover, 13 are currently being assisted by IOM and 4 others are being assisted by partners of Caritas International. Before every return, a family assessment is conducted by the IOM Mission in the country of return to make sure that the return is in the best interest of the child.

Return of migrants with heavy medical needs

From February to the end of August 2018, 18 migrants with heavy medical needs have been assisted by CO Brussels to voluntarily return to their home country. 12 of them were accompanied by a social or medical escort. 5 of them benefitted from the Adapted Medical Assistance After Return (AMAAR) and received a top-up budget to cover all the expenses related to their medical needs. In total, 17 escorting missions have been successfully organized, which included other types of vulnerabilities as well (i.e. elderly persons and single parents with young children). Georgia, Romania and the RDC were the main countries of return with 2 returns each. Since a couple of years, CO Brussels has noticed an increase of migrants with a mental condition, which required a significant adaptation of the assistance provided throughout the return process.

Job placement Caucasus: Job counselling and referral in Armenia, Georgia and the Russian Federation

Within the Belgian AVRR programme funded by Fedasil, IOM missions in Armenia, Georgia and the Russian Federation provide additional support to migrants returning from Belgium in the form of job counselling and referral to training and employment opportunities. This support mechanism was set-up in 2015 to foster a durable reintegration in the Caucasus and is still ongoing. Returnees under the Belgian programme receive in-depth counselling, information on training opportunities, assessment on skills development, CV drafting and job interview skills. The IOM Job counsellors also assist with concluding internship or training contracts.

In April, Fedasil and IOM conducted a monitoring mission in Georgia to evaluate the impact of this support mechanism. Meetings with training and employment institutes and interviews with returnees confirmed that there is a dire need of skilled personnel and that returnees who made use of the assistance were able to advance their career and employment perspectives on the long term.
Davit and Karina started a small catering service and snack bar in Tbilisi. Both of them followed an additional training in accounting to strengthen their micro-business on the long term. With the support of the IOM Georgia Job Counsellor, Maya Kikabidze took up a professional training in Hotel Management and is currently employed in a hotel in the touristic hotspot “old town” of Tbilisi.

Administrative Assistance in the Balkans

The 'Administrative Assistance' is a project developed under the AVRR programme as an alternative assistance to vulnerable cases that return to Western Balkan countries (Serbia, Albania, UNSC resolution 1244-administered Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) and cannot benefit from the regular AVRR reintegration assistance programme (due to the visa-free regime of these countries).

After two years of implementation of the project, Fedasil, in coordination with CO Brussels and Caritas, has conducted an evaluation mission from 4 to 8 June in Serbia. The evaluation showed that the assistance tailored to support returnees in undertaking the first administrative steps after returning home (obtaining personal documents, school enrollment, guidance and referral for job seeking, referral to different local services, etc.) is very useful, and that it is also an effective means for the programme partners to keep in touch with – especially vulnerable – returnees and to be able to follow-up on their reintegration process during the first year.

From February to August 2018, 135 persons returned to the Western Balkans of which 73% applied for the administrative assistance.

AVR(R) Action in the Western Balkans

Within the Belgian AVRR programme, a specific sub-project ‘AVR(R) Action in the Western Balkans: Facilitating Knowledge Transfer from Belgium to the Western Balkan Region’ focuses on the support offered to IOM Serbia in the delivery of return and reintegration support to transit and stranded migrants in the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, UNSC resolution 1244-administered Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia) and the development of the AVRR Reception Facilities Network and data collection capacity in the region. The project is financed by Fedasil and allows for direct support to migrants and the organization of trainings and information sessions for AVRR field staff in the Western Balkans.

In March and July, IOM Serbia organized 2 regional meetings for IOM AVRR field counselors from the target countries.

Monitoring Mission in Morocco

CO Brussels, together with Fedasil, undertook a monitoring mission to Morocco from 2 to 6 July. The purpose of the visit was to meet returnees from Belgium who had been assisted through the AVRR programme and to monitor the reintegration assistance in Morocco.

With the support of IOM Rabat, the participants travelled to various places in the country and met seven returnees who had received support through the Belgian AVRR programme. Different profiles of beneficiaries were visited, including a UMC, a university student and a returnee with a medical condition. Moreover, a meeting with national officials and local partners took place.

Information sessions

In Belgium

Throughout the reporting period, CO Brussels organized numerous information sessions on voluntary return focusing every time a particular topic and target group. From February to July 2018, nine different info sessions on AVRR for UMC took
place, targeting mainly legal guardians, Fedasil staff members working with UMC in reception centers, staff members of Pleegzorg Vlaanderen and foster families. On 14 and 15 March, CO Brussels co-organized with Fedasil 2 info sessions, one for social escorts and one for medical escorts, on the procedures for medical cases. On 25 May, CO Brussels and Pag-Asa provided an information session for Fedasil return desk counsellors on AVRR for VoTs. On 11 June, CO Brussels participated in a meeting day on “People without legal residence” organized by the City of Gent. It targeted the social network and public authorities present in the regions.

In Luxembourg

On 11 July 2018, CO Brussels gave an information session to irregular migrants hosted in the Findel detention center on its Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration programme. On 12 July 2018, the IOM Chief of Mission and the IOM Luxembourg project coordinator participated in Luxembourg’s annual Consular Day where IOM’s activities related to return and reintegration were presented to various embassies, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other relevant stakeholders.
Assisted Movement Operations

Relocation assistance

The European Union (EU) relocation scheme is an expression of internal EU solidarity, through which people in need of international protection are transferred from Greece and Italy to another member state of relocation. The EU relocation scheme came officially to an end in December last year, while people who were already selected could still arrive in the different EU Member States during the first three months of 2018. Belgium welcomed 57 asylum seekers from Italy between January and March 2018. CO Brussels welcomed each person at Brussels Airport by providing arrival assistance, giving them a lunch package and accompanying them until their final destination in Belgium.

During the reporting period, there was no relocation to Luxembourg.

Resettlement Assistance

During the period January to August 2018, Belgium welcomed 714 refugees, namely: 680 Syrian refugees from Lebanon (344) and from Turkey (336) and 34 Congolese refugees from Uganda. CO Brussels facilitates the selection and pre-departure orientation missions in the countries of resettlement for the Belgian Government and carries out pre-departure health assessments in coordination with the Belgian Government to ensure that refugees are fit to travel, that they travel in a safe and dignified manner, that they receive appropriate assistance and do not pose any health risks to other travellers or receiving communities.

Since the onset of the Syrian crisis, CO Brussels has been involved in many resettlement and humanitarian admission programmes from countries neighbouring Syria, as well as in Syria itself. More information on resettlement to Belgium.

During the reporting period, there was no resettlement to Luxembourg.
Family Assessment of Unaccompanied Migrant Children (UMC)

Between October 2017 and the end of August 2018, CO Brussels coordinated the family assessment of 19 UMC present in Luxembourg. The countries of origin for the cases in this period were Albania (8), Guinea (4), Morocco (5), UNSC resolution 1244-administered Kosovo (1) and Ukraine (1). CO Brussels has submitted a proposal responding to an AMIF call for proposal to renew the implementation of this project for another year.

Family Reunification to Belgium

From January to the end of August 2018, CO Brussels has assisted 161 individuals through its Family Reunification programme. Afghanistan remains the main country of origin with 120 individuals assisted so far, while Uganda remains second with 19 individuals assisted. All of them were refugees from neighbouring countries.

Among these are the daughters of Mr. Kalala (9, 7 and 4-year-old), a recognized refugee in Belgium who had not seen his daughters for nearly 3 years when he contacted CO Brussels in December 2017. He had his mind set on an idea: to welcome his daughters in person, but not in any ordinary way – he wanted to prepare the surprise of their lives. Read the full story.
Migration and Development

Strengthening Youth Employability and Entrepreneurship in Burkina Faso

Launched in 2017, this three-year project financed by the Italian and the Belgian Cooperations aims to promote income generating activities and to strengthen the employability and entrepreneurial skills of young people living in the Center-East region.

A first information campaign organized in March to present the project in the region’s 30 communes led to more than 26,000 young persons showing interest and registering to be potential candidates. During a second campaign in June and July, a total of 750 beneficiaries were selected; they will be trained by a specialized agency on entrepreneurship and for the development of their business plan.

Out of these 750, the project will select the best 375 beneficiaries who will benefit from financial support to create their business. For beneficiaries like Nouktara Jean, a new hope is coming: "I am very happy. I have already been trained in shoemaking since 2012. After my training, I opened a shoemaking workshop in Tenkodogo, but I need money to strengthen and grow my business".

Promoting engagement of the Guinean diaspora

In the framework of the project “Promote the Socio-Economic Engagement of the Guinean Diaspora Living in Belgium for the Development of Guinea”, financed by the Belgian Cooperation, a two-day “Diaspora Forum” was organized in Conakry on 24-25 January in coordination with the project’s two national partners (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ Direction of Guineans Abroad (DGE) and the Agency for the Promotion of Private Investments (APIP)).

The Forum aimed to promote a better mobilization of the Guinean diaspora in Guinea’s economic, social and cultural development process. It gathered diaspora representatives from more than thirty countries worldwide.

Contributing to evidence-based migration and diaspora policies in Rwanda

In March, CO Brussels started a mapping exercise of the Rwandan diaspora in Belgium, in coordination with Country Offices in the UK, Germany and The Netherlands. As output of the project “Migration Profile in Rwanda”, the diaspora mapping report will contribute to IOM’s efforts to build the capacity of the Rwandan Government to develop a diaspora engagement strategy for development. Under the supervision of CO Brussels, a consultant is currently implementing a study to assess the capacity, interest and motivation of the Rwandan diaspora to participate and engage in developmental activities of their country of origin, such as business, investment and skills transfer.

Empowering Female Diaspora Associations

In May, CO Brussels launched a small pilot project “Empowering Female Diaspora Associations to Strengthen their Role in the Development of Countries of Origin” with the financial support of the Belgian Cooperation. The project is targeting African diaspora associations which have been created and managed by women originating from priority countries of the Belgian Cooperation. A selection process is being carried out in July and August and will target 10 to 15 associations who will benefit from capacity building trainings according to their needs.
Other projects

Fostering Across Borders (FAB)

The Fostering Across Borders (FAB) project is funded by the European Commission, DG Justice (European Union’s Right, Equality and Citizenship Programme, 2014-2020).

It aims at improving & expanding the quality of Family-Based Care (FBC) of UMC with dedicated foster carers who will be trained and supported to address challenges and specific vulnerabilities UMC face. The project started on 15 January 2018 and is implemented in Austria, Belgium, Greece, Luxembourg, Poland and the United Kingdom.

In Belgium, the project partners are Fedasil, Minor-Ndako and Mentor-Escale. In Luxembourg, IOM works in partnership with the Luxembourgish Red Cross.

On 25 June 2018, the first Belgian stakeholders meeting of the project was organized in Brussels in the premises of Pleegzorg Vlaanderen by IOM, Mentor-Escale and Minor-Ndako, jointly with Nidos and Pleegzorg Vlaanderen. The meeting gathered about 30 people representing various governmental and non-governmental organizations in Belgium active in the field of reception and children’s rights.

In Luxembourg, the first FAB stakeholders’ meeting was organized on 25 April 2018 together with the Luxembourgish Red Cross’ foster care unit. It gathered representatives of three ministries¹, three reception centers² and various units of the Red Cross, the UNHCR’s Regional Child Protection Officer and Luxembourg Liaison Officer, as well as two IOM staff. Following the meeting, three reports were produced following thorough mapping exercises at national level and summarize the needs identified in 3 thematic areas: professionals’ training needs on UMC; foster carers’ training needs on UMC; Recruitment, Retention and Awareness raising needs related to foster care of UMC.

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¹ The Ministry for national Education, Childhood and Youth ; The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs ; The Ministry for Family and Integration.
² Foyer Villa Nia Domo, Foyer Lilly Unden, Foyer St Martin Jeunes.
IOM’s LINK IT, which started in January 2018, is an innovative new project managed by IOM London, providing resettled refugees with the building blocks to start their new life in Europe. LINK IT takes a holistic approach working with refugees and host communities to share information, facilitate integration and strengthen cohesion among the community. The project is co-funded by the European Commission and partners with the Refugee Council (UK), ICMC Europe, Jesuit Refugee Services Romania, Caritas Friedland and the Portuguese Refugee Council. On 20 April, a one-day conference was organized in Bucharest where participants from many different EU countries had the chance to promote integration best practices with national, regional and local governments, as well as international organizations and civil society.

From Belgium, Caritas International, DUO for a JOB and ‘Welcome Student Refugees Programme’ (VUB) participated to the exchange. From Luxembourg, the Association de Soutien aux Travailleurs Immigrés (ASTI) was invited to share its knowledge on integration practices.
**Other initiatives and events**

IOM’s Migapp is an application that migrants can download into their mobile devices and which responds to the need to help migrants make informed decisions throughout their migration process. It provides migrants with access to services related to their migration process and enables a secure two-way communication between IOM and migrants. On the occasion of the International Day of Family Remittances on 16 June, the Belgian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Development Cooperation, Mr Alexander De Croo, joined forces with IOM to build a comprehensive price comparison app for international money transfers (remittances). By the 30th of September, the 14 partner countries of the Belgian development cooperation will be fully integrated in the comparison tool, allowing people in Belgium having access to the cheapest and fastest possible money transfer exchange rates to these countries and 132 others that are already in MigApp. Click here for more information.

**Migration Festival**

CO Brussels held a stand at the annual Migration Festival on 3-4 March. Information was shared and communicated to the wide audience and to stakeholders in Luxembourg on IOM’s activities, which are implemented nationally, regionally and globally.

**ExpoSciences**

On 27 April, IOM participated in the Village ‘Society’, organized by mediel asbl, as part of the event ‘ExpoSciences’, held by the Young Belgian Scientists in Tour&Taxis. The aim of the Village, entitled ‘Women First!’, was to raise awareness on women’s rights, and their role in contributing to the development of their countries of origin. The village gathered several organizations active in this field and was supported by the Belgian Development Cooperation. IOM had the opportunity to hold a stand and animate the Migrant’s Game®, a workshop ‘I am a migrant’, and a card game on migration and gender. View the pictures of the event.

**Presentation - More than numbers**

On 4 May, the IOM Regional and Country Offices in Brussels organized the presentation of the report ‘More than Numbers: How migration data can deliver real-life benefits for migrants and governments’. It gathered 65 participants representing UN agencies, EU institutions, the Belgian Government, NGO’s, think-thank organizations, and academia. The event started with a joint presentation of the report by the GMDAC Director, Mr Frank Laczko, and Mc Kinsey Partner, Ms. Solveigh Hieronimus. It was followed by a panel discussion between the audience and Mr Peter Bosch, Adviser to the Deputy Director-General, Joint Research Centre at the European Commission and Mr Peter van Costenoble, Policy Officer, Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons & Belgian Contact Point European Migration Network. View the pictures of the event.

**Inter-stakeholders’ meeting**

On 17 May, IOM participated at an inter-stakeholders meeting organized by the Collectif des Réfugiés in Luxembourg, gathering key stakeholders working actively and migration and refugee related issues. During this meeting, IOM presented its ongoing activities in Luxembourg and responded to questions relating to its various programmes.
**20km of Brussels**

On 27 May, IOM actively joined the United Nations Team in the Brussels 20 km race. This year, the team ran in support of the HeForShe solidarity movement, striving for gender equality, under the banner of the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The UN team was led by the Belgian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Development Cooperation, Mr Alexander De Croo.

[Read more.](#)

**Study Visits**

**IOM Egypt**

From 6 to 11 May, CO Brussels, together with IOM Egypt, facilitated a [study visit](#) of Egyptian government representatives to Brussels. The visit aimed at studying best practices on counter-trafficking in persons, with a focus on victim protection mechanisms. The delegation met with representatives of the Criminal Policy Service, the Belgian Immigration Office, The Belgian Ministry of Justice, the Federal Public Prosecutor’s Office and the Belgian Federal Police as well as Myria, Labour and Social Inspection, and NGOs, such as PAG-ASA, ECPAT Belgium and Fondation Samilia to discuss the coordination of counter-trafficking activities, the Belgian national referral mechanism for protecting victims of trafficking & awareness raising initiatives.

**Moroccan students**

From 7 to 11 May, CO Brussels and IOM Rabat organized a study visit for 10 students in journalism (Master ‘Media&Migration’) from ISIC Institute in Rabat. The visit took place within the framework of the ‘Regional Development & Protection Programme (RDPP) – North Africa’, funded by DG Near. The students received an in-depth overview of the migration coverage in the media, via gatherings with UNRIC, IHECS, the municipality of Molenbeek, Le Soir, RTBF, the European Parliament, and the Migration Policy Group. Many issues were discussed: debunking myths on migration, the role of European citizens and the youth in the migration debate, the contribution of migrants, and the social cohesion at the local level. [Read more.](#)

**IOM Azerbaijan**

From 4 until 8 June, CO Brussels, together with IOM Azerbaijan, facilitated a study visit for representatives of the Azərbaycan Xarıçi İşlər Nazirliyi/Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan. The visit focused on matters related to border controls, registration of migrants and coordination of nationals abroad. The delegation met with representatives of the Belgian Immigration Office, The Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as non-governmental organizations such as 11.11.11 to discuss remittances. Several visits were also conducted to Brussels Airport - with an interesting meeting with the Belgian Federal Police -, the Caricole Transit Centre and the Belgian Immigration Office.
Interesting IOM publications

Opinion paper by DG Swing

On the occasion of World Day Against Trafficking in Persons (30 July 2018), an opinion paper by IOM Director General William Lacy Swing was released.

Coming soon

Global Migration Film Festival

The third edition of the Global Migration Film Festival is coming up (28 November – 18 December)! Click here for more general information and follow us on Twitter/Facebook to see what IOM Belgium and Luxembourg will be organizing on the occasion of International Migrants Day.

Refugee Walk

On 30 September, Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen organizes for the third time their Refugee Walk to support asylum seekers and refugees.

“...countries that share the Mediterranean area and have a common interest in better managing the situation should collaborate better together and coordinate their actions.”

Eugenio Ambrosi, IOM Regional Director for EEA, EU and NATO. Read the full article in La Libre.

Contact

For more information, please contact the Communications team here.