

The Commissariat for Refugees and Migration of the Republic of Serbia (SCRM), which implements a national program of voluntary return and reintegration, works closely in cooperation with the IOM Mission in Serbia in advising migrants interested in voluntary return. In line with its mandate, the Commissariat is also committed to addressing the problems of refugees, internally displaced persons, readmission agreement returnees and asylum seekers through the application of legislation and international standards.



Interview with SCRM representatives on the subject of assisted voluntary return and reintegration

How do you assess the return of migrants to their countries of origin, what do you consider to be the biggest challenges and how do you think they can be effectively influenced?

The return of migrants to their countries of origin is of the utmost importance for solving the problems of mixed migration that the region has been facing in recent years. Unfortunately, the results are very modest. The reasons for this are numerous, from the fact that migrants have almost reached their destination, to the difficulties related to obtaining documents and ensuring the acceptance of potential returnees by the country of origin. In this context, assisted voluntary return is certainly a more favorable option. Therefore, the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration ensures that all migrants accommodated in reception centers receive appropriate information on the possibilities of assisted voluntary return. In cooperation with colleagues from IOM, we inform users on a daily basis about the possibilities for assisted voluntary return.

Do you think that migrants have sufficient access to information on the possibilities of voluntary return and reintegration into countries of origin, what is your impression from the field?

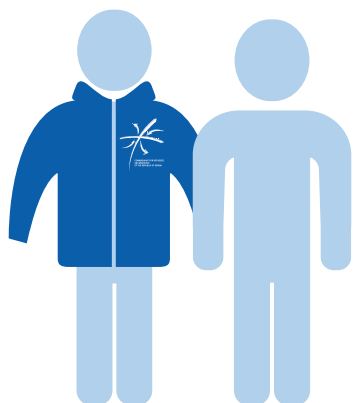


There is enough information for those who want to return. However, their lack of interest in mentioning their return to their country of origin is obvious. That is why more intensive work with potential returnees is necessary. Direct contact and the ability to answer any questions that may be important for return are crucial. Also, various materials - brochures, posters, videos in their native languages are very helpful. A campaign that would also promote success stories of return and reintegration would certainly contribute.

The Migration Training Center in Plandište was established in 2018. How do you see the role of that center today when it comes to education and training of employees in the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration?

In order to design and later implement appropriate policies in the field of migration management, staff with the appropriate knowledge and skills are needed. That is why such a center, which will provide specialized training for employees of the Commissariat, the public sector in general, as well as the civil sector, is necessary. In previous years, the Commissariat has developed modules and coached trainers in various projects. They will be updated and improved through a project funded by the Multi-Partnership Migration Fund. In addition to trainings provided by other relevant institutions at the center, Plandište will be interesting not only for those dealing with migration in Serbia, but also for colleagues throughout the region.

The return of migrants to their countries of origin is of the utmost importance for solving the problems of mixed migration that the region has been facing in recent years.



STANDARD OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES (SOPS) FOR ASSISTED RETURN AND REINTEGRATION (AVRR)

ROLE OF NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND COOPERATION WITH IOM

- National authorities actively refer potential beneficiaries to IOM
- National authorities issue return decision and mention IOM for AVRR services
- IOM informs national partners on AVRR programme and provide guidance on the referral of migrants to IOM

- National authorities cooperate with IOM in the provision of pre-departure assistance to vulnerable migrants
- National authorities provide facilities where IOM counselling can take place: reception and asylum centers, administrative detention facilities etc.

- IOM informs national authorities of the migrant's AVRR registration
- National authorities allow for statutory period for voluntary return processing and departure
- National authorities verify if there are any objections to voluntary return
- IOM informs national authorities of expiry or termination of applications

- National authorities carry out exit formalities
- National authorities cooperate on the processing of special cases: unaccompanied migrant children, medical cases, VOTs etc.
- National authorities ensure support for appointments to diplomatic representations by migrants in detention

- National authorities facilitate IOM's access to border area
- National authorities provide office space in airport
- National authorities provide transportation to the airport of migrants in administrative detention
- IOM coordinates with relevant authorities on departures
- IOM informs national authorities of the departure of IOM-assisted migrants

This flowchart was developed as a part of the document „Guidelines and Standard Operating Procedures for Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration from the Western Balkans“, published within the IPA II 2014-2020 IOM project “Regional Support to Protection-Sensitive Migration Management in the Western Balkans and Turkey, phase I”, funded by the European Union, aiming to present procedure of assisted voluntary return and reintegration in a generic manner, in order to address all Western Balkans beneficiaries.

However, separate SOPs on AVRR, and accompanying separate flowcharts, were developed for each WB beneficiary, corresponding to its particularities.

IOM OPERATIONS

- IOM produces and disseminates information materials on AVRR programme
- IOM networks actively with NGOs, international organizations, diaspora organizations, diplomatic representations, religious organizations, municipalities (incl visits to migrant neighborhoods and migrant gathering areas) to disseminate information on AVRR services
- IOM organizes meetings and events to promote broader understanding and awareness of AVRR

- Potential beneficiaries approach or are referred to IOM
- IOM provides detailed information on the AVRR process and existing services, information on country of origin information etc.
- IOM determines eligibility for AVRR and assesses the migrant's needs including vulnerabilities
- IOM coordinates the provision of assistance for vulnerable migrants with national authorities and other partners

- Migrant signs AVRR Application form and IOM Data Exchange form
- IOM registers case data in the IOM Migration Management & Operational Systems Application (MiMOSA), bio data and return-related info incl. availability of travel document, return preferences (dates, final destination etc.), travel-related needs, pre-departure circumstances (need for accommodation, medical treatments etc.)
- AVRR applications may be terminated by either the applicant or IOM.

- IOM liaises with embassies/ consulates for the issuance of travel documents
- Tickets at preferential rates
- Fit-to-travel assessment; provision of operational/ medical escorts
- Internal coordination on transit, reception and post arrival assistance
- Communication with the migrant: flight details, luggage allowance, assistance expected in the country of origin
- Coordination with airlines on special cases (group departures; medical cases)
- Temporary accommodation prior departure (especially for vulnerable migrants)

- IOM organizes all logistics for the migrant's actual departure: boarding, luggage, escorts, signing of departure declaration, assistance with formalities
- Payment of cash grants to migrants
- Internal notifications to IOM in transit and receiving missions
- Transit assistance and arrival reception
- Support for inland travel in the country of origin
- Handover of vulnerable cases to responsible parties in country of origin

- IOM provides support to migrants in their reintegration in the country and origin
- IOM monitors and reports on the reintegration process





IOM Kosovo* Assists in Return of Iraqi Migrant Home



November 5, 2020 - After almost three years as a migrant in Greece and later in Kosovo*, Karrar Alzeyadi is heading back home to his family in Iraq with IOM’s Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) Program support. His flight to Baghdad was suspended twice due to the coronavirus pandemic. The third attempt is bound to result in success.

This afternoon, after completing all formalities - distributing masks, disinfectants and having resulted negative for the corona virus yesterday, this youngster is flying home from Pristina International Airport. He is departing to Istanbul, where he then transfers for the final destination – Baghdad.

“I left my home city of Diwaniya in search for better opportunities but trying to reach Europe proved to be very different from what I had imagined,” said Karrar.

Karrar has made friends during his stay in Kosovo* but says he has not been successful in reaching his destination, which is one of the developed European countries. For some migrants, returning home is a logical, viable and desirable option.

“It has been a difficult journey, and one that I will never do again. I have told my friends that I am returning home, and that no one should attempt to leave like I did. What we see on television about Europe is not true,” said the young Iraqi. “But also, what you see on television about Iraq is also not true. You need to come and see for yourself.”

After a year at the Kosovo* asylum centre in Magure, the 25-year old decided to sign up for IOM support to return home voluntarily. For migrants who need to return to their home country but lack the means to do so, IOM’s AVRR programmes are often the only solution to their immediate plight. This means that upon Karrar’s arrival in Baghdad, he will be met there by IOM representatives

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

working in Iraq, for receiving further counselling on reintegration support at home.

Back in Diwaniya, Karrar used to work in a design and printing house, a job he would still like to pursue once he returns, with the support of IOM.

“I miss my Mom’s food the most, and my friends,” he said, explaining that he is part of a large family of four brothers and four sisters. Although admitting there will be challenges for him upon his return, Karrar will be putting his best foot forward and is hoping for a fresh start.

According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs about 2,508 migrants and asylum seekers have registered in Kosovo* from January to October 2020.

IOM Kosovo* will continue to assist migrants, providing a dignified return and fostering the sustainable reintegration of migrants who are unable or unwilling to remain in host countries and wish to return voluntarily to their countries of origin.

IOM’s AVRR programmes are often the only solution to their immediate plight



* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/ 1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.



Co-funded by the European Union



www.avrr-wb.com