Supporting Migrants, Fostering Development and Improving Migration Policies

Belgium and IOM
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IOM is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. As an intergovernmental organization, IOM acts with its partners in the international community to: assist in meeting the operational challenges of migration; advance understanding of migration issues; encourage social and economic development through migration; and uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants.

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Cover picture: © IOM 2010 - Two agricultural engineers benefit from a capacity-building mission in the North Kivu, DRC, to improve agricultural development and the position of women in their communities.

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Belgium and IOM: Supporting Migrants, Fostering Development and Improving Migration Policies

Partnerships in Action
Belgium delegates gather in Brussels for the International Migration Conference, during which the Provisional Intergovernmental Committee for the Movement of Migrants from Europe was founded. © IOM 1951
Foreword

The International Organization for Migration (IOM), or as it was first known, the Provisional Intergovernmental Committee for the Movement of Migrants from Europe (PICMME), was born in 1951 at the International Migration Conference that took place in Brussels. With IOM’s 65th birthday approaching, it is an opportune moment to celebrate and reflect on IOM’s partnership with Belgium. Originally mandated to help European governments to identify resettlement countries for the vast number of people uprooted by the Second World War, IOM arranged transport for nearly a million migrants during the 1950s. Since then, much has changed in the world, including IOM. Once mainly a logistics agency, IOM has evolved into a migration organization with a global membership and presence.

The nature of migration has also changed and new challenges have emerged for both migrants and their host countries, including Belgium and the rest of Europe. Demographic changes, economic disparities, multiple complex emergencies and the rapid rise of information technology combine to produce unprecedented levels of human mobility. The global discourse on migration has not kept pace with these transformations and is all too often afflicted by anti-migrant sentiments. These are times when migration stakeholders must work together as never before especially in the European context where there is shared governance in key policy areas.

As the leading agency delivering comprehensive migration management services and policy advice, IOM has been a long-standing partner of the Belgian government, migrants, local communities and other stakeholders in Belgium. This publication provides a brief overview of our collaboration over the years, with a specific focus on the period between 2008 and 2015.

IOM is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits both migrants and society at large. It is a continuing privilege for the Organization to work with Belgium to uphold this principle.

I once more thank Belgium for its strong support for IOM’s activities over the years and offer IOM’s continued partnership and cooperation in moving forward.

William Lacy Swing
Director General
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# Migration Means Hope and Survival
A couple returning to Georgia established a dairy farm with support from the REAB programme and the EU Return Fund. Here, they pose with an IOM staff member as part of the IOM “Migration Means” campaign. © IOM 2014
Partnership overview

Evolving migration patterns

Until the economic crisis in the early 1970s, migration to Belgium existed mainly to support labour market needs. Bilateral agreements with Southern Europe, Northern Africa and Turkey were concluded in order to support flexible work permits and relatively accessible family reunification. Due to the deteriorating economic situation in the early 1970s, Belgium started adopting stricter immigration rules. In the late 1980s, the immigration flows started to increase steadily, due to three distinct phenomena: family reunification, asylum, and a high level of European nationals settling in Belgium.

Since the EU enlargements in 2004 and 2007, the number of nationals from Eastern Europe residing in Belgium has more than doubled. In 2015, EU citizens make up more than half of the non-national population of Belgium. The largest concentrations of third-country nationals consist of nationals from Morocco and Turkey and to a lesser extent, from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Russian Federation, the United States of America, Algeria, China, Serbia, Montenegro, Cameroon and India.

IOM and Belgium: Historical partners

Belgium is a pioneer of multilateral processes, including in the Benelux, the United Nations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. Belgium played a central role in the creation of the Provisional Intergovernmental Committee for the Movements of Migrants from Europe (PICMME) at the International Migration Conference that took place in Brussels from 26 November to 5 December 1951. The PICMME, whose first objective was to resettle displaced persons, refugees, and migrants in Europe after the Second World War, arranged transport for nearly a million migrants during the 1950s.

Mr M. Meurice, the Belgian minister for external trade, opens the International Migration Conference, during which PICMME was founded. Mr Roswell McClelland, the Executive Secretary of the conference is on his right. © IOM 1951

The PICMME changed its name over the years, reflecting the evolution of the Organization. It became the Intergovernmental Committee for European migration in 1952, the Intergovernmental Committee for Migration in 1980, and finally the International Organization for Migration in 1989.
Emigrants board an ICEM-chartered flight at Brussels International Airport destined for New York, United States. © IOM 1953 (Photo: A. Strubbe)

Between 1 and 5 April 1957, 548 refugees from Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, U.S.S.R. and Yugoslavia arrived by air at Melsbroek Airport in Brussels. They were on route to Seilles, Liège, from Camp Lavrion in Greece and Istanbul, Turkey. Here refugees pose happily in one of the dormitories arranged for the families at the transit centre. © IOM 1957
Sustainable return and reintegration assistance

Rasool, from Sulaymaniyyah, returned to Iraq in 2012 and found a job as an oil drill operator in less than three months through the MAGNET project. © IOM 2012
Sustainable voluntary return and reintegration assistance

Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) is an indispensable part of a comprehensive approach to migration management. It aims to safeguard the dignity and rights of migrants who wish to return to their country of origin, but lack the means to do so. AVRR also helps to preserve the integrity of regular migration structures and asylum procedures.

IOM and the respective Belgian authorities have been providing assistance to migrants returning home from Belgium, including the most vulnerable individuals, since 1984. The Return and Emigration of Asylum-seekers ex-Belgium programme (REAB), is funded by the Kingdom of Belgium and managed by the Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum-Seekers in Belgium (Fedasil). IOM ensures that returnees can benefit from counselling and individual support, are assisted in obtaining necessary travel documentation and their return ticket, and are supported throughout the return journey. In some cases, returnees receive a reinstallation grant and livelihood training to support their reintegration into their communities. To date, IOM and Belgium have facilitated the voluntary return from Belgium of 66,657 individuals originating from 149 different countries. About 20 per cent of these returnees received reintegration grants. Moreover, through various projects, IOM has worked with Belgium to support migration management and voluntary return from specific countries. One example is the MAGNET project, providing returnees with job placement assistance in the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in Iraq since 2011, with co-funding from Fedasil and the EU.

Two other notable projects were supported with the Belgian Immigration Office in Guinea and Morocco. Following on bilateral dialogues between Guinea and Belgium on migration and returns started in 2009, the first project helped support the return and reintegration of returnees, particularly following the Libyan and Ivorian crises. The second project supported voluntary returnees from Morocco to their countries of origin, as some irregular migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa found themselves stranded in Morocco with no means of returning home. IOM and the Belgian Immigration Office have also provided specific and additional support for families with children and for migrants with special needs. The importance of tailored approaches, including with regards to the countries of origin, is increasingly becoming a point of focus in IOM and Belgium’s cooperation.
Integrating returnees in the local labour market

Reintegration assistance for returning migrants is an essential input to the sustainability of the return process. Socioeconomic support empowers returnees to become self-sufficient, provide for their families and contribute to their local communities.

IOM’s approach to reintegration is context-specific and is based on the particular needs of each individual. IOM reviews the socioeconomic profile of returnees and assesses their needs, motivations and skills, while also evaluating the conditions and opportunities available within the communities and countries of return. This analysis allows IOM to connect returnees with tailored skills training and income generating opportunities that best support the returnees’ reintegration prospects. IOM also pays specific attention to unaccompanied minors, single parents, victims of trafficking and individuals with medical conditions so that these vulnerable populations receive the support they need.

The MAGNET Approach

In 2011, IOM launched the MAGNET pilot project in Iraq to establish a common approach for the reintegration of Iraqi migrants returning to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The project resulted from cooperation between EU Member States - Austria, Belgium, France and the Netherlands - and sought to connect returnees with local companies who faced labour market shortages in specific roles and sectors. The project aimed to improve the likelihood of returnees finding fruitful employment upon their return to Iraq through a three pronged approach: pre-departure information sessions, post-arrival counselling sessions, and job and training referrals. Following the positive feedback received and conclusive results from the pilot phase, MAGNET II was launched on 1 April 2014. MAGNET II is issued from cooperation between EU Member States committed to the implementation of a joint approach in the field of job placement in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, including Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

Building on MAGNET’s successes, IOM applied a similar approach to supporting returnees from Belgium in finding work in their countries of origin in Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation. In these countries, IOM local offices conduct thorough labour market assessments in order to provide returnees with detailed information on the available job search services and vacancies.
Counselling services

In close cooperation with Fedasil, IOM supports a broad network of federal reception structures and NGOs in their daily counselling activities for returnees. IOM acts as an information repository, and promotes the sharing of resources and best practices between centres. For example, IOM maintains a database of information on 25 countries of origin, so that counsellors always have up-to-date, accurate and detailed information to help answer migrants’ questions on travel and reintegration support, including on support for vulnerable groups. Additionally, IOM helps to build the capacity of counselling services in Belgium through regular visits and information exchanges with counsellors working in reception centres. IOM also regularly organizes post-arrival monitoring missions, in cooperation with Fedasil, to evaluate the efficacy of the joint programming. These missions allow Belgian caseworkers to gain a better insight into the reintegration follow-up process in the country of origin and at the same time help develop the capacity of IOM missions to learn from the Belgian perspective. Additionally, the monitoring missions have led to useful recommendations and adaptations of the Belgian return programme to better tailor the reintegration support services to the returnees’ needs and increase their impact on local community development.

1 Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Burundi, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Georgia, Ghana, Guinea, Iraq, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Morocco, Nigeria, Pakistan, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Senegal and Ukraine.
Unaccompanied Migrant Children

Separated from families and communities of origin, unaccompanied migrant children are highly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Since 2005, IOM has provided assistance to unaccompanied migrant children in Belgium who wish to be reunited with their families in their home countries. Inspired by the Council of Europe’s Recommendations of Life Projects for Unaccompanied Minors, IOM aims at developing the capacities of minors allowing them to acquire and strengthen the skills necessary to become independent, responsible and active in society.

IOM’s support for unaccompanied children includes operational planning for return and reintegration, as well as information provision, family assessments, counselling, and capacity-building. IOM works closely with specialized partners in Belgium and in countries of return to support the returning children. Specifically, IOM can assess and plan for the return and reintegration of unaccompanied minor children by:

1. Providing pre-departure, return and post arrival counselling;
2. Collecting and providing adequate, neutral, and timely information on the current situation in countries of origin;
3. Assessing the family situation in the country of origin and in engaging the guardians in support packages;
4. Developing tailor-made reintegration plans and setting up adapted reintegration mechanisms to support the reintegration of unaccompanied migrant children;
5. Monitoring and following-up with returnees’ reintegration projects.

Since 2008, IOM has enhanced its cooperation with the Guardianship Service (FPS Justice) and the Fedasil Cell in charge of unaccompanied minors. The collaboration has reinforced both agencies’ capacities and has facilitated the sharing of best practices and other pertinent information in the fields of reception, protection and treatment of unaccompanied minors.
Migration and development

A MIDA expert with a PhD in Mathematics trains students at the Institute of Applied Pedagogy of the National University of Burundi. © IOM 2007
IOM is committed to better understanding the links between international migration and development in order to harness the potential of migration for sustainable development and poverty reduction. Belgium and IOM have made considerable strides to advance debates on these issues, including by drawing on experiences and lessons learned from innovative diaspora projects in Africa, and also through participation in forums such as the Global Forum for Migration and Development and the International Dialogue on Migration.

Belgium has worked with IOM to engage diaspora communities for a variety of different purposes, including skills transfers to build the capacities of their origin countries public and private institutions, and investment opportunities to strengthen the economies and communities of their countries of origin. Equally, IOM and Belgium are looking to increase the impact of migrants’ contributions to their families and communities by lowering the costs of remittance services. Finally, IOM and Belgium are committed to examining new kinds of partnership that could increase diaspora and transnational communities’ contributions to their origin countries.

Enabling, engaging and empowering diaspora

IOM recognizes the vital role that diaspora and other transnational communities can play in promoting development. Since the 1970s, IOM has actively worked with diaspora to transfer diaspora community’s knowledge and skills to the communities in their countries of origin.

Based on the lessons learned from previous programmes facilitating the return of highly skilled and experienced migrants, IOM launched a series of programmes on Migration for Development in Africa (MIDA). With Belgian support, IOM has been able to develop multifaceted models to enable diaspora community members to invest their knowledge, skills and resources in their home countries.

During twelve years, Belgium supported the distinguished MIDA Great Lakes programme, which focused on working with the diaspora communities to build the capacities of institutions in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda. The programme pioneered a number of new approaches, initiating calls for proposals amongst institutions in the health, education and rural development sectors, and establishing durable partnerships with diaspora experts. These partnerships were facilitated by roundtables between diaspora and academia in the targeted sectors, the provision of small support grants for projects and the establishment of project teams for each intervention.
Building on the premise that transnational communities can facilitate increased trade and investment between their country of residence and origin, Belgium helped IOM to set up the MEDMA programme, which mobilized Moroccan entrepreneurs residing in Belgium to support the development of their home country. IOM provided supplementary training through its partners, such as the Solvay Business School, in both Belgium and Morocco, and financial support for business start-ups. The experiences of the MEDMA and MIDA Great Lakes programmes have informed the development of IOM’s strategic approach to *enable, engage and empower* transnational communities as agents for development.

Two agricultural engineers benefit from a capacity-building mission in the North Kivu, DRC, to improve agricultural development and the position of women in their communities, thanks to the MIDA programme. © IOM 2010
Partnerships and innovation

Belgium has played a significant role in fostering new partnerships and investing in innovative approaches towards migration and development programming. A recent example is the Belgian Development Cooperation’s support for the IOM and Universal Postal Union’s remittance project in Burundi which aims to technically equip the Burundi postal network to offer remittance services at lower costs than current market prices. The project includes complementary components on improving rural population’s access to financial services, and in providing financial education for migrants and their families. This pilot project is particularly relevant in light of the recently adopted Sustainable Development Goals, which seek to decrease remittance costs to a maximum of three per cent. Other Sustainable Development Goals related to migration include the protection of migrant workers, the countering of human trafficking, the promotion of better migration governance, and the promotion of skills transfers through international education opportunities.

Signing ceremony of the tripartite agreement between the United Postal Union, Burundi Post and IOM in Geneva on 17 September 2015. © IOM 2015
Promoting Migration’s Opportunities

IOM is committed to showcasing the contributions migrants make to their societies. To this end, IOM has initiated a series of global advocacy campaigns that seek to promote positive perceptions of migrants. IOM also supports dialogue on topical migration issues and aims to inform the debate with factual and evidence based research.

Belgium has partnered with IOM to advance this positive messaging on migration, and in a number of cases, has financially supported the Organization’s different campaigns in Belgium. For example, IOM organized a special awareness raising event in Brussels in 2014 to promote the positive contributions of migrants. The City of Brussels funded visibility material for this event, and government stakeholders, NGOs, migrant organizations, media representatives and cultural, political and social celebrities attended. In partnership with other UN agencies based in Brussels, IOM also participated in the Brussels 20 Km run in 2014 and 2015 to raise public awareness on the “Migrants Contribute” and “Migrant Heroes” campaigns respectively.

Future cooperation

The ongoing migrant and refugee flows into Europe presents a number of challenges, and demands that a longer-term development strategy is considered which takes into account the root causes of migration. By refining the approaches developed in the Belgian-funded diaspora programmes, one potential approach would be to further leverage diaspora philanthropy and investment to support entrepreneurship and youth employment in countries of origin. There will also be a need to address the integration challenges faced by newly arrived communities. In this regards, there could be added value in bringing on board diaspora communities as active partners in promoting social inclusion and integration.
Preventing human trafficking, assisting victims and promoting regular migration

IOM and Belgium promote regular migration channels to ensure that migrants are able to move in a safe and dignified manner. This work is crucial in better protecting vulnerable groups against the risks of exploitation, including human trafficking. ©IOM 2003 (Photo: Thomas Moran)
Preventing human trafficking, assisting victims, and promoting regular migration

Regular migration is safer migration

IOM holds that humane and orderly migration is of benefit to all. Keeping migrants informed of the regular migration channels available to them, and the potential dangers of travelling through irregular routes, is therefore a central pillar of IOM’s work. Together with Belgium, IOM has developed information campaigns in a variety of contexts that help migrants understand how they can come to Belgium legally, including key information on asylum procedures and residence permits. These campaigns continue to be implemented in close cooperation with Belgian state actors, in particular the Immigration Office. In parallel, IOM and Belgium have worked to improve the capacity of national and local authorities to promote regular migration and respond to human trafficking. These efforts have led to a better implementation of migration policies and have improved the management of border crossing points, as in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where Belgian’s support facilitated the establishment of two fully operational border posts. Together with its partners, IOM continues to explore innovative approaches to promote safe and regular migration.

Fighting back against human trafficking

Belgium has been a pioneer in tackling trafficking in human beings since the mid-1990s, when Europe became increasingly aware of this widespread phenomenon on its soil. Belgium was one of the first European countries to adopt counter-trafficking legislation, and in 1999 a multidisciplinary committee was established to monitor and discuss the issue. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, IOM implemented a number of counter-trafficking projects at the EU level that primarily focused on cooperation and networking between relevant officials. IOM aimed to increase knowledge of the phenomena, and promote best practices, many of which were pioneered by the Belgian counter-trafficking practitioners.

Belgium also firmly placed the prevention and fight against human trafficking on the EU political agenda during its Presidency in 2001. Following the Belgian EU Presidency Conclusions, and with active participation from the Belgian Government and NGOs, IOM and the EU jointly organized the “European Conference on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, 18–20 September 2002.”
Combating Trafficking in Human Beings: A Global Challenge for the 21st Century” in September 2002 at the European Parliament in Brussels. The conference brought together over 1,100 participants representing European Institutions, EU Member States, Candidate Countries and relevant third countries, international organizations, regional and national organizations, NGOs, universities and research institutes and media and other relevant counterparts from 59 countries. The core result of the conference was the Brussels Declaration on Prevention and Fight against Trafficking in Human Beings which outlined a set of recommendations for European policy, as well as an operational framework to address the phenomena.

Today, IOM and Belgium work in a variety of contexts to ensure that vulnerable populations are better informed of the faces and forms of human trafficking. Equally, improving the socioeconomic inclusion of marginalized communities who are at an increased risk of being trafficked is a powerful intervention to support counter-trafficking initiatives. In parallel, efforts are ongoing to ensure that communities and officials are more knowledgeable and capable of identifying and assisting victims, and that national institutions are equipped with legislation and well trained officials to tackle the many facets of human trafficking. Specifically noteworthy in this context are the study visits facilitated by IOM, with the Immigration Office as one of the key counterparts, for high-level delegations from countries such as Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia who wish to learn from best practices in Belgium in the fight against human trafficking.

Information is power

Many individuals around the world have dreams and aspirations to improve their livelihoods and the well-being of their families by moving to a new city or country with greater opportunities. However, migrants who move through irregular channels are at an increased risk of exploitation, abuse and discrimination, both during transit and once arrived at their destination country.

IOM works in a variety of locations and through multiple mediums to conduct outreach activities. Through the distribution of brochures, screening of documentaries, television and radio clips, and theatre performances, IOM has reached thousands of individuals. In the DRC alone, IOM reached at least 5 million people through public talk shows, and in the Jalandhar district of Punjab in India, nearly 10,000 students, teachers and community members met in street fairs to discuss regular migration.
Resettlement support and humanitarian assistance
Resettlement support and humanitarian assistance

Since the Organization’s inception, IOM has been playing a vital role in refugee resettlement around the world. IOM fosters refugee integration through a comprehensive suite of resettlement services, including case processing, movement support, pre-departure orientation and integration support, health assessments and travel health assistance. IOM and Belgium have a budding partnership in the area of resettlement, which has been growing in scope of the last seven years. While resettlement services were requested on an ad-hoc basis from 2009, Belgium has initiated a structured resettlement programme that has fixed annual quotas since 2013. IOM has been carrying out health assessments for Belgian-bound refugees, as well as cultural adjustment pre-departure orientation training that complements the Government of Belgium’s general cultural orientation programme.

A budding partnership

Over a relatively short period of time, Belgium and IOM have developed a solid partnership in assisting refugees to resettle in Belgium. IOM now works closely with the Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (Fedasil) and the Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (CGRS), and meets with the two agencies regularly in bilateral coordination meetings, steering group and stakeholder meetings.

Health assistance

IOM provides pre-departure health assessments based on a medical protocol developed by Fedasil for incoming refugees from various countries. The assessment aims at ensuring that people travel in a safe and dignified manner, providing appropriate assistance whenever required. IOM thus accredits that the refugees are fit to fly and they do not pose a health risk towards other passengers nor the receiving communities; e.g. by carrying communicable and contagious diseases such as tuberculosis.
Cultural orientation

IOM draws on its vast global experience gained from delivering pre-departure orientation for up to 50,000 migrants annually to support existing cultural orientation provided by the Belgian authorities to Belgium-bound refugees. IOM focuses on supporting the orientation provided by Fedasil through the provision of specific modules that address the migration continuum, including cultural adaptation covering integration and culture shock. IOM also addressed pre-departure processing, pre-embarkation, in-flight safety procedures, as well as transit and reception processes. This is done through interactive, participatory, learner-centred approaches that draw on adult learning theory. The training consists of group work, games and activities designed to include all participants.

Movements

IOM and Belgium work together in ensuring the safe movement of refugees resettling in Belgium. Between 2009 and 2015, IOM has assisted more than 500 refugees to move to Belgium. The largest numbers of refugees have been resettled from the Great Lakes Region and from the Middle East.
Humanitarian assistance

Central African Republic

In December 2013, when sectarian and inter-communal violence erupted in and around Bangui, IOM arrived in the Central African Republic (CAR) to support humanitarian operations. The UN estimated that at the onset of the crisis 2.5 million people – out of a population of about 4 million – were in need of humanitarian aid. Thanks to the generous contribution of Belgium’s Development Cooperation, IOM established an office in CAR to support populations in critical need of humanitarian assistance. IOM now operates a country office in Bangui and two sub-offices in Boda and in Kabo.

IOM’s assistance in CAR centres on camp coordination and camp management, displacement tracking, shelter, and return assistance for foreign nationals and vulnerable groups. Furthermore, in an effort to prevent further internal and external displacement, IOM promotes community stabilization and social cohesion programmes. For example, IOM implements a very successful cash-for-work project that aims to employ 10,000 individuals for community-based projects. IOM is also implementing social cohesion activities in the 3rd and 5th districts of Bangui to retain the presence of mixed communities.
Ebola Response in Guinea

IOM teams support health screening, including hand washing, at a point of entry along the Guinea-Sierra Leone border. With contributions from the Government of Belgium and other partners, IOM is supporting the Government of Guinea in infection prevention and control at points of entry in order to limit the spread of Ebola across borders © IOM 2014 (Photo: Catianne Tijerina)

Thanks to the contributions of the Belgium government, IOM is supporting Guinea in its Ebola response and recovery activities. This includes, inter alia, health, border and mobility management activities. IOM is providing sanitary and other public health measures along borders and in areas that experience high levels of human mobility, and is strengthening primary health systems in border areas. Equally, IOM is assisting affected border communities in recovering from the socio-economic impacts of the epidemic, and is providing direct assistance to survivors in the form of psychosocial assistance and livelihood support.
Migration health

Bulgarian Roma health mediator visits the hospital Citadelle in Liège. © IOM 2014
Migration health

IOM delivers and promotes comprehensive, preventive and curative health programmes which are beneficial, accessible, and equitable for migrants and mobile populations. Bridging the needs of both migrants and states, IOM contributes towards the physical, mental and social well-being of migrants, enabling them and host communities to achieve social and economic development.

The main activities are ensuring the right to health for migrants, avoiding disparities in health status and access to health services, reducing excess mortality and morbidity among migrant populations and minimizing the negative health outcomes of migration.

Belgium has been supporting these activities throughout the years and collaborates on issues such as mental health, combating female genital mutilation, health promotion among Roma and other minority populations.

IOM is also part of the Belgian Be-Cause Health Platform Working Group on Human Resources for Health. Its main objective is the strengthening of the role and the effectiveness of all actors in the Belgian development cooperation to make quality health care accessible worldwide.

Promoting access to health care

As a result of IOM’s collaboration with the COST ADAPT² and the Brussels-based Migration Policy Group, a health strand was incorporated into the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) in 2015. The MIPEX measures policies affecting the integration of migrants against 167 multi-dimensional indicators. The health strand monitors health policies in EU member states and other countries³, and aims to develop a harmonized approach to access to health care for migrants in the European Union. These two reports were developed by IOM within the framework of the Equi-Health project, co-funded by the European Commission DG SANTE. The Government of Belgium provided funding for the Roma component.

Mental health

In collaboration with the Congolese Ministry of Health Directorate for Mental Health Services, IOM conducted a mental health and psychosocial capacity-building programme in the Democratic Republic of the Congo between 2009 and 2010. With this collaboration, IOM supported community-based mental health and psychosocial awareness raising activities, the capacity-building of mental health professionals and caregivers working at the

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² COST is the longest-running European framework supporting transnational cooperation among researchers, engineers and scholars across Europe. ADAPT is a four-year EU network project with 110 members in 30 countries. It is concerned with translating health-related research on migrants and ethnic minorities into policy change.
³ The MIPEX also monitors integration policies in Australia, Canada, Iceland, Japan, Republic of Korea, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland, Turkey, and the United States of America.
psychiatric hospital and those attached to the selected public health centre in Goma, the Mental Health and Psychosocial understanding of community, religious and women leaders and activists, and technical guidance to the training team in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

**Connecting health care providers**

The regional intervention on “Health Mediation and the Roma”, which is part of the Equi-Health project, is actively supported by the Belgian FPS Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment. This approach aims to develop an EU Community Health Mediation Network by establishing communication lines between health mediators in countries of origin and countries of destination.
The IOM Development Fund supports a wide range of projects across IOM’s portfolio. The Fund helps develop the migration management capacity of eligible Member States. © IOM 2008 (Photo: Kari Collins)
Since 2001, the IOM Development Fund has provided a unique global resource to support developing Member States to strengthen their migration management capacity. Offering grants between USD 50,000 and USD 300,000 to low and middle income Member States, the Fund has supported 390 projects at the national and regional level to be implemented in more than 112 countries worldwide. The Fund provides seed funding for innovative projects covering a range of thematic areas including counter-trafficking, labour migration, migration and development, migration and climate change, migration health, and immigration and border management. With the Government of Belgium’s significant support, the IOM Development Fund has empowered eligible Member States to better manage migration for the benefit of migrants and communities around the world.

**A global fund**

In 2014, the IOM Development Fund approved 49 projects that benefit 51 countries across the globe, including eight regional projects. The diversity of IOM’s thematic expertise is reflected in the scope of the projects’ objectives, covering issues as diverse as climate change and migration, capacity-building in border management, and labour migration mobility.
IOM helps to build the resilience of communities who live in disaster prone areas by supporting preparedness and risk management initiatives. © IOM 2014
Snapshots: The Fund in Action

IOM promotes urban gardening in Bamako, Mali. Many rural to urban migrants can use their existing skills in agriculture and livestock management to make a living in the city. © IOM 2015

Reducing Vulnerability to Climate Change

The migration, climate and environment nexus is gaining increasing visibility in global policy agendas. Worldwide, IOM works at policy, research and operational levels on this emerging theme. Through the IOM Development Fund, the Organization is supporting governments to better understand the linkages between human mobility and environmental and climatic changes and build their capacities to respond to these new challenges. In Mali, IOM, at the request of the government, is collecting much needed data on environmental migration to provide evidence on the nature of the linkages between migration and climate change. The project also supports policy development through capacity-building actions, targeting national policymakers from various ministries, with a view to improving understanding of the human mobile-environment nexus and encouraging the mainstreaming of this question in national climate adaptation planning.
Diaspora engagement in Mozambique

The National Institute for Mozambican Communities Abroad is an arm of the Mozambique’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation. This project in Mozambique has helped the country connect with its diaspora through institutional capacity-building. The Institute has now gained expertise to engage with the diaspora, and created a database and mapping system that can gather information on the profile of diaspora living in South Africa, Mozambique’s biggest destination country. To target them, the project has supported the Institute to develop a targeted communication strategy, and launch a website and Facebook page (www.facebook.com/mocambicanosnoexterior).

Safer labour migration in Viet Nam

In partnership with the Department of Overseas Labour, the IOM Development Fund established a Migrant Resource Centre in Viet Nam to provide comprehensive information and support services on safe migration practices for the tens of thousands of Vietnamese who migrate each year. This pilot project hopes to reduce migrants’ levels of vulnerability to exploitation and human trafficking through improved access to information and support. The Resource Centre, supported by quality staff, provides a variety of services including information campaigns, a website, destination country profiles, and training for recruitment companies. The project has gone a long way to make sure future and returning migrants are protected and national capacities are strengthened to promote and facilitate safe migration.

IOM establishes a Migrant Resource Centre in Viet Nam to improve migrants’ access to information on safe migration, including ethical recruitment. © IOM 2015
Looking forward

Looking for new beginnings and a safe haven, a Syrian family crosses the Serbian Croatian border. © IOM 2015 (Photo: Francesco Malavolta)
Looking forward

While the influx of asylum-seekers and migrants arriving to Europe’s shores during 2015 – and the subsequent policy imperatives – has captured the lion’s share of media and public attention, questions surrounding labour market needs, integration, managing (urban) diversity, changes in global demographics and the global Sustainable Development Goals are all key issues at stake in the broader migration debate. A holistic and long-term approach to the mobility dynamics of the 21st century is required to ensure that migration is well managed and benefits all. Belgium is no stranger to these debates and has engaged proactively on many of these topics.

The specificities of the Belgian context, including the fact that migration is managed by the Belgian government at different levels, the country’s federal structure and the importance of EU policies and laws, combined with the complexity of modern migration flows, demand that policy challenges be met with a strategic approach based on partnership. As made evident in this publication, IOM has a long track-record of engaging with Belgian stakeholders, both state and non-state actors, on a broad range of migration related matters. IOM is committed to maintaining and building these relationships, and assisting Belgium to ensure that migration’s opportunities are maximized.

Looking forward, the European Agenda on Migration has laid out four pillars to better manage migration: a) reducing the incentives for irregular migration; b) improving border management; c) a strong common asylum policy; and d) a new policy on legal migration. For both the EU and Belgium, this juncture represents an opportunity to review and improve migration policies and to further strengthen coherence between the various institutions and ministries that are charged with a migration portfolio including Home Affairs, Justice, Development Cooperation, Trade, and Foreign Affairs. Strengthening regional approaches, institutions and policies with regards to migration and integration is another important means to achieve coherent migration policies. In both cases, IOM stands ready to support Belgian stakeholders.

IOM greatly appreciates Belgium’s close and continuing engagement as a founding Member State, as reflected in its active participation in the IOM Governing Bodies, its retention of IOM as a partner organization for its development cooperation program, its sponsorship of IOM’s Junior Professional Officer Program, and its increased offering of un-earmarked contributions.

The high level bilateral consultation between IOM’s Director General and the Federal Belgium Authorities in November 2015 will provide a unique opportunity for mutual review of that strong partnership and to identify priorities for joint action.

As the leading international organization for migration, IOM is committed to supporting Belgian stakeholders. IOM’s research and policy advice, its global network of offices and its operational expertise in migration management are at the service of Belgium.
From left to right: Mr Pascal Reyntjens, Chief of Mission of the IOM Country Office for Belgium and Luxembourg, meeting with Mr Alexander De Croo, Belgian Minister for Development Cooperation and IOM Director General, Ambassador William Lacy Swing, on 27 January 2015 in Geneva. ©IOM 2015
Belgium and IOM: Supporting Migrants, Fostering Development and Improving Migration Policies

Partnerships in Action

International Organization for Migration (IOM)