

The Implementation of Assisted Voluntary Returns Including Reintegration Measures (AVRR)

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IOM is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. As an intergovernmental body, 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 work towards effective respect of the human dignity and well-being of migrants.

The authors – Alexandra Flessa, Christiana Outsika, Konstantina Mintzoli, Luna Emmanouil and Zoe Vanikioti – would like to thank all the IOM colleagues in the field, in the country office of IOM Greece in Athens and the sub-offices at the Greek mainland and islands, who have contributed to this report.

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Publisher: International Organization for Migration – IOM Greece
6, Str. Dodekanisou
174 56 Athens, Greece
Tel.: +30 210 9919040
Fax: + 30 210 9944074
E-mail: iomathens@iom.int
Website: www.greece.iom.int

Cover: A beneficiary of assisted voluntary return and reintegration is reunited with his family after returning successfully to his home with assistance from IOM Greece. © IOM 2018/Mission in Greece

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The Implementation of Assisted Voluntary Returns Including Reintegration Measures (AVRR)

Foreword

(Chief of IOM Mission in Greece and Regional Response Coordinator)



While various migration challenges are still rising in Greece, the Implementation of Assisted Voluntary Returns including Reintegration Measures (AVRR) project remains a stable pillar of safe, dignified and legal migration. During the last 12 months, more than 5,000 third-country nationals (TCNs) visited the International Organization for Migration (IOM),

asking to return to their home countries, to their families, while during the last two years, more than 3,000 beneficiaries have received reintegration assistance through IOM specialized officers.

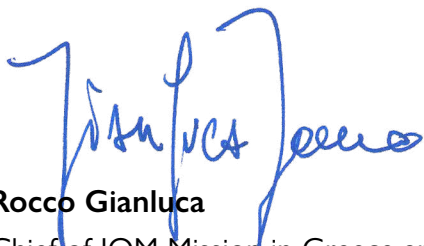
The AVRR programmes have been at the heart of IOM's commitments to protect migrants' rights, while ensuring that every voluntary return is a result of a decision freely taken by the individual, encompassing two key elements – the freedom of choice and the informed decision – at the different ends of the migration spectrum.

Within Europe, the IOM's mission in Greece is implementing one of the largest AVRR operations mainly related to the large inflow of migrants. Since 2010, more than 43,000 TCNs have been assisted by IOM Greece to voluntarily return to their country of origin.

AVRR is an indispensable part of a comprehensive approach to migration flows and in Greece, it is fully embedded in the mechanisms set by the Greek authorities for dealing with the management of migration issues. The AVRR project has been designed in close cooperation with the Greek authorities and is one of the most comprehensive in Europe, including pre-departure and counselling assistance, travel arrangements, return and reintegration measures for TCNs.

It is with great pleasure that we present the second AVRR Bulletin, capturing information for the second year of the programme's implementation covering the period from June 2017 to May 2018, which is the continuation of the activities implemented in the first annual report, covering the period from June 2016 to May 2017.

The report is structured along four chapters: the first chapter presents an overview of the relationship between IOM and AVRR, which are further elaborated in the second and third chapter, where the return and reintegration assistance are described respectively. The fourth chapter features the key activities in the area of AVRR information campaign, which is pivotal for raising the awareness and understanding of voluntary return and reintegration.



Rocco Gianluca

Chief of IOM Mission in Greece and Regional Response Coordinator

Foreword

(Special Envoy of the Director General of IOM to the Government of Greece and Advisor of the Regional Director in matters concerning the Mediterranean area)



The International Organization for Migration (IOM), the UN Migration Agency, is the major intergovernmental organization in the field of migration and dedicated to promoting humane and orderly migration for the benefit of all. Since 1979, when the assisted voluntary return and reintegration (AVRR) programmes were firstly introduced by IOM, the Organization has been


supporting those who decide to return to their homeland but lack the means to do so. Assistance provided under AVRR can help returnees in preparing for their travel, return and reintegration.

At this glance and throughout its existence, the IOM Mission in Greece has implemented a wide range of projects based on fundamental human rights in the field of migration management following a rights-based approach. AVRR is one of the core activities of IOM and has provided vital assistance to tens of thousands of migrants returning home every year.

The current three-year-programme on AVRR, the Implementation of Assisted Voluntary Returns including Reintegration Measures, commenced its implementation in June 2016 and will be completed in May 2019, and it is implemented under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) National Programme 2014–2020, funded 75 per cent by the European AMIF and 25 per cent by national funds.

Through this project, our Mission provides assistance to stranded migrants in Greece, irregular migrants, regular migrants, asylum seekers who decide

not to pursue their claims, as well as migrants in a situation of vulnerability, including victims of trafficking, elderly people, unaccompanied and separated children or migrants with health-related needs. Our purpose is to ensure safe, orderly and dignified migration that safeguards the human rights of migrants, and upholds international principles and standards. Throughout the chapters of this report, you may trace significant data for migration trends, understand the procedures followed by our Mission and discover the activities undertaken by IOM Mission in Greece in close cooperation with IOM Offices in countries of origin, local stakeholders, international counterparts, diplomatic authorities, Greek authorities, the Ministry of Interior and other collaborative entities, towards the successful implementation of the project so as to ensure that migrants have access to adequate and accurate information and individualized AVRR assistance.



Daniel Esdras

Special Envoy of the Director General of IOM to the Government of Greece and
Advisor of the Regional Director in matters concerning the Mediterranean area

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List of acronyms

AMIF	Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund
AVR	Assisted voluntary return
AVRR	Assisted voluntary return and reintegration
CoO	country of origin
EEA	European Economic Area
EDPD	European and Development Programs Division
GARP	Government Assisted Repatriation Programme
IOM	International Organization for Migration
NGO	non-governmental organization
OCAVRR	Open Centre for migrants registered for assisted voluntary return and reintegration
PIKPA	Patriotic Institute for Social Welfare and Awareness
REAG	Reintegration and Emigration Programme for Asylum Seekers in Germany
RIC	Reception and Identification Centre
TCN	third-country national
NFI	non-food item
UMCs	unaccompanied migrant children
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
VoT	victim of trafficking

Definitions

Assisted voluntary return (AVR)/Assisted voluntary return and reintegration (AVRR): The provision of the administrative, logistical, financial and reintegration support to rejected asylum seekers, victims of trafficking (VoT) in human beings, stranded migrants, qualified nationals and other migrants unable or unwilling to remain in the host country who volunteer to return to their countries of origin. Assisted voluntary return is a narrower term of voluntary return.¹

Asylum seeker: A person who seeks safety from persecution or serious harm in a country other than his or her own and awaits a decision on the application for refugee status under relevant international and national instruments. In case of a negative decision, the person must leave the country and may be expelled, as may any non-national in an irregular or unlawful situation, unless permission to stay is provided on humanitarian or other related grounds.²

County of origin (CoO): The country that is a source of migratory flows (regular or irregular).³

Country of return: A third country (CoO, transit or other where the migrant is able to obtain a residence permit). In most cases, it is the CoO to which a return is made, but this definition is used here to indicate other (possible) destinations.⁴

1 R. Perruchoud and J. Redpath-Cross (eds.), *Glossary on Migration*, 2nd Edition, International Migration Law no. 25 (International Organization for Migration (IOM), Geneva, 2011), p. 11. Available from <https://publications.iom.int/books/international-migration-law-ndeg25-glossary-migration>

2 *Ibid.*, 12.

3 *Ibid.*, 22.

4 European Migration Network, *Return Migration*. Published by the Directorate-General Justice, Freedom and Security (Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg, 2007). Available from https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/reports/docs/emn-studies/return-migration/emn_return_migration_booklet_feb08_en.pdf

Country of transit: The country through which migratory flows (regular or irregular) move.⁵

Immigration: A process by which non-nationals move into a country for the purpose of settlement.⁶

Irregular migration: Movement that takes place outside the regulatory norms of the sending, transit and receiving countries. There is no clear or universally accepted definition of irregular migration. From the perspective of destination countries, it is entry, stay or work in a country without the necessary authorization or documents required under immigration regulations. From the perspective of the sending country, the irregularity is, for example, seen in cases in which a person crosses an international boundary without a valid passport or travel document or does not fulfil the administrative requirements for leaving the country. There is, however, a tendency to restrict the use of the term “illegal migration” to cases of smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons.⁷

Migrant: The International Organization for Migration (IOM) defines a migrant as any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a State away from his/her habitual place of residence, regardless of the following: (a) the person’s legal status; (b) whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary; (c) what the causes for the movement are; or (d) what the length of the stay is. IOM concerns itself with migrants and migration-related issues and, in agreement with relevant States, with migrants who are in need of international migration services.⁸

Migration: The movement of a person or a group of persons, either across an international border or within a State. It is a population movement, encompassing any kind of movement of people, whatever its length, composition and causes; it includes migration of refugees, displaced persons, economic migrants and persons moving for other purposes, including family reunification.⁹

5 Ibid., 3.

6 Ibid., 49.

7 Ibid., 4.

8 IOM, Key Migration Terms (n.d.). Available from www.iom.int/key-migration-terms

9 Ibid., 7, 62.

Receiving country: Country of destination or a third country. In the case of return or repatriation, also the CoO. Country that has accepted to receive a certain number of refugees and migrants on a yearly basis by presidential, ministerial or parliamentary decision.¹⁰

Refugee: A person who, “owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country” (Art. 1(A) (2), Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, 1951, as modified by the 1967 Protocol). In addition to the refugee definition in the 1951 Refugee Convention, Art. 1(2) of the Organization of African Unity Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, 1969, defines a refugee as any person compelled to leave his or her country “owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of his country or origin or nationality”. Similarly, the 1984 Cartagena Declaration states that refugees also include persons who flee their country “because their lives, safety or freedom have been threatened by generalized violence, foreign aggression, internal conflicts, massive violation of human rights or other circumstances which have seriously disturbed public order”.¹¹

Removal: Enforcement of the obligation to return; physical transportation out of the country.¹²

Returnee: A non-European Union/European Economic Area (i.e. third country) national migrant who moves to the country of return, whether voluntary or forced.¹³

Return: The movement of a person returning to his/her CoO, country of nationality or habitual residence usually after spending a significant period of time (i.e. excluding holiday visits, business meetings and typically considered

10 Ibid., 79.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid., 83.

13 Ibid., 4, 10.

to be for a period of time more than three months) in another country. This return may or may not be voluntary.¹⁴

Return decision: An administrative or judicial decision or act, stating or declaring the stay of third-country nationals to be illegal and imposing an obligation to return.¹⁵

Third-country national: Any person who is not a citizen of the Union within the meaning of Article 17(1) of the Treaty establishing the European Community, including stateless persons.¹⁶

Unaccompanied migrant children (UMC) (also called unaccompanied minors): Children, as defined in Article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child of 20 November 1989, “who have been separated from both parents and other relatives and are not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so”.¹⁷

Voluntary return: The assisted or independent return to the country of origin, transit or another third country based on the free will of the returnee.¹⁸

14 Ibid., 12, 85.

15 Return Directive – Article 3(4); 6(6), In: European Commission, *Annex Return Handbook* (n. p.), p. 10. See more: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/return_handbook_en.pdf

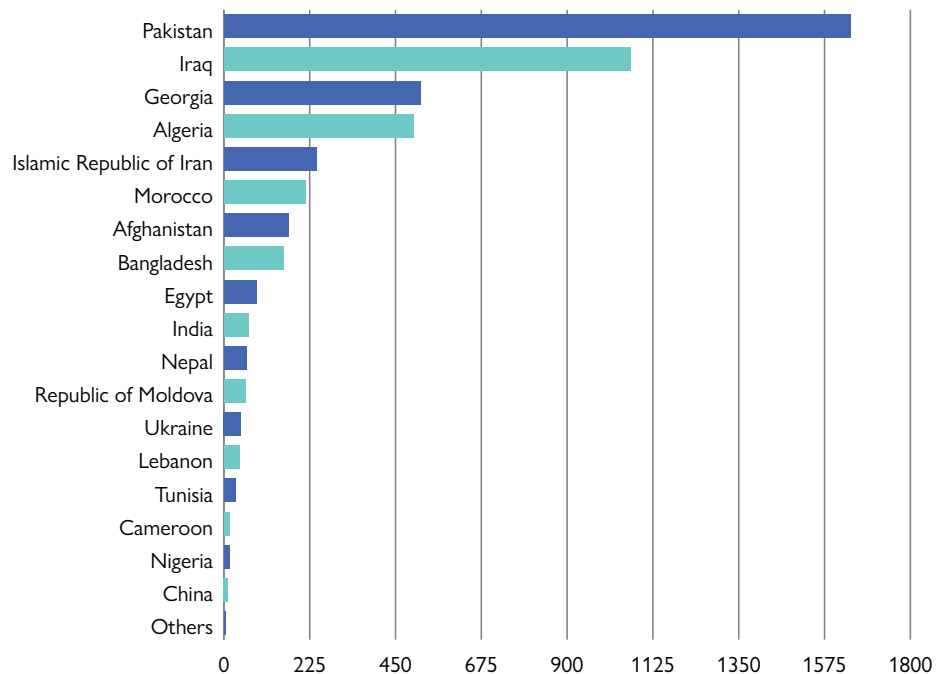
16 Ibid., 14, 98.

17 Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment no. 6, Treatment of Unaccompanied and Separated Children Outside Their Country of Origin, CRC/GC/2005/6, 1 September 2005, para. 7. According to the Directive of the European Parliament and the Council 2013/33/EU, unaccompanied minors are defined as “third country nationals or stateless persons below the age of eighteen, who arrive on the territory of the Member States unaccompanied by an adult responsible by law or custom, and for as long as they are not effectively taken into the care of such a person, or minors who are left unaccompanied after they entered the territory of the Member States”.

18 Ibid., 16, 105.

IOM Greece assisted voluntary return and reintegration key highlights, June 2017–May 2018 at a glance

Figure 1: Number of return beneficiaries per country of origin, June 2017–May 2018



Migrants assisted from June 2017 to May 2018: 5,034



Migrants in situation of vulnerability: 550

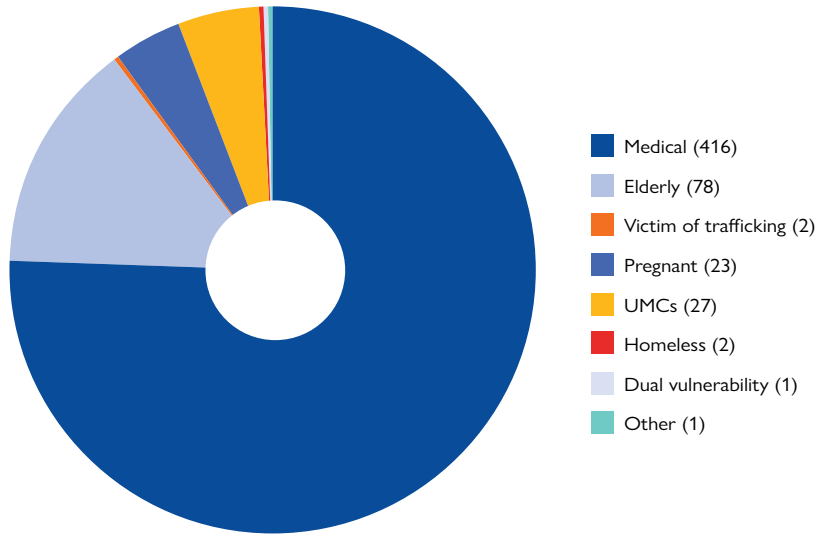
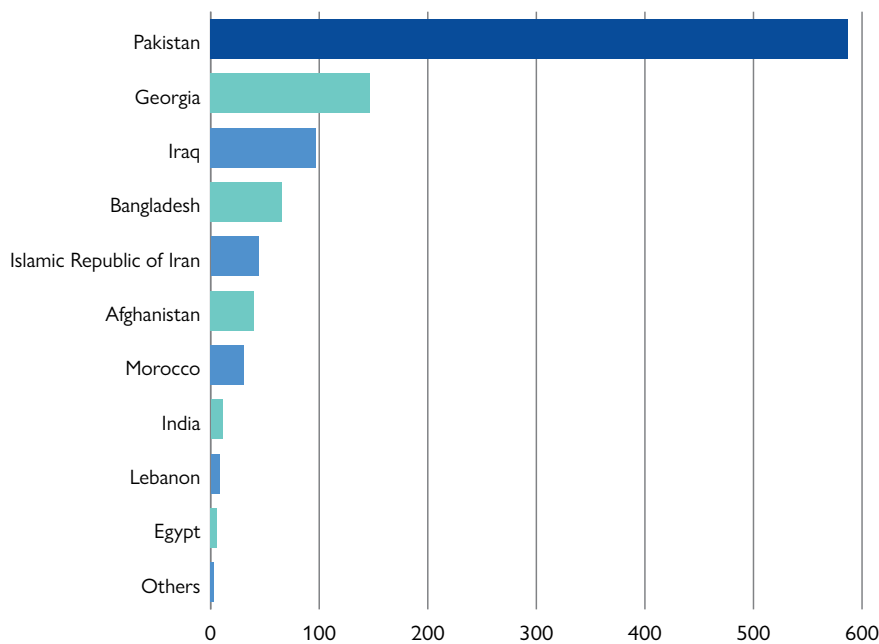


Figure 2: Number of reintegration beneficiaries per country of origin, June 2017–May 2018



Migrants assisted with in-kind reintegration assistance, June 2017–May 2018



Migrants in situation of vulnerability



Counsellings sessions in IOM Greece



Registered migrants referred to IOM Greece Reintegration unit

Table 1: Assisted voluntary return and reintegration comparative snapshot

	June 2017–May 2018	June 2016–May 2017
Total number of returnees	5,034	5,994
Countries of origin	53	47
Top three countries of origin	Pakistan Iraq Georgia	Pakistan Iraq Afghanistan
Migrants in situation of vulnerability	550	264
Information provision on the islands	10,229	14,167
Information provision in the Mainland	9,840	8,630
Registrations from the islands	1,870	1,649
Departures from the islands	1,833	1,236
In-kind reintegration support	1,202	1,307
Men	976	1,084
Women	226	223
Beneficiaries in situation of vulnerability (Men/Women)	1,118	430
Counselling sessions to assess eligibility for reintegration assistance	2,186	2,605
Reintegration activities		
Small business	1,035	1,238
Job placement	29	9
Education	2	3
Vocational training	2	9
Temporary accommodation	34	10
Material assistance	34	7
Medical assistance	66	31
Monitoring completed cases ¹⁹	1,557	638

19 Monitoring and evaluation stage should be finalized three months upon implementation of each case. Consequently, the section “Monitoring completed cases” includes also several cases that have been implemented during the first annual reporting period.

Chapter 1:

International Organization for Migration and assisted voluntary return and reintegration

Assisted voluntary return and reintegration (AVRR) is an indispensable part of a comprehensive approach to migration management aiming at orderly and humane return and reintegration of migrants who are unable or unwilling to remain in host or transit countries and wish to return voluntarily to their countries of origin. The partnerships created by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and a diverse range of national and international stakeholders ensure the vital AVRR assistance to several tens of thousands of migrants returning home every year.

Through the AVRR programme, IOM ensures that all returns take place on the basis of the migrant's free, prior and informed consent, and returning migrants are assisted in their reintegration process through effective partnerships in line with objective 21 of the Final Draft of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. Through AVRR programmes, IOM aims at facilitating the sustainable reintegration of returning migrants into community life by providing them equal access to social protection and services, justice, psychosocial assistance, while at the same time identifying and addressing the needs of the communities to which migrants return by including respective provisions in plans developed in the country of origin (CoO).

Assisted voluntary return (AVR)/AVR(R) entails advantages for all players on the origin–transit–destination spectrum: for the migrant, it is a humane alternative to deportation; for the country of destination, it is more cost effective and administratively expedient than forced return; and for the CoO, and its bilateral relations with the country of destination, while significantly facilitating the reintegration of their nationals. For migrants who seek or need

to return home but lack the means to do so, AVR(R)s are often the only solution to their immediate plight.

What are the benefits of assisted voluntary return and reintegration?

- **For the migrant,** AVRR represents a more humane and dignified approach to return, enhancing reintegration perspectives at home. For migrants who need to return home but lack the means to do so, AVRR is often the only approach to address their immediate plight. AVRR allows the migrants concerned to prepare for their return, encouraging them to identify potential opportunities for socioeconomic reinsertion into communities of origin, thereby facilitating the sustainability of their return.
- **For the governments of host and transit countries,** AVRR is a consensual and cost-effective option that allows strengthening the integrity of asylum and immigration systems, without the systematic (and generally costly) use of law enforcement and detention.
- **For the governments of origin and for the migrants' communities,** AVRR is an acceptable option to support the reinsertion of returning nationals. IOM assists the governments of origin in the development of strategies and programmes facilitating the management of return migration and strengthening capacities for reintegration in these countries. AVRR also facilitates and enhances a cooperative approach to return between the relevant authorities in host, transit and origin countries.

AVRR principles	
Principle 1	Voluntariness
Principle 2	Migrant-centred response
Principle 3	Safety
Principle 4	Sustainability of reintegration
Principle 5	Confidentiality
Principle 6	Dialogue and partnerships
Principle 7	Evidence-based programming

Who can benefit from assisted voluntary return and reintegration?

Beneficiaries of AVRR programmes may include stranded migrants, irregular migrants, regular migrants and asylum seekers who decide not to pursue their claims or who are found not to be in need of international protection. AVRR assistance could also be extended to migrants in situation of vulnerability, such as victims of trafficking (VoTs), elderly people, unaccompanied migrant children (UMCs) and migrants with health-related needs.



Beneficiaries at the airport are assisted with check-in procedures and passport control by IOM Greece staff. © IOM 2018

1.1. IOM Greece and assisted voluntary return and reintegration

Greece is a founding member of IOM, and the Office was established in 1952 on the basis of an agreement between the Government of Greece and IOM. The office in Greece has been offering services steadily to any moving population in need for the past 66 years, always preserving human dignity and the right of free movement.

From the 1950s until the mid-1970s, the office in Greece organized the migration of Greek nationals to overseas countries, primarily to Australia, Canada and the United States of America, while providing support in organizing training courses and accelerated learning language courses.

Since the early 1990s, Greece has become a country of receiving third-country nationals (TCNs) either as a transit or destination country. Situated

geographically on the external borders of the European Union, Greece remains the main gateway to the European Union for hundreds of thousands of people coming from the Middle East, Africa and Asia.

Since 2015, when the burst of migration flows was observed, IOM Greece plays a significant role in the Greek field of migration, by supporting the Greek authorities in managing the challenges that derived during the last crucial three years.

At the end of the second quarter of 2018, according to official data provided by the Hellenic authorities, 22,899 migrants and refugees had crossed both the land and the sea Greek borders. More than half (13,514) of all individuals arrived by sea route, and the remaining (9,385) reached Greece by land, crossing the Evros River, through the Greek–Turkish borders. Greece has remained one of the main entry points for migrants who are crossing the Mediterranean Sea on their journey to Europe. The 22,899 arrivals reported between January and June 2018 represent a 115 per cent increase compared to the 10,679 reported in the same period last year and 65 per cent of the 35,052 reported in the whole of 2017. In contrast to that, arrivals this year are still far behind the 160,115 reported at the end of June 2016.

The vast majority (80%) of refugees and migrants arriving in Greece originates from the Syrian Arab Republic, Iraq and Afghanistan. Furthermore, an increasing number of migrants from Africa is also appearing as a new trend, as monitored by IOM officers.

The implementation of return programmes started in 2010 and from the commencement of the project, the need for continuous AVR(R) provision was evident. IOM premises in Athens were visited daily by TCNs wishing to be included in voluntary return programmes, and the number of people who expressed their interest in returning to their homeland increased gradually, and sometimes even exceeded the number of migrants that could be assisted under a specific AVRR programme.

In order to respond to the imminent need for AVRR information and assistance throughout Greece, IOM has established four sub-offices since 2013 and last year, it expanded its information officers to 14, who were present in various locations across Greece to ensure that the information of the project

was easily accessible to both eligible beneficiaries and local stakeholders regardless of geographic constraints. IOM sub-offices in the periphery are well established in the areas of high migratory pressure and thus receive large numbers of migrants interested in voluntary return in their premises, while AVRR Field Officers in the various locations across Greece are witnesses of the programme's significance and widespread recognition. Through the sub-offices in Crete, Ioannina, Patra and Thessaloniki and the presence in different regions including the islands of the Northern–Eastern Aegean, IOM provided extensive AVRR information and service even in remote areas of Greece (for more information, read chapter 4).

1.2. Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund National Programme 2014–2020

The Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) was set up for the period 2014–2020, with a total of EUR 3,137 billion for seven years. It aims to promote the efficient management of migration flows and the implementation, strengthening and development of a common Union approach to asylum and migration. This fund contributes to the achievement of four specific objectives:

Asylum	Solidarity	Return	Legal migration and integration
Strengthening and developing the Common European Asylum System by ensuring that European Union legislation in this field is efficiently and uniformly applied.	Making sure that European Union States that are most affected by migration and asylum flows can count on solidarity from other European Union States.	Enhancing fair and effective return strategies that contribute to combating irregular migration, with an emphasis on sustainability and effectiveness of the return process.	Supporting legal migration to European Union States in line with the labour market needs and promoting the effective integration of non-European Union nationals.

The largest share of the total amount of the AMIF (about 88%) is channeled through shared management. European Union States implement their multi-annual national programmes, covering the whole period 2014–2020. These programmes are prepared, implemented, monitored and evaluated by the responsible authorities in the European Union States, in partnership with the relevant stakeholders in the field, including the civil society.

Table 2: Return policy approach under Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund

Main pillars of return policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Effective return policy/AVR²⁰ approach ■ Improvement of living conditions in pre-removal centres by reducing the total number of TCNs in detention ■ Modification of the part of pre-removal centres into open centres for the same target group ■ Reliable evaluation and monitoring mechanism of forced return process ■ Effective use of alternatives to detention for TCNs
Main goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Maintain/increase the average number (2011–2014) in AVR by strengthening the cooperation with third countries, disseminating information for AVR programmes, increasing the percentage of reintegration measures ■ Speed up the forced return process ■ Enhance the effectiveness of the monitoring system for forced return ■ Tailor-made educational strategy, aiming at the qualitative enhancement of the services provided to irregularly residing TCNs ■ Proper operation of pre-removal centres by improving the living conditions of irregular TCNs to ensure respect of human rights ■ Reduce the total number of TCNs in detention ■ Convert part of pre-removal centres into open centres for the same target group ■ Introduce, develop and improvement alternatives to detention measures ■ Implement European Union readmission agreements while strengthening the third countries' capacity through the specific actions/other financial instruments
Results to be attained	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Effective return policy/Increase or at least maintain the average number (2011–2014) of AVR while enhancing and increasing the reintegration measures ■ Effective monitoring of forced returns by an independent authority ■ Improvement of irregular TCNs' living conditions by providing specific services and activities ■ Continuation of the AVRR Programme

20 IOM Greece incorporated the provision of the reintegration assistance (AVR(R)-second R) in the return projects in 2012. Until 2012, IOM Greece has implemented solely return activities. Reintegration activation was not a certain provision to every project rather than support according to the donors.

Main axes of the programme entailed the following:

- Information campaign and raising awareness on the AVRR option;
- The reception, information provision, registration of TCNs that express their will to return to their CoO;
- Identification and operation issues related to AVRR;
- Issuance of travel documents and flight tickets;
- Reintegration assistance; and
- Effective measures for the sustainability of the return and the reception of TCNs in the CoO.

Eligible beneficiaries

As specified in the framework of the call of the proposal announced by the European and Development Programs Division (EDPD–Ministry of Interior) in November 2015, the programme focuses on the following:

- (a) TCNs who have not yet received a final negative decision in relation to their request to stay, their legal residence and/or international protection in a Member State, and who may choose to make use of voluntary return;
- (b) TCNs enjoying the right to stay, legal residence and/or international protection within the meaning of Directive 2011/95/EU, or temporary protection within the meaning of Directive 2001/55/EC in a Member State, and who have chosen to make use of voluntary return; and
- (c) TCNs who are present in a Member State and do not or no longer fulfil the conditions for entry and/or stay in a Member State, including those TCNs whose removal has been postponed in accordance with Article 9 and Article 14(1) of Directive 2008/115/EC.

The current AVRR programme commenced its implementation on 1 June 2016 and will be completed on 31 May 2019.

In Greece, according to Article 9 of Law 4332/2015, the EDPD of the Ministry of Interior assumes the designated authority to exercise part of the functions of the responsible authority in the field of asylum fund, immigration and integration, as specified in Article 5 of delegated Regulation (European Union) no. 1042/2014.

The implementation of AVRR was the first national programme under the AMIF activated by the EDPD, following a call of the proposal on November 2015 for non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international and intergovernmental organizations, the International Committee of the Red Cross or the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

1.3. Partnerships

IOM places its AVRR activities in the context of international cooperation and partnership, providing operational support, policy advice and expertise to host, transit and origin countries. Consequently, IOM has established strong partnerships and ties with the main actors involved in the assisted voluntary return process that are essential for the successful implementation of the programme.

Under this context, IOM operates in close cooperation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). UNHCR's involvement is considered significant to facilitate the availability of and access to refugee determination and protection mechanisms in the preliminary stages of the establishment of a voluntary return framework. IOM Greece hosts an AVRR national expert appointed by UNHCR in its premises who provides advice to asylum seekers, refugees and irregular migrants (individuals and/or families) who request such advice. The counselling sessions include an illustration of their rights and obligations to ensure that the potential beneficiaries are properly informed before making a final decision on their return. Such practices safeguard migrants' dignity and rights in operating returns and ensure the voluntary and conscious nature of the AVRR, seeking adherence to applicable international standards and principles.

IOM Greece also works closely with NGOs and other agencies, such as legal and health support groups, to ensure migrant access to information, legal advice or counselling, social services and protection mechanisms. More specifically, it cooperates efficiently with government authorities, including the Hellenic Police, the Reception and Identification Service, the Asylum Service and civil society organizations in all phases of the voluntary return process in order to provide AVRR information to potential beneficiaries and complete all pre-departure arrangements.

Moreover, IOM Greece cooperates closely with a network of more than 54 embassies and consulates in Greece and out of the country for identification matters and issuance of travel documents.

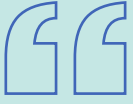


IOM Greece organizing an information meeting with embassies and consulates in Greece. © IOM 2018

1.4. Open Centre for Migrants registered for Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration

The Open Centre for migrants registered for assisted voluntary return and reintegration (OCAVRR II) is co-funded by the European Return Fund and the Hellenic Ministry for Migration Policy. The Open Centre for migrants registered for assisted voluntary return and reintegration (OCAVRR) is the first open centre in Europe and acts as a supplementary action of the AVRR project. This exemplary Open Centre is established near the centre of Athens to provide shelter to migrants in Greece who have registered with IOM Greece's AVRR programmes and who have no place to stay until their departure. The beneficiaries are migrants in situation of vulnerability, defined for the purpose of the project as pregnant women, single parent families, UMCs, migrants with medical needs, elderly migrants and homeless migrants.

During this year, 1,393 beneficiaries were accommodated in OCAVRR – 436 were from Iraq, 456 from Pakistan, 61 from Afghanistan and 440 were from other nationalities – while 1,266 were respectfully provided with return assistance to their CoO.



Nabil Naaman in OCAVRR. © IOM 2018

My name is Nabil Naaman, and I am 26 years old. I arrived in Greece 27 months ago, from Lebanon. I had a very difficult journey. My first stop was on the island of Chios, and then I came to Athens by boat. I stayed for one year in a hotel in Athens and one month ago, I moved here, in OCAVRR, the open accommodation centre for people registered for voluntary return. All personnel have been proven very helpful and kind. I have my own room, and food is delicious. I decided to leave my country for personal and political reasons. I was not feeling safe. Now, things are different. The political situation in my country has changed and stabilized. There is no war, and I can tell you from the bottom of my heart that I love my country. I was aware of IOM from the Internet, and I applied for AVRR. When I left my home, I was working as an assistant manager in a restaurant in Beirut for 10 years. I love cooking and everything related to food, even though I am not a chef. Lebanon is famous for its local food, and my dream is to open my small personal food business – not a fancy restaurant and definitely not something expensive. I want to open a fast-food local cuisine restaurant or a drive-through. Food is an inextricable part of our culture, and I really believe I can be very creative working in the culinary field. My favorite food is called warak arich. It is actually grape leaves stuffed with meat. Food means more than pleasure to me. It is something that brings people together, and I think this is the reason why I love working in the food industry. This is the reason why I want to go back to my country and restart my life.



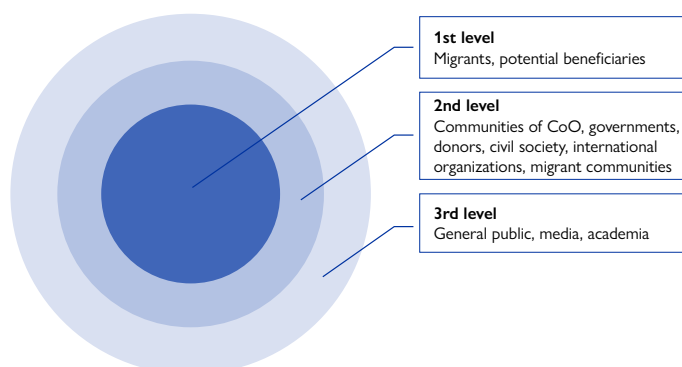
Chapter 2: Information campaign

2.1. Raising awareness on assisted voluntary return and reintegration in Greece

While communicating about AVRR, IOM Mission in Greece did not aim at promoting voluntary return or urge migrants to apply for it. AVRR officers rather presented it as an option to TCNs, while encouraging them to make an informed decision on their future.

For that purpose, IOM Mission in Greece identified the target groups of the AVRR communication strategy and divided them into three categories according to the level of direct involvement in AVRR.

Figure 3: AVRR target groups according to the level of direct involvement in the project



IOM Mission in Greece used a range of communication channels to disseminate information and raise awareness about the services offered under the national AVRR programme particularly among partners, migrant communities, beneficiaries, donors, governments, civil society and the general public, to name a few.

The website of IOM Mission in Greece (<https://greece.iom.int/en>) played a major role in raising awareness about IOM's activities in general; however, it provided a separate webpage on AVRR (<https://greece.iom.int/en/assisted-voluntary-return-and-reintegration-programs-avrr>), including general information on AVRR, as well as updated statistics and figures.

Social media platforms:



@IOMGreece

Facebook account



@IOMGREECE

Twitter account



@iomgreece

Instagram account



IOM Greece

YouTube account

IOM Mission in Greece used the aforementioned platforms to disseminate information and key messages weekly about AVRR's activities to potential beneficiaries, stakeholders and the general public. For a better engagement, IOM Greece integrated the website with the social media accounts.

Moreover, IOM Greece supported the development of the MigApp, which was launched in December 2017. MigApp is a trusted-one stop mobile application to provide key and potentially lifesaving information for people on the move. It is a secure, user-friendly, and downloadable app which serves as a one-stop shop platform where migrants can access relevant information and services. MigApp responds to the need to help migrants make informed decisions throughout their migration process and provides guidance on AVRR in the following pilot countries: Belgium, Ireland, Turkey, Greece and the Netherlands.

MigApp functions



- Compare costs among service remittance providers
- Migration information and guidelines organized by service area and country of destination
- A feedback mechanism for migrants tailored for targeted programmes
- Targeted messages to users on migration risks based on location and profile data
- Directory for IOM offices, local service providers and hotlines
- Response to migration-related inquiries

Source: IOM.

- A mechanism for migrants and the general public to donate to specific programmes at IOM

Moreover, IOM Greece supported the “i am a migrant” platform, the UN Migration Agency’s platform what is part of the UN TOGETHER initiative and allows the voices of individuals to shine through. Through this platform, IOM seeks to combat xenophobia and discrimination at a time when so many are exposed to negative narratives about migration – whether on social media feeds or on the airwaves. IOM Greece is also one of the most important contributors to the content of the platform, having shared more than 20 AVRR stories of the project’s beneficiaries. IOM Greece has provided an honest insight into the triumphs and tribulations of the migrants of all backgrounds who asked for IOM Greece’s assistance to return to their home countries, without shying away from presenting life as it is experienced.

Greek is one of the core languages of the platform, among German, English, Spanish, French and Italian.

The screenshot shows the 'i am a migrant' website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the logo 'i am a migrant' and links for 'about', 'stories', 'blog', and 'videos'. On the right, there are language options (DE, EN, ES, FR, IT, ET, RU, EL) and social media icons for YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook.




Below the navigation bar is a search filter section with the following fields:

- Country of Origin: - Any -
- Current Country: Greece
- Hashtag: #avrr
- Keywords: (empty text box)

 There are 'Reset' and 'Apply' buttons to the right of the filter fields.

The main content area displays a grid of eight story cards, each featuring a photo, a name and distance, a quote, and social media sharing options.

- Ahmed, 1,808 km**: "Now not only I am ready to return to my home country but I can also start working again!"
- Nabil, 1,185 km**: "I love working in the food industry. This is the reason why I want to go back to my country and restart my life!"
- Khurram, 4,533 km**: "Participating in IOM's AVRR project was my only solution!"
- Omar**: "Being safe and finding a job were my top priorities... Somehow, I knew that my future is there, in my home country!"
- Azad and his family, 1,808 km**: "We decided to return to our home, but this time in a safe and organized way!"
- Nozary, 1,412 km**: "The thought of being back again with my family and friends makes me really happy!"
- Rehmat, 4,602 km**: "I strongly believe that I am now ready to go back home and restart my new life!"
- Alfred and his wife, Immaculata, 4,375 km**: "We will be given some assistance by IOM to start again in Kenya!"

		 12 Information visits*	 8 Press releases	 8 Meetings and events
2017	JUN	Leros	IOM information campaign on the island of Leros	
	JUL		UN Migration Agency helps nearly 100,000 migrants return and reintegrate in 2016	
	AUG		Over 38,000 migrants assisted with voluntary return by UN Migration Agency in first half of 2017	
	SEP			
	OCT		IOM Greece supports over 2,000 voluntary returnees to reintegrate, start businesses back home	Meeting with regional staff
	NOV	Thessaloniki	IOM in Thessaloniki	Information meeting and event with migrants' communities and diplomatic authorities
	DEC			
2018	JAN	Kavala–Paranesti Komotini–Ksanthi Alexandroupoli– Orestiada		
	FEB		IOM and Diplomatic Corps representatives information meeting	Information meeting and event with migrants' communities and diplomatic authorities
	MAR	Lesvos Chios Samos		Information meeting and event with migrants' communities and diplomatic authorities
	APR	Rhodes Kos Lesvos	IOM Greece: An international educational workshop on reintegration assistance was held in Athens	
	MAY	Alexandroupoli	Over 10,000 migrants in Greece voluntarily returned home in last 20 months	International Educational Workshop on Reintegration Assistance Study visit to IOM Berlin Meeting with regional staff Information meeting and event with migrants' communities and diplomatic authorities

* In regions outside of Athens intending to widely disseminate information for the return and reintegration activities of AVRR project.

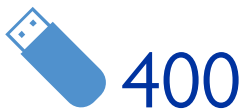
Production of information materials



monthly newsletters exclusively focused on AVRR, highlighting return and reintegration achievements



advertisements in newspapers, magazines, websites and social media. All media were chosen based on their daily circulation and the targeted audience. The vast majority were national media, plus media operating on the islands of North-Eastern Aegean.



USB sticks for information events, meetings and press conferences



calendars for stakeholders



campaign posters in 12 languages

“With the Implementation of Assisted Voluntary Returns including Reintegration measures, you may return to your country in safety and dignity.”

IOM Greece created and produced one multilingual poster and one multilingual leaflet during the first year of the project.

The posters and the leaflets include information related to the AVRR project (procedures, benefits and IOM Greece contact details).

The information printed material has been distributed to potential beneficiaries and relevant stakeholders (e.g. NGOs, reception and pre-removal centres, migrant communities, local and regional public authorities, embassies and public transport). The selection of the 12 languages was based on the current migration trends and TCNs who have currently approached IOM Greece.

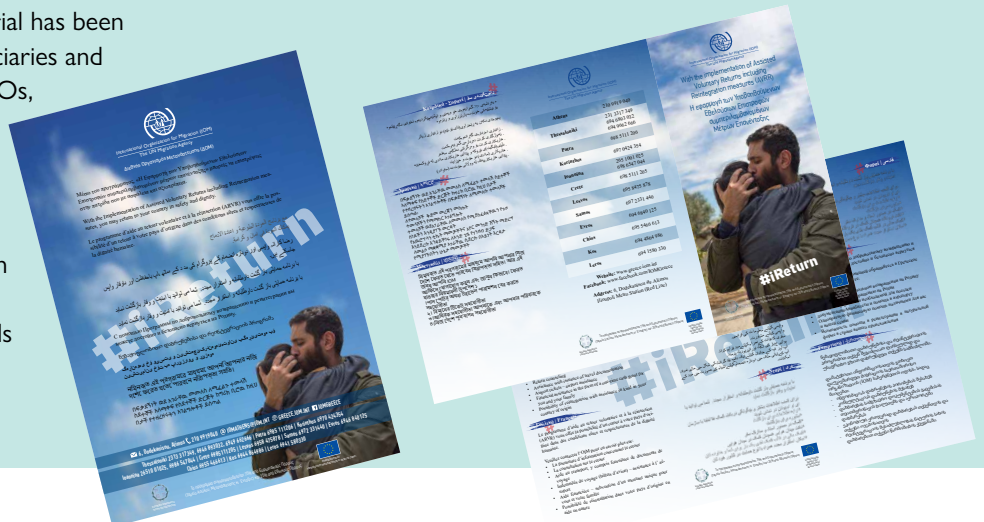


campaign leaflets

Providing the basic description of the AVRR programme, encouraging people in concern to contact IOM Greece for further information.

The threefold leaflets in 12 languages (Greek, English, French, Arabic, Urdu, Ntari, Farsi, Russian, Georgian, Amharic, Kurdish–Sorani and Bengali) aim to reach the targeted population.

Leaflets were distributed to all islands and areas in Greece where IOM officers are present. The distribution plan was based on the number of migrant population stranded at each area in combination with the response to the project.



2.2. Assisted voluntary return and reintegration activities

Map 1: AVRR staff presence in Greece



This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM.

Source: IOM Mission in Greece.

IOM staff were present in various locations across Greece to guarantee that information on the programme was easily accessible to all interested parties regardless of geographic constraints.

AVRR officers conducted regular visits in closed facilities, open accommodation sites and areas with a high concentration of migrants. Setting as a priority the sharing of frequent, coherent and reliable information to eligible beneficiaries, IOM staff elaborated on provisions and required procedures for a return to take place while beneficiaries were guided in all steps of the return process.

It is considered of vast importance to maintain and strengthen a well-established network with the authorities, international organizations and NGOs to ensure that AVRR awareness was enhanced, the referral pathway among entities was reinforced, and consequently, beneficiaries were served in the best possible way. Staff from the project's coordination unit and experts from the operations department attended regularly the inter-agencies' coordination meetings coordinated by the European Commission with the participation of representatives from the Ministry of Migration Policy, the Hellenic Police, the Greek Asylum Office, Frontex, the European Asylum Support Office, UNHCR and others.

Mainland

Apart from the offices in Athens, IOM operates sub-offices in Thessaloniki, Heraklion, Ioannina and Patra. The premises were kindly provided by the relevant municipalities/prefectures, and representatives from IOM were well established in the area through an efficiently created network that renders them easily accessible to everyone willing to acquire additional information on the project.

Complementary to sub-offices, AVRR Field Officers established a permanent presence in locations with a high number of eligible beneficiaries, such as Reception and Identification Centres (RICs) while conducting frequent visits in areas with a high concentration of TCNs, such as open accommodation sites and pre-removal centres. Engaged presence ensured that the project's provisions and benefits were adequately shared both to stakeholders and eligible beneficiaries, and thus the project's scope was maximized.

The AVRR Field Officers' main duty was to ensure that information on the project's benefits and procedures was disseminated frequently to stakeholders in an updated and coherent manner. Detailed and reliable information on the procedures of a safe and dignified return was of vast importance while beneficiaries were guided and debriefed during all steps of the return process.

AVRR representatives were present in the entry and exit points and conducted AVRR information provisions to new arrivals, stranded populations who were originally aiming to reach another European country and irregular migrants who had been living in Greece for many years. Visits were conducted in open

accommodation sites, closed facilities, shelters, hospitals, regional asylum offices and others, while officers often engaged in street work to ensure that the information was perpetuated and the project achieved its maximum visibility. AVRR leaflets were distributed to all interested parties; AVRR posters were placed in areas with high concentration of TCNs, while officials deployed in services addressed to migrants' act as referral mechanisms that link IOM to possible beneficiaries. By focusing on maintaining and perpetuating information on the project the staff was made easily reachable to everyone interested.

Apart from focusing on a well-established network with migrants' communities, AVRR Field Officers strived to enhance and improve their cooperation with the local authorities, international organizations and NGOs. To attain and maintain such rapport, IOM representatives regularly attended coordination meetings among entities that operate in the migration scene scheduled to facilitate the exchange of information, the sharing of feedback and the brainstorming of ways to deal with prevailing challenges. The stable presence of an AVRR Field Officer in meetings was an indirect means to reinforce the AVRR messaging, while assisting IOM staff to follow developments and achieve a holistic approach to the migration situation.

The AVRR Field Officer operating in Evros, having a permanent presence in the RIC in Fylakio, conducted frequent visits in the pre-removal centres of Fylakio and upon coordination with the authorities and other stakeholders may visit other police stations in the department of Evros.

During the reporting period, AVRR Field Officers in Evros conducted 3,230 group and individual AVRR information sessions to newly arrived population upon their registration was realized by the responsible authorities. The majority of information sessions were addressed to Pakistani nationals (1,178) and Iraqi nationals (1,089). IOM staff operating in the northern land borders of Evros had a very significant role since he was one of the first to provide consistent and reliable information to newly arrived TCNs who were largely misinformed by smugglers and had often inconsistent, chaotic input on the current situation prevailing in Europe.

It should be mentioned that during AVRR information provision on newly arrived TCNs, the project was presented in a brief and rather superficial manner

with an emphasis in the presentation of IOM, the acquaintance with AVRR representative and the sharing of IOM's contact data for future use. AVRR staff was highly sensitive on protection issues, and there was a shared recognition that a heavy load of information on various issues was shared to overwhelm TCNs upon their arrival while priority had been given to screening of migrants in situation of vulnerability and the presentation of alternative options. Nonetheless, AVRR officers ensured that all newcomers who were eligible for a safe return had an AVRR leaflet with them upon departure from the RIC. Even though opting for AVRR was not the newcomers' preferred option in the beginning, it had been proven that knowing the programme and acquiring an information leaflet to facilitate communication with IOM could be beneficial for possible future use. As a result, many TCNs who entered Greece through Evros and were informed accordingly by colleagues operating in the RIC decided to opt for AVRR after a short period of time while living in an open or closed facility in another part of Greece.

As mentioned above, IOM has established an AVRR sub-office in Thessaloniki with two AVRR Field Officers who were responsible for gathering all necessary data that would assist them to achieve a complete understanding on the prevailing situation in the Northern Greece. They were in continuous communication with representatives from governmental and non-governmental entities and conducted regular visits in open sites (in Diavata, Drama, Kavala and Lagkadikia) and closed facilities in the area (police stations in Thessaloniki, Serres, Veroia and others). The AVRR staff in Epirus, Korinthos and Patra were engaged in following developments in their areas of operation and maintaining an open communication among them to ensure that the migration routes within the country are being recognized and shared among all colleagues operating in the periphery.

It should be mentioned that frequent visits were also conducted in open sites in Attika (Elaionas, Schisto, Skaramagkas and others) while frequent presence was also ensured in pre-removal centres (Amygdaleza and Petrou Ralli) and local police stations. Recurrent visits were scheduled upon coordination with the responsible authorities and upon request from detained migrants, diplomatic agencies, aid helpers, governmental and non-governmental representatives. Upon arrival, AVRR Field Officers liaised with the authorities

responsible for the open/closed facility, distribute leaflets, put up posters and perform group and individual information sessions to migrants who could benefit from the programme.

Table 3: AVRR information provisions in the Mainland during the second year of the project

Location	Informed	Registered	Returned
Orestiada (and other regions of northern Macedonia and Thrace)	3,230	23	11
Thessaloniki (and other regions of Northern Greece)	1,813	394	334
Ioannina (and other regions of Epirus)	668	52	45
Patra (and other regions of Peloponnese)	1,409	37	30
Korinthos (and other regions of Peloponnese)	1,642	90	113
Attica (Open and closed facilities outside IOM Athens)	1,078	N/A	N/A

Table 4: Informed, registered and returned TCNs statistics from the Mainland during the second year of the project

June 2017–31 May 2018						
	Open facilities	Closed facilities			Other	Total
	Formal/ Informal sites	Pre-removal centres	RICs	Police stations	IOM sub-office, shelters, street work, hospitals	
Epirus	55	8 (via phone)	N/A	365	240	668
Northern Greece	158	855	N/A	377	423	1,813
Peloponnese	74	1,557	N/A	549	871	3,051
Central Greece	456	578	N/A	44	N/A	1,078
Thrace	N/A	240	2,962	28	0	3,230
Total Mainland	743	3,238	2,962	1,363	1,534	9,840



AVRR staff informing a TCN about his return options. © IOM 2018

Islands

AVRR staff operated in the hotspot islands of Chios, Kos, Leros, Lesvos and Samos, having a permanent presence inside the RICs while scheduling frequent visits in open sites, shelters, hospitals, pre-removal centres and police stations. Field Officers provided information on the project to new arrivals via individual and group sessions and disseminated leaflets while conducting follow-up information provision sessions to eligible beneficiaries who have been residing on the island for a larger period of time. The provision of information was tailored according to specific characteristics of the target population, while special care was given to more migrants in situation of vulnerability that seemed to increase due to the prolonged stay in the islands and the frustration caused by the downsizing of their expectation and the abolition of their dreams for a better future.

Awareness on the project was established by conducting large-scale information sessions and individual counselling sessions in the population who resided in Kara Tepe-Lesvos, Patriotic Institute for Social Welfare and Awareness (PIKPA) in Lesvos and PIKPA in Leros, while daily contact was established with representatives from actors that managed accommodation shelters in apartments and hotels. In addition, IOM was present in the pre-removal centres of Lesvos and Kos, as well as in local police stations in Mitilini (Lesvos), Agia Marina (Leros), Vathi and Karlovasi (Samos), in Kos and Chios.

It should be noted that during reporting period, a total 95.96 per cent of those who opted for AVRR in the hotspot islands plus Crete returned to their CoO under the auspices of IOM.²¹

AVRR officers had daily communication with the responsible authorities to facilitate the voluntary return procedures and ensure that the beneficiaries were assisted in a person-centred manner. Through regular presence in meetings with other actors, IOM staff debriefed on the project's provisions and were available to offer clarifications when required. In addition, relevant updates were often provided to representatives from international organizations and NGOs operating in the field as a means to guarantee that all service providers were unambiguously informed on the project and thus provided accurate information on eligible beneficiaries. Such updates assisted in maintaining an enhanced referral pathway and rendered information that are reliable and equally accessible to all.

The AVRR Field Officer operating in Crete was mostly dealing with TCNs who did not hold a legal residence status and work in agriculture in one of the villages of the island. The IOM sub-office is located in Heraklion, while AVRR staff conducted frequent visits to the departments of Chania, Rethymno and Lassithi. Some of the beneficiaries who decided to opt for AVRR were detained in the police stations of the island, while the majority of them were Pakistani nationals who had been living and working in Crete for more than a year.

Table 5: Informed, registered and returned TCNs from the islands during the second year of the project

Greek island	Informed	Registered	Returned
Lesvos	3,937	516	584
Chios	1,470	220	194
Samos	1,439	206	188
Leros	848	85	72
Kos	1,282	250	233
Crete	1,253	182	129
Total	10,229	1,459	1,400

²¹ Since the decision of returning home is voluntary, the TCNs can opt in and out of the programme any time they wish. As a result, 4.04 per cent of those who registered in the programme neither appeared at the airport nor contacted IOM staff prior to their departure to inform that they changed their mind for personal reasons.

Figure 4: Total AVRR returns per month during the second year of the project

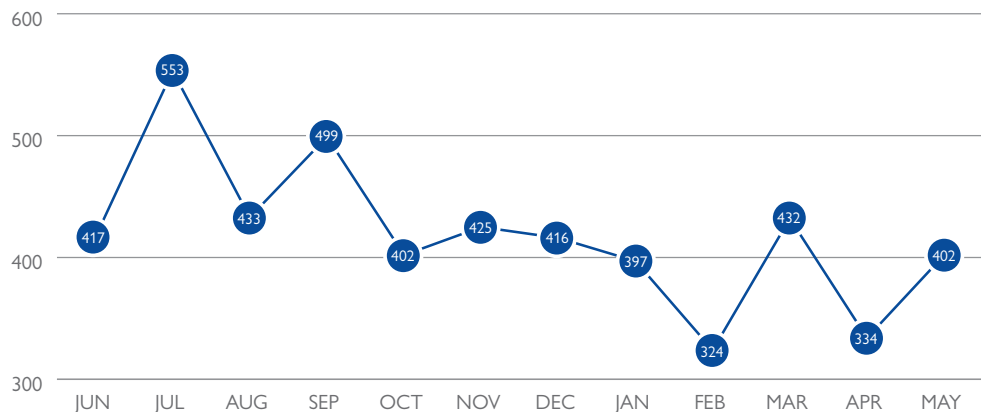


Table 6: AVRR figures from closed and open sites from the Mainland and islands during the second year of the project

	Pre-removal centres	Police stations	RICs	Open sites
AVRR information provisions	4,857	2,026	9,654	947
AVRR registrations	623	194	859	210
AVRR departures	769	174	731	167



AVRR staff conducting an information visit in Lesbos Island to provide AVRR information to eligible migrants residing in Moria camp. © IOM 2018

Voices of returnees



Juliana from the Philippines

My name is Juliana, and I am from the Philippines. I left my country when I was 45 years old, looking for a better job and a higher income. Back home, I worked in a pharmacy laboratory for five years and in a clothes factory for three years. I arrived in Greece hoping to get a job and make a good living. It took me many months to finally get a job as a housekeeper. As a result, I have been living in Greece for 17 years. However, during the years of the Greek economic crisis and due to the high unemployment rate, finding or maintaining a job was really difficult. At the same time, I met many difficulties with my fragile health condition, which made me think about returning to my hometown, Marikina City.

I was already aware of IOM's AVRR programme, so I visited the IOM office in Athens to get more information on my options. IOM informed me that I could benefit from the Reintegration Assistance, thus, I took the decision to return. Also, as I am getting older, I prefer to be with my people in my hometown. One month after my arrival in my country with the help of IOM, I set up my own sari-sari store, a grocery store in the Philippines.

Moreover, six months after my business was set up, IOM Greece visited me in Marikina City to evaluate my business. My business is running well, and my income is enough to support myself and my family.

IOM gave me the opportunity not only to return to my hometown, but also to restart my life here, feeling more useful and more participative to my community.



Juliana at her sari-sari store in the Philippines.
© IOM 2018





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Omar Mahjoob from Iraq

I was born in Sargat village, located near Said Sadiq town. I have 13 sisters and 7 brothers and now I am a father of 7 children: Khattab, Hendie, Jiehia, Zakariya, Shahd, Al-Rayyan and little Marina, the three-month-old newborn baby. My father was a very famous and rich man in Iraq and even though I did not get much love from him, I always knew that I do not want to raise my kids in the same way.

I started to work at my mother's market, selling sweets, while I was studying engineering in college. When I completed my studies, I got work as an engineer in an American oil company operating in Duhok. I was a hardworking businessman; I had a good job and a decent income, but since ISIS was coming to my village, I had to protect myself and my family. This is why I decided to leave. First, I bought a house in Sulaimaniya governorate, one of the major cities in Iraqi Kurdistan. However, ISIS attacked us, and the city was almost destroyed. I was robbed, and I lost everything I had, including my car and my savings. After that incident, I realized that the situation was unstable and dangerous for my family. Hence, I took the decision to leave. My wife took care of our children, and I went to Egypt. I bought a house there in order to travel to Iraq and work, when necessary. Every week, I was travelling from Egypt to Iraq and from Iraq to Egypt. But this lasted only some weeks. Egypt was not a safe choice either. I returned to my hometown, from where I took my family, and travelled to Turkey. We stayed there for 60 days. Our next stop was Orestiada, Greece, in April 2017. Being safe and finding a job were my top priorities. I was thinking that the best place for us to make a new start was Belgium or Germany since they have great achievements in technology and science. I tried to find a job there but without any result.

Greece is how I had imagined it – amazing weather, 100 per cent safety and nice people. My children were really excited to attend school every day. Unfortunately, our income remained low. The price of one carton of milk for babies is EUR 9, and my little daughter needs five of them per month. Hence, even in Greece, I was struggling to cover our basic needs. Meanwhile, I was always staying in close contact with my friends back home. A few days ago, I was

informed that ISIS has left, and although my house was completely destroyed, I decided to go back. My next step was to call IOM and find out more details about voluntary returns. Somehow, I knew that my future is there, in my home country.



Omar and his seven children before leaving Greece to return to his home in Iraq. © IOM 2018



2.2.1. Information visits around Greece

In the context of the project, IOM Greece scheduled information visits in various locations within Greece as a means to facilitate awareness about the programme, to update on the procedures and debrief on the accompanying benefits. Information visits and meetings were organized to provide detailed information to all target groups related to the project, such as potential beneficiaries, local stakeholders, governmental counterparts and other actors and service providers involved in the migration field.

The purpose of the visits were as follows:

- (a) Enhance the communication channel between IOM Athens, Greek authorities and international organizations operating in Northern Greece through strengthening their relationship;

- (b) Gather information and ascertain directly the situation in Northern Greece regarding the immigration flows, migrants' nationalities and the difficulties the migrants, the local authorities and the regional police authorities might face; and
- (c) Provide AVRR information to eligible migrants residing in open and closed facilities.

2.2.2. Information meetings and events

Four meetings/events were implemented with migrants' communities, diplomatic authorities and other relevant parties in order to raise awareness for the possibility and advantages of the AVRR, strengthen their cooperation with IOM Greece and build up close collaboration with the stakeholders of the action.



In November 2017, an information meeting organized by IOM Greece was attended by representatives of migrant communities. The meeting enhanced the communication channels between IOM Athens and migrant communities and further contributed to the development of the services provided to the potential beneficiaries. It gave the opportunity to both interested parties – IOM Athens and migrant communities – to exchange thoughts and concerns regarding AVRR. © IOM 2018



In February 2018, under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs auspices and the framework of the AVRR project, an information meeting was successfully implemented between representatives of IOM Mission in Greece and the Diplomatic Corps in Athens. The information meeting was attended by officers from EDPD, the delegated authority of the Ministry of Interior, representatives from the Hellenic Police, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, embassies and consulates. © IOM 2018



In March 2018, an information meeting, which was attended by 18 representatives of migrant communities, took place in IOM Athens' premises. The communities' representatives underlined the necessity of the AVRR programme and highlighted the benefits of broadening and enhancing the collaboration with IOM Greece. It was a productive discussion since different aspects and needs were raised from the communities, which informed IOM staff on the living conditions and concerns that migrants face either in Greece or in their home countries. © IOM 2018



In May 2018, IOM Greece took the initiative to bring together, for the first time, representatives of consulates and embassies of TCNs and AVRR Field Officers from IOM sub-offices across Greece. Thirteen (13) IOM Field Officers and 10 representatives of consulates and embassies attended the meeting. It proved successful and productive since it gave all parties the opportunity to exchange views on their cooperation and the procedures related to administrative and technical services. Current accomplishments and future challenges were also discussed related to the implementation of the project. © IOM 2018

2.2.3. Information events

In June 2017, IOM Greece organized an information event under the framework of the AVRR programme in Leros Island, which was attended by local stakeholders including local authorities, law enforcement, coast guards, social service providers, representatives of local governments and international organizations, NGOs and journalists. During the event, the participants had the opportunity to exchange views and challenges and strengthen the already existing cooperation among them under the information campaign, which was implemented by IOM Greece on the islands of the Northern Aegean. From the beginning of June 2016 since the end of May 2017, 5,944 TCNs had voluntarily returned to their countries of origin. Among them, 1,236 had voluntarily returned from the islands of Chios, Crete, Kos, Leros, Lesvos and Samos.

In May 2018, IOM Greece organized an information event under the framework of the AVRR programme in Alexandroupoli, which was attended by more than 30 persons. The aim of the information event was to provide information on the provisions of the AVRR project and discuss relevant matters with local counterparts and other agents that operate in the migration scene in the area.



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2.3. Capacity-building

Since the beginning of AVRR in Greece, IOM staff involved in the programme were constantly striving to create and update tools to enhance applied procedures. Such continuous endeavour was essential to accelerate the

assisted voluntary return process and ensure that synchronicity and harmony will benefit the beneficiaries and reinforce the Organization's credibility. In order to achieve that, meetings were frequently scheduled among representatives from the AVRR coordination unit, the operations division, the finance department and the airport staff as a means to update on formalities and brainstorm on improving performance. Moreover, during the reporting year, IOM Greece has organized and participated in several meetings, trainings and workshops with IOM Missions and other parts that are involved in the AVRR activities, and they exchanged ideas and best practices. Such meetings strengthened the existing capacity of IOM Greece regarding operational matters, reporting issues and financial matters. IOM Greece has participated in trainings related to the development of project proposals and activities, the use of internal tools as well as workshops regarding reintegration assistance.

Regarding specifically the use of internal tools such as the Migrant Management and Operational Systems Application (MIMOSA), which is IOM's institutional global information management system, it contains biographic and demographic information that is used in multiple operational activities such as Migrant Protection and Assistance Division: AVRR and Vulnerable Migrant Assistance (AVM), medical and movements.

2.3.1. Meetings with the regional staff



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Two meetings with the regional staff took place in May and October in the IOM premises in Athens, which are considered of vast importance since they facilitate the sharing of experiences between field staff who work in different

locations and in diverse settings. In addition, seminars and information meetings for all AVRR officers who operate in periphery are occasionally organized. The prevailing challenges were presented, ways to deal with difficulties were analysed, suggestions for improving performance were discussed, while trainings on current issues and operational matters were included.

2.3.2. Study visits to other IOM Offices

IOM Greece organizes study visits to other IOM Offices in Europe, as well as in third countries with high experience in implementing AVRR projects. The purpose of the visits is to exchange information and best practices in the implementation of voluntary returns and reintegration. Consequently, IOM Greece, taking into consideration that IOM Germany has implemented the highest number of voluntary returns among the IOM Offices in Europe and has a 40-year of experience in the implementation of AVRR projects, planned a two-day study visit in IOM Berlin in May 2018.

For the implementation of voluntary returns and reintegration, IOM Germany mentioned that their core project is Reintegration and Emigration Programme for Asylum Seekers in Germany/Government Assisted Repatriation Programme (REAG/GARP), which is funded by the Federal Government and the federal States. REAG started in 1979 and covers travel expenses and travel allowance costs, while GARP started in 1989 and provides assistance to targeted nationalities for start-up in CoOs. Other projects that are implemented by IOM Germany are: (a) StarthilfePlus, which provides financial assistance according to the status of the asylum procedure (i.e. EUR 1,200 if the application for voluntary returns is done before the asylum procedure is completed, EUR 800 if the application for voluntary return takes place after the rejection of the asylum application); (b) the Integrated Reintegration in North Iraq, which was completed a few months ago; and (c) a project related to information portal on voluntary return.

During the meeting, representatives of IOM Berlin stressed that the main office of IOM Germany is in Nuremberg, and currently they try to enhance the office in Berlin with personnel and activities. Moreover, colleagues from IOM Berlin demonstrated that the provision of information and the implementation of return counselling is undertaken by the civil society and

the municipality of Berlin in the counselling centre of the town that has been established by the federal State of Berlin. In general, IOM Berlin does not provide return counselling sessions or AVRR information in IOM premises, as it is involved mainly with the booking of beneficiaries' air tickets and the provision of cash allowance at the airport through service providers who have contracts with IOM Germany. The two sides demonstrated how the provision of information and the implementation of return counselling takes place in IOM Germany and IOM Greece, discussing the converging and diverging points of the implementation of the programmes. Moreover, the two IOM missions exchanged information on migration trends and the success of the AVRR activities in both Germany and Greece.

IOM Greece also visited the Federal Ministry of the Interior (divisions for AVRR and communication; Division for Readmissions) and informed the implementation of voluntary returns and reintegration activities from a governmental scope. Last but not the least, IOM Greece staff had the opportunity to observe the cash payment procedure IOM Germany follows to beneficiaries travelling to their CoO from the Tegel Airport.

2.3.3. International Educational Workshop on Reintegration Assistance



From left: Kallas Stylianos, Director of EDPD; Daniel Esdras, Special Envoy of the IOM Director General to the Government of Greece; Hunzinger Laurence, Senior Regional Migrant Assistance Specialist (AVRR) of RO Brussels; and Tzanetos Filippakos, General Secretary of Coordination of the Ministry of Interior. © IOM 2018

In April 2018, an International Educational Workshop on Reintegration Assistance was held in IOM premises in Athens, under the framework of the AVRR project.

Twenty-three IOM representatives participated in the Educational Workshop, from the IOM Regional Office for the European Economic Area (EEA), the European Union and NATO (RO Brussels), IOM Greece, IOM offices in the main countries of origin including Afghanistan, Egypt, Georgia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco, Pakistan and Tunisia, where reintegration plans are being implemented, as well as from European IOM offices with long experience in reintegration assistance, such as Austria, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, Norway, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Switzerland and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. During the workshop, the participants highlighted the objectives achieved in the field of reintegration up to date, examined best practices for implementing the programme for the benefit of the beneficiaries and exchanged information on the procedures and the benefits of reintegration assistance. Present at the event were the General Secretary of Coordination of the Ministry of Interior, Tzanetos Filippakos; representatives of the Ministry of Finance and Development and executives of the EDPD of the Ministry of Interior were present at the workshop as well.

Upon completion of the workshop, all participants had gained in-depth knowledge on how reintegration assistance is developed from different host countries and CoOs and had the opportunity to interact and discuss best practices that can apply in other countries. All missions underlined the fact that it is truly essential for IOM to create a bond with the beneficiary. To establish and ensure maintaining trust throughout the entire return and reintegration process is an important issue that needs to be taken under consideration throughout the entire reintegration procedure. Additionally, reintegration is a team effort; thus, what is initiated in one country needs to be followed up in another country. Thanks to IOM's global presence, this could be possible.

It was a great opportunity to gather colleagues from European country offices with those outside of Europe and discuss the importance of encompassing flexible reintegration modules and give beneficiaries sufficient time to decide

on how to use the assistance. Overall, the workshop could be praised as a great event for exchange and for getting new inspiration while learning more about new trends in the reintegration area. It is worth mentioning that there are strong arguments to repeat a similar two-day workshop in the future, as it seems that one day was not enough to engage into in-depth discussion on a topic as complex as the migrants' reintegration process.



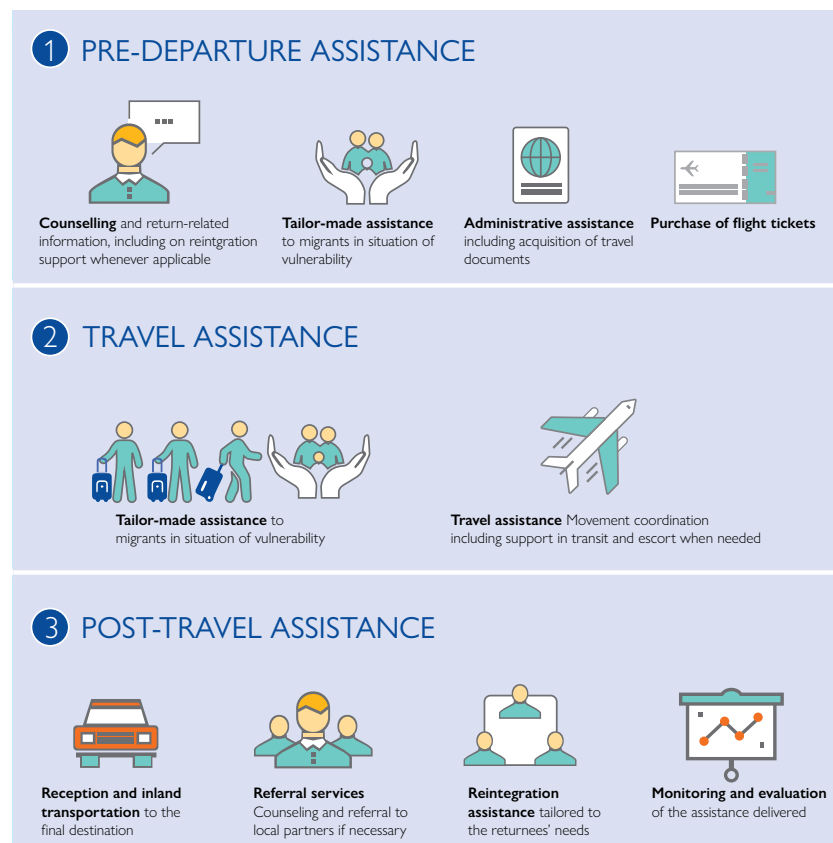
IOM Greece staff and IOM representatives around the globe at the Educational Workshop on Reintegration Assistance hosted by IOM Greece. © IOM 2018

Chapter 3: The return process

3.1. Procedure

The voluntary returns that took place within the framework of the AVRR project were based on a decision freely taken by the individual. They were defined by the absence of any physical or psychological pressure and the provision of timely, accurate and impartial information for the individual to make a well-informed decision.

The project is implemented through three phases – the pre-departure assistance, the travel arrangements and the post-arrival activities – which are analysed on the infographic that follows.



3.1.1. Pre-departure assistance

The first stage included pre-departure procedures related to the provision of information to migrants' registration in the programme and collection of the appropriate documents. With the assistance of a cultural mediator, migrants were informed in their native language about the option of voluntary return and how IOM Greece could support them if they decide to participate in the programme. IOM Greece implemented counselling sessions in IOM premises in Athens, in IOM sub-offices and through AVRR Field Officers all over Greece with those who expressed their wish to return to their CoO. After ascertaining the beneficiary's willingness to return and eligibility for assistance, he or she is referred to the Hellenic Police for clearance of exit from the country. IOM Greece collaborated with more than 54 consular authorities in Greece and abroad in order to support the identification process of the project beneficiaries. Moreover, IOM Greece assisted several migrants to receive valid travel documents. In particular, from June 2017 to May 2018, 3,003 travel documents were issued for AVRR returnees.

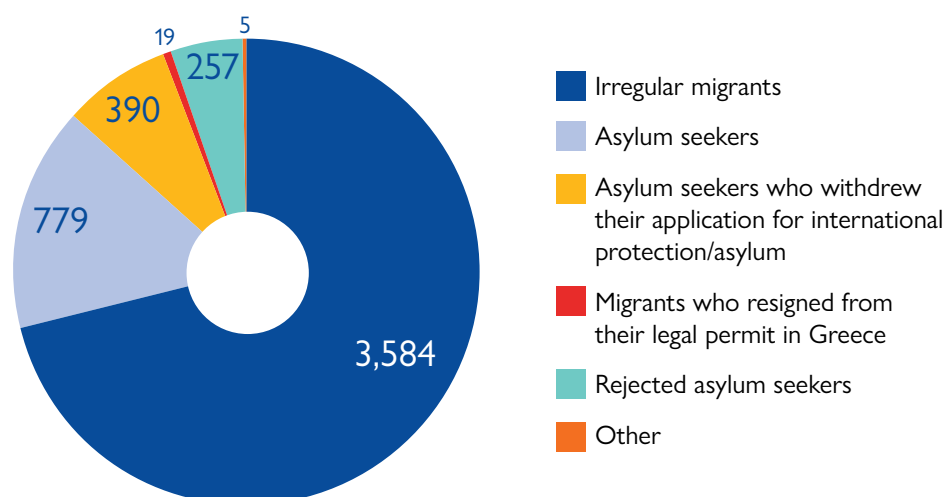
Reintegration counsellors conducted counselling sessions with eligible beneficiaries for reintegration assistance in kind and coordinated with IOM offices in countries of return where reintegration plans were implemented (for analysis in reintegration assistance, see chapter 3).

A few days prior to departure, IOM Greece organized pre-departure meetings and provided the returnees with information for their travel. During the second year of the project, 970 pre-departure sessions were organized.



IOM staff providing the returnees with information for their travel during the pre-departure meeting.
© IOM 2018

Figure 5: Status of the AVRR returnees during the second year of the project



3.1.2. Travel arrangements

The necessary travel arrangements for the safe and dignified return of AVRR beneficiaries that represent an integral part of the AVRR process were:

- Booked for flights or other means of transportation;
- Conducted family assessments in case of UMCs with the collaboration of IOM Offices in the CoOs;
- Facilitated the issuance of travel documents when required through liaison with the consular authorities of the CoO;
- Arranged escorts, if required (e.g. in the case of UMCs or migrants with health-related needs);
- Arranged domestic transportation from the place of residence/accommodation in regions out of Attica to Athens in order to depart (in cases of need);
- Conducted pre-departure meetings to inform migrants of their flights and travel procedures;
- Conducted health assessments in case of migrants with health-related needs; and
- Provided departure assistance at the airport/point of departure.

On the day of the departure, IOM Greece staff met the beneficiaries at the airport and assisted them with check-in procedures, passport control and boarding. A one-time cash grant of EUR 500 was given to each returnee in order to address their basic needs after departure from Greece.

Table 7: Assistance provided in transit points

Transit point	Beneficiaries
Amman	4
Istanbul	2,136
Baghdad	104
Cairo	66
Doha	106
Dubai	326
Kiev	1
Total	2,743

Table 8: Assistance provided upon arrival²²

Country of origin	Beneficiaries
Afghanistan	72
Algeria	411
Armenia	1
Bangladesh	108
Côte d'Ivoire	1
Egypt	57
Ethiopia	1
Georgia	149
Haiti	2
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	39
Iraq	546
Jordan	1
Lebanon	18
Pakistan	922
Philippines	1
Republic of Moldova	7
Ukraine	5
Uzbekistan	1
Yemen	2
Total	2,344

22 Reception assistance is provided in cases of need by IOM Offices in countries of return following prior cooperation with IOM Greece.



IOM staff providing assistance at Dubai International Airport (United Arab Emirates), a transit point. © IOM 2018

3.1.3. Assistance to third-country nationals in situation of vulnerability

It is a fact that throughout the implementation of the current AVRR programme, there was a significant increase of migrants in situation of vulnerability opting for assisted voluntary return, including migrants with health needs, VoTs, UMCs and elderly. Cases of migrants with medical needs have risen over the last years mainly due to the prolonged stay in Greece in harsh conditions and lack of alternatives and opportunities.

Throughout the programme's second year of implementation, IOM Greece assisted a total of 552 migrants in situation of vulnerability to return to their CoOs with safety and dignity.

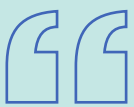
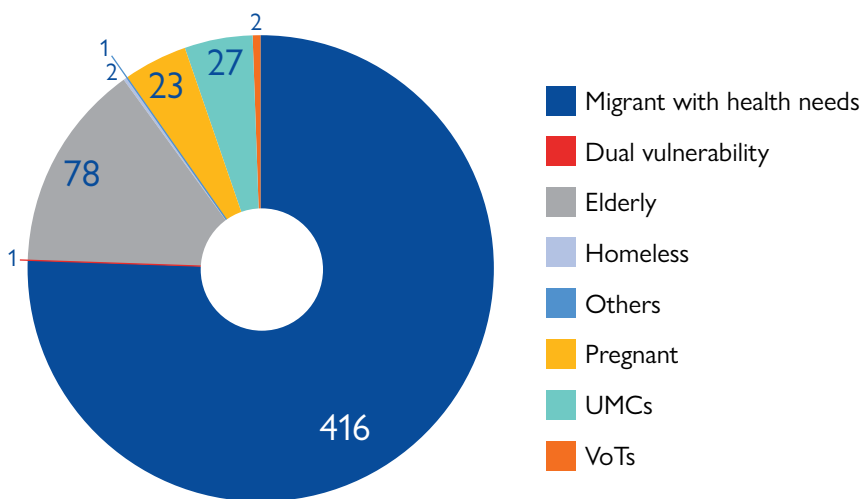
IOM Greece focused on providing personalized and tailored services to migrants in situation of vulnerability to satisfy their desire to return to their CoOs. Particular attention and delicate handling were required before, during and after the return travel.

IOM organized AVRR support of all migrants in situation of vulnerability, always taking in consideration the specific needs of each case and the individual solution envisaged for each case. Operational and medical escorts were deployed when needed to ensure the smooth implementation of the return.

Extensive reintegration counselling was conducted for migrants in situation of vulnerability cases and through cooperation with IOM Missions in the CoO reintegration plans were developed to the best interest of the beneficiaries so as to integrate in the local community and safeguard their long-term well-being.

One of the lessons learned throughout the implementation of the current programme was that assistance provision to migrants in situation of vulnerability requires a holistic approach, and mention should be given to develop further initiatives towards this direction.

Figure 6: Migrants in situation of vulnerability provided with AVRR assistance during the second year of the project



Satnam from India

My relationship with Greece started years ago, in 1987, when I first came from India. Back then I was young – 32 years old – and I was coming to Greece to find a job and support my family financially. I had a good life in India, a decent job, a sufficient income. But my siblings were in a difficult position, so I decided to come to Greece and help them by sending them money. I was one of the best electricians in Athens, and I was making good money. Things were different back then since there were better job conditions. I worked really hard; I built a lot of houses, I made Greek friends, and as a result, I managed to support my family.



Satnam received a special escort assistance from Crete Island to India, ensuring his smooth travel. © IOM 2018

However, my family was away. My initial plan was to stay in Greece for a short period of time, but since my family needs were increasing, I decided to stay practically more than 30 years. A few months ago, I started thinking of my wife, our children, our dog, our jokes. Three months ago, I had an accident, and I was hospitalized in the public hospital of Heraklion, a big city on the island of Crete. I was feeling really weak, and I was afraid of my life. So I decided to return to my family. IOM took care of

everything. They issued my travel documents. I had a special escort from Crete to India and through the reintegration assistance, I will be able to do all the necessary medical exams on time.

IOM not only gave me the opportunity to see my family again, but I also managed to enhance my fragile clinical picture. A new life has just started for me.



3.1.4. Post-arrival

IOM Greece was in collaboration with the IOM Offices in CoOs to provide reception assistance upon arrival and reintegration assistance activities for those returnees who were entitled to receive such support. IOM Offices in CoOs may facilitate with the entry for luggage upon arrival and provide initial post-arrival information and referral services. It should be noted that migrants in situation of vulnerability, such as UMCs, those with medical needs and the elderly, were provided with specific assistance throughout the whole duration of the travel, as well as reception/reintegration in the CoO. Moreover, IOM Greece and IOM Offices in CoOs cooperated for the provision of further reintegration assistance, including monitoring activities.

Chapter 4:

The reintegration assistance

Reintegration is a fundamental aspect of the return process and contributes to the sustainability of returns for all parties – migrants, the host countries and origin countries.²³ IOM has been at the centre of designing and delivering reintegration assistance since the inception of AVRR, and thanks to its global presence and worldwide expertise, the Organization is in an undoubtedly privileged position to share expertise gained over many years of conceptualization and implementation.

According to IOM's definition, reintegration can be considered sustainable when returnees have reached levels of economic self-sufficiency, social stability within their communities and psychosocial well-being that allow them to cope with (re)migration drivers. Having achieved sustainable reintegration, returnees are able to make further migration decisions a matter of choice, rather than necessity.²⁴

IOM considers AVRR to be an indispensable part of comprehensive approach to migration management. AVRR represents a more humane and dignified approach to return and provides the possibility of more effective reintegration assistance that can respond in some capacity to the immediate needs of returnees. Moreover, it contributes to their self-sufficiency upon their arrival in their CoO, as well as to the local development of communities of origin.

To contribute to Greece's comprehensive management of migration by facilitating the safe and dignified return of TCNs to their countries of origin,

23 IOM considers reintegration assistance fundamental; however, resources are sometimes limited, and as such, IOM then tries to ensure that at least the most vulnerable of returnees are provided with reintegration support.

24 IOM, *Towards an Integrated Approach to Reintegration in the Context of Return* (IOM, Geneva, 2017). Available from www.iom.int/sites/default/files/our_work/DMM/AVRR/Towards-an-Integrated-Approach-to-Reintegration.pdf

IOM Greece – through the AVRR programme – aims to provide reintegration assistance to 3,600 project beneficiaries who will return to their countries of origin under the project. The reintegration unit has a yearly target of 1,200 implemented reintegration plans in different countries.

However, the developments that occurred during the first year of the implementation of the project (June 2016–May 2017) – such as the high number of arrivals, the imposed restrictive policies, the closure of the Northern European borders, the establishment of the European Union–Turkey statement, the inadequate accommodation structures on the islands to cover the emerging needs, the high number of asylum applications and the prolonged stay of the TCNs on the hotspot islands – resulted in migrant populations being unable to leave the islands of North-Eastern Aegean Sea. These factors were largely influential on migrants and refugees and resulted in feelings of fatigue, impatience, anger and despair evident in the frequent tensions, protests and incidents of violence that were occasionally bursting out in all RICs.

IOM Greece, taking into account the aforementioned factors, proposed a provision for reintegration assistance through an additional reintegration package that would enhance the option of the voluntary return for the TCNs who were residing on the North Aegean islands, under a six-month pilot scheme. This reintegration package was given in cash in the form of an additional EUR 500 grant per returnee. The returnee should be in a situation of vulnerability, residing on one of the islands of Chios, Kos, Leros, Lesvos and Samos, without a family and opted for AVRR. That means that the assistance provided to the returnees was double. The package ended in September 2017 of the second year of the implementation of the programme assisting 292 TCNs to return to their home countries in June, July and August. In total, this pilot project assisted 623 returnees. Migrants in situation of vulnerability residing in the islands did not to receive the additional reintegration assistance in cash, as they were entitled to the reintegration assistance in kind (EUR 1,500).

4.1. Target group and types of assistance in kind

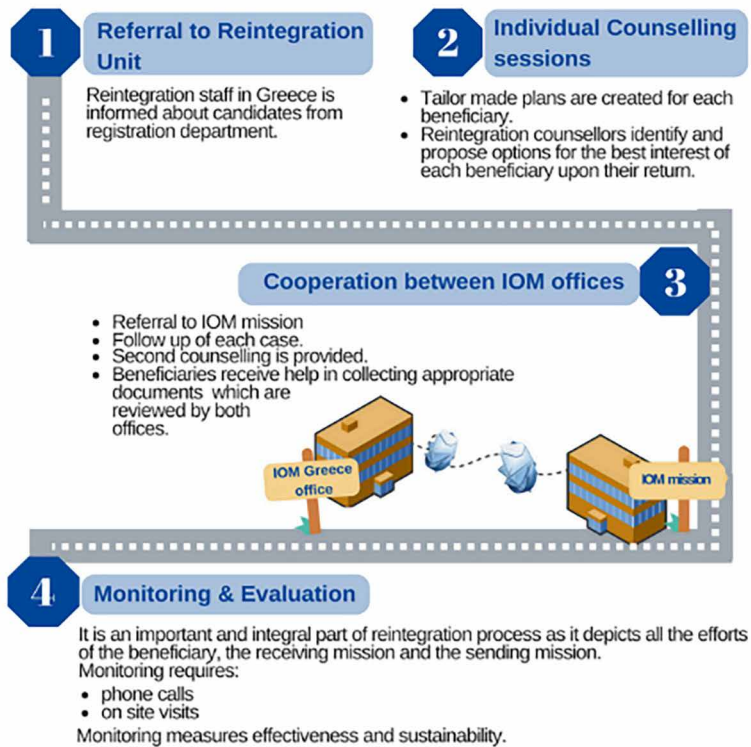
The reintegration unit of IOM Greece, with the support of cultural mediators, conducted individual counselling sessions with the returnees to provide them with information regarding the implementation of reintegration plans in their CoO so as to facilitate successful long-term reintegration.

During the implementation of the second year of the project (June 2017–May 2018), it was noticed that there was a need to establish even more new contact channels with countries, such as Uganda, Serbia, Zimbabwe and Sri Lanka, and explore the possibility of implementing reintegration plans in their CoO with returnees from IOM Greece, for the first time. During the second year of the implementation of the programme, IOM Greece's reintegration unit cooperated with 30 different countries. Thanks to IOM's global presence, the unit was able to provide reintegration assistance to a wide list of countries.

For the selection of candidates who would receive the reintegration assistance in kind, various parameters were taken into consideration, such as a situation of vulnerability, work experience, skills and other specifications that could guarantee the duration and sustainability of their reintegration plan.

4.2. Reintegration assistance process

The procedure of each reintegration plan was multiphase. It pertained to several paramount operational procedures in order to accomplish one completed plan in the CoO. Tools that had been constructed for effective follow-up of the cases were continually updated, and new tools were also created for the needs of the new AVRR projects.

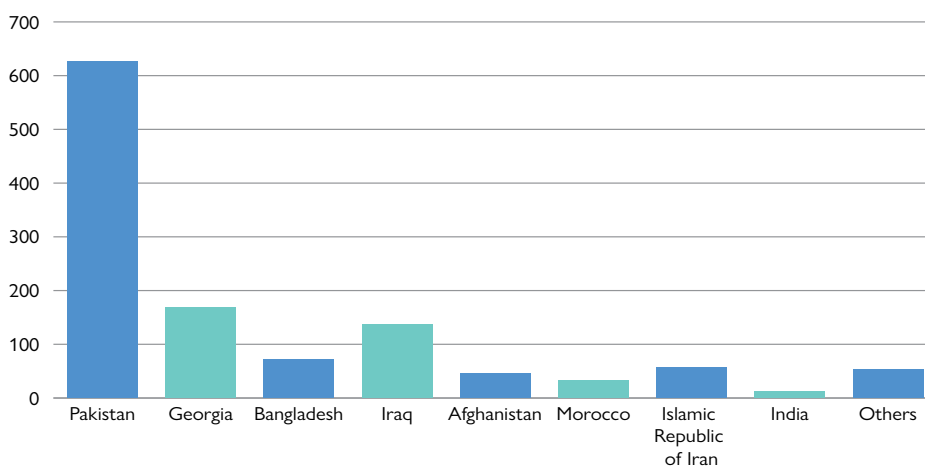


Source: IOM Mission in Greece.

4.3. Cooperation with IOM offices in countries of origin

Along with great cooperation between 30 IOM offices worldwide, IOM Greece managed to assist 1,202 beneficiaries to receive reintegration assistance, as depicted in Figure 7.

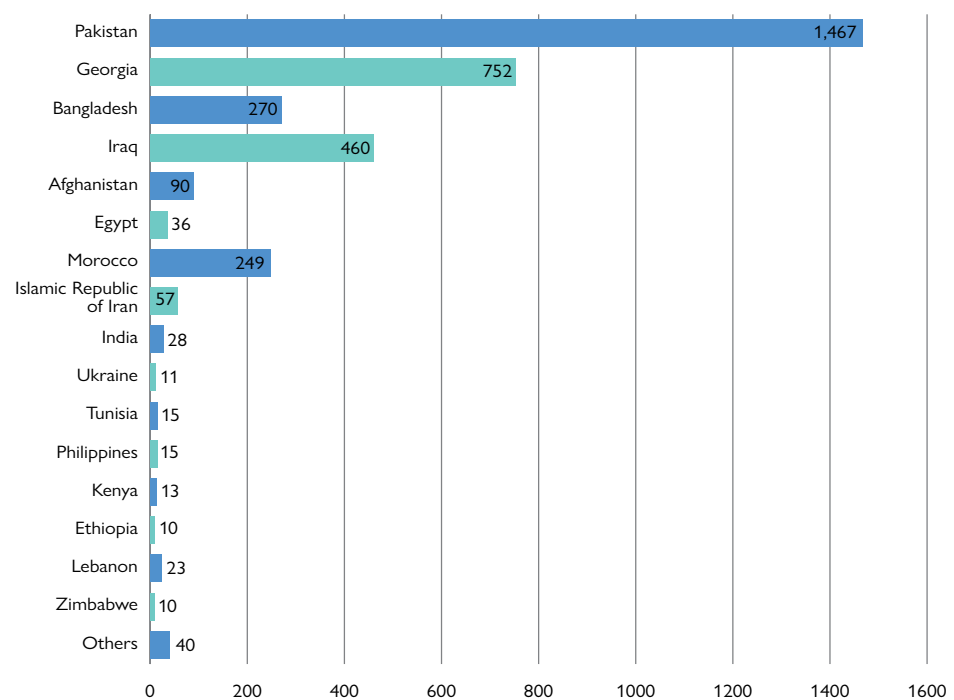
Figure 7: Reintegration assistance provided per country



Upon return, beneficiaries received a second counselling session from the respective IOM mission in their CoO. This seemed to be a good practice as experience proved that several agreed plans discussed in Greece had to be altered due to the fact that beneficiaries dealt with different circumstances in their hometown than thought prior departure. Even though not all plans changed, counselling sessions were still important since the beneficiary was informed about all necessary documents that he/she should provide, so as to initiate and implement the plan.

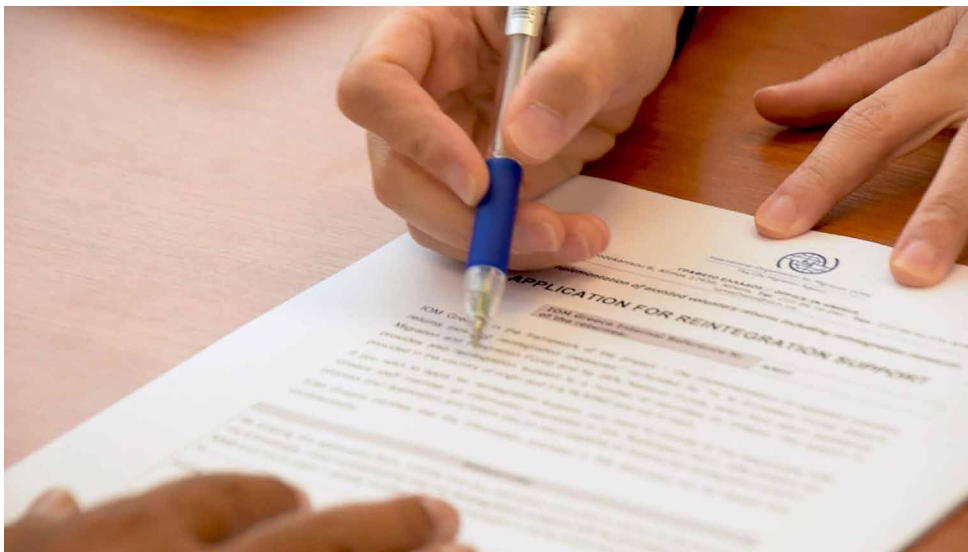
Figure 8 depicts the number of sessions provided by IOM missions worldwide to beneficiaries returning to their CoO departing from Greece.

Figure 8: Counselling sessions in countries of origin



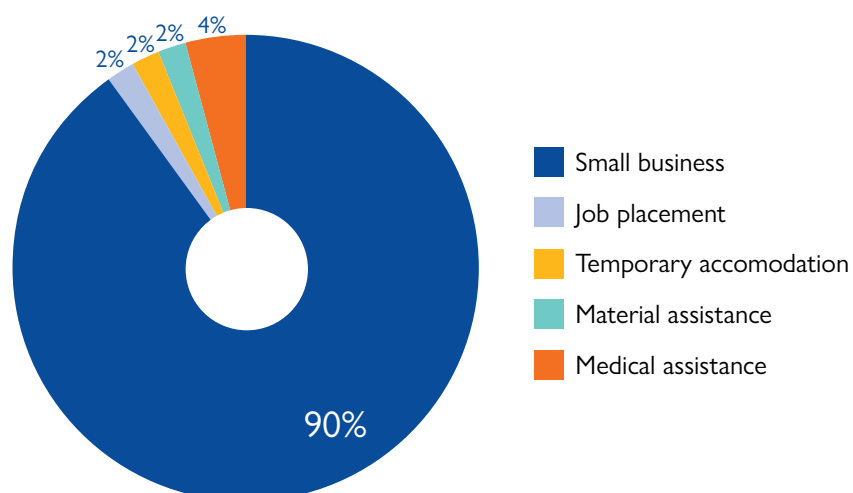
In the framework of the AVRR programme, personalized assistance empowered the returnees and set the grounds for an environment where they could take responsibility for the reintegration process and decide on the use of reintegration support. Within individual reintegration support, tailored

packages could promote the returnees' economic self-sufficiency, for instance by supporting the set-up of small business, promoting the reinsertion in the local labour market and increasing returnees' skills through enrolment in education or vocational training courses. The reintegration assistance under this project was EUR 1,500 in kind.



An AVRR beneficiary applying for reintegration assistance. © IOM 2018

Figure 9: Top preferred types of assistance during the second year of the project



4.4. Various types of reintegration assistance in kind

Each personal story is a special, unique narrative that includes expectations, hopes and experiences having as destination a dignified, sustainable return in full respect of fundamental human rights.



Islam Md Shohidul at his mobile store in Bangladesh.
© IOM 2018

Small business: Mobile phone store in Bangladesh

I had several years of work experience in a mobile and accessories shop in Bangladesh, and after my return to my home country, I managed to set up a mobile and accessories shop through IOM's reintegration assistance. The business is doing relatively well while now I am able to employ two staff. Monthly income allows me to support my family, and my future plan is to expand my business so as to sustain myself and family even more.



Small business: Dairy farm in Pakistan

As a farmer since childhood in Pakistan, I used the reintegration assistance in kind in the form of setting up a small cattle-buffalo breeding business. I am very satisfied with the reintegration assistance of IOM, and it seems that my long experience has helped me to thrive in this domain.



Iqbal Zafar at his dairy farm in Pakistan. © IOM 2018



“

Material assistance in Iraq

Prior departure to Europe, I had to sell all my home appliances. So, now, upon return to my house in Duhok, I prefer to use the reintegration assistance in kind through purchasing some basic home appliance that will improve the living condition of my family.



Dena Aishe Ziden Shamo after receiving basic home appliance in Iraq. © IOM 2018

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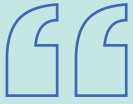
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Temporal accommodation in Afghanistan

Kabiri Mohamad Bashir at his rented house in Kabul city. © IOM 2018

Upon my return to Afghanistan, I did not have my own house to accommodate myself and my seven-member family. As this was the most essential need for us, I managed to rent a house in Khair Khana area, in Kabul city, which contains a kitchen, a bathroom and three bedrooms.

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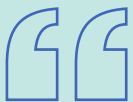


Vocational training in Georgia

I wanted to use the reintegration assistance in kind for an aesthetician and make-up artist vocational training in Georgia. Through IOM's reintegration assistance, I attended the beauty courses in a specialized vocational centre in Georgia, from which I received a certificate of completion.



Mestvirishvili Tea at her beauty courses. © IOM 2018

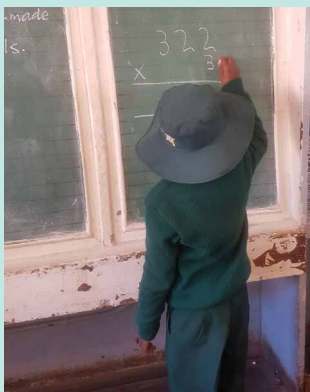


Medical assistance in Georgia

After 15 years residing in Greece, I decided to return to my home country, Georgia, due to my health issues. I was in need of surgery for both legs, but according to doctor's recommendations, I had to go under two different surgeries. Through IOM's assistance, medical expenses were covered.



Khosroshvili Lily after receiving her medical assistance in Georgia. © IOM 2018



Gonyora Christine used part of her reintegration assistance to pay for tuition fees and school uniform for her son. © IOM 2018



Education assistance in Zimbabwe

I am a mother of a single-parent family who recently returned from Greece. I wished to use my reintegration assistance in the form of education, to pay tuition fees and school uniform for my son. The available remaining grant will be used to set up a small business so as to earn income and support my family. In that way, we will be all benefited!



Monitoring visit to Morocco

In February 2018, IOM Mission of Greece conducted a monitoring visit to Morocco and specifically in the cities and wider areas of Marrakesh, El Kelaa des Sraghna and Casablanca with the aim of evaluating the progress of implemented reintegration plans of the beneficiaries who were assisted by the IOM AVR program. IOM Morocco had implemented many successful plans in rural as well as urban areas. Beneficiaries expressed their willingness to expand their businesses, and remigration for financial issues was not an option for them anymore.

All beneficiaries that were monitored, despite the difficulties that they had faced, were satisfied with IOM reintegration assistance. The beneficiaries who invested in family business seemed to be doing very well and were more satisfied with their business development.

Various factors influencing a person's ability to reintegrate in their CoO are not dissimilar from those that resulted in the decision to migrate in the first place. They can be of economic, social and psychosocial nature, and they relate at the same time to the individual returnees, the communities to which they return and the structural environment. IOM asserts that reintegration can be considered sustainable when returnees have reached levels of economic self-sufficiency, social stability within their communities and psychosocial well-being that allow them to cope with (re)migration drivers. Having achieved sustainable reintegration, returnees are able to make further migration decisions a matter of choice, rather than necessity.



Fadil at his butcher shop in Morocco. © IOM 2018/Mission in Greece

Monitoring visit to India

Gurpreet Singh resides in a remote area, and he has set up his own dairy farm. With the assistance of IOM, he managed to purchase two buffaloes that produce 45 litres of milk per month. The beneficiary uses a small space for the buffaloes outside of his house. Singh collects the milk, waits for the middleman on a daily basis to sell it, and then distributes this product to other customers. According to Singh, he earns around INR 9,000–10,000 monthly, which is a good source of income for his family. He is also helping his father in agricultural activities, while he is trying to save money in order to expand his dairy farm business. Last but not least, Singh expressed many times his gratitude towards IOM for the assistance he received in order to implement his business plan.



IOM staff with Gurpreet Singh's family. © IOM 2018/Mission in Greece

In December 2017, IOM Mission in Greece conducted a monitoring visit to India, specifically to the northern region of India, in Punjab. This visit was conducted with the aim of evaluating the progress of the implemented reintegration plans by the beneficiaries who were assisted by the IOM AVRR programme. IOM's reintegration assistance in the context of return aims at fostering reintegration sustainability. In order to monitor and evaluate this effort, new tools have been developed to measure the sustainability of reintegration.

The economic dimension of reintegration covers aspects of reintegration that contribute to economic self-sufficiency. These include the ability to borrow money, the debt-to-spending ratio, need for food rationing, adequacy of employment and ownership of productive assets.

The social dimension reflects the extent to which returnees have reached social stability within the community, including access to services relating to housing, education, justice, health and other public infrastructure services.

The psychosocial dimension encompasses the emotional, mental and psychological elements of reintegration. “Psychological”-related needs – such as the need for therapy due to a mental health concern – are just one component of the broader psychosocial dimension.

From the sample monitored in India, it was concluded that all returnees gained income enough to support their family, had access to necessary services, such as health centres and education institutions, and according to their words, they are all participating in social activities and feel strongly that they are part of the community.

Conclusion

Following the completion of the second year of the project, the Implementation of Assisted Voluntary Returns including Reintegration Measures, co-funded 75 per cent by the European AMIF and 25 per cent by national funds, it seems safe to conclude that voluntary returns remain the most humane option for those migrants who do not wish to remain in Greece any longer.

Since the beginning of the second year of the project's implementation in June 2017, more than 5,000 TCNs were assisted by IOM Greece to return to their CoO under the AMIF National Programme. Moreover, more than 600 returnees received reintegration assistance in cash, while more than 1,000 returnees received reintegration assistance in kind developing tailor-made reintegration plans, such as small businesses, education, job placement, medical assistance and temporary accommodation. Additionally, extensive information campaigns took place in various locations across Greece as a means to raise awareness about the procedures and benefits of the project and share updated information to potential beneficiaries and different stakeholders.

Taking into consideration all the above-mentioned results and achievements, IOM Greece is confident that the second year of the current AVRR project was completed successfully. IOM Greece strongly believes that the voluntary return programme contributes significantly to migration management, especially in transit countries that received a massive influx of TCNs who had no intention of settling in since their initial final destination is another European country. Furthermore, as indicated in this report through beneficiaries' success stories, voluntary returns benefit both the host countries and countries of return, as they support the returnees to live in their CoO with dignity and sustainability.

Last but not the least, it should be noted that AVRR staff remains dedicated to the programme while striving to serve AVRR beneficiaries in the best possible way. Being hardworking, flexible, passionate and person-centred while dealing with potential returnees; AVRR staff strive to maintain IOM visibility and ensure that IOM's credibility is perpetuated and strengthened. Within the second year of the project's implementation, IOM Greece is engaged to maintain the effort and develop new practices and tools for assisting beneficiaries.

Annex 1

AVRR projects since 2010

Voluntary Return of Third-Country Nationals and Reception into Their Countries of Origin	
March 2010–June 2011	
The programme was co-funded by the European Return Fund (75%) and the Ministry of Public Order and Citizen Protection (25%).	586 returns
Voluntary Return of Third-Country Nationals and Reception into Their Countries of Origin	
March 2011–June 2011	
The programme was co-funded by the European Return Fund (75%) and the Ministry of Public Order and Citizen Protection (25%).	511 returns
Assisted Voluntary Return Programme including Reintegration Measures – Annual Programme 2010	
December 2011–June 2012	
The programme was co-funded by the European Return Fund (75%) and the Ministry of Public Order and Citizen Protection (25%).	3,275 returns 35 reintegration returns
Assisted Voluntary Return of Third-Country Nationals from Greece	
February 2012–10 August 2012	
The programme was funded by the Government of the United Kingdom.	90 returns
Assisted Voluntary Return of Third-Country Nationals from Greece	
February 2012–January 2013	
The programme was funded by EEA Grants.	874 returns
Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration Programme for Third-Country Nationals in Their Country of Origin – Annual Programme 2011	
August 2012–June 2013	
The programme was co-funded by the European Return Fund (75%) and the Ministry of Public Order and Citizen Protection (25%).	8,046 returns 167 reintegration returns
Assisted Voluntary Return of Third-Country Nationals from Greece	
October 2012–August 2013	
The programme was funded by the Government of the United Kingdom.	188 returns

Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration Programme for Third-Country Nationals in Their Country of Origin – Annual Programme 2012

July 2013–June 2014

The programme was co-funded by the European Return Fund (75%) and the Ministry of Public Order and Citizen Protection (25%).	7,408 returns 514 reintegrations
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Addressing the needs of unaccompanied minors (UAMs) in Greece

January 2013–October 2014

The programme was co-funded by the European Commission (90%) and European Union Member States (10% – Sweden, the Netherlands, Denmark and the United Kingdom).	165 returns 129 reintegrations
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Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration Programme for Third-Country Nationals in Their Country of Origin – Annual Programme 2013

July 2014–June 2015

The programme was co-funded by the European Return Fund (75%) and the Ministry of Public Order and Citizen Protection (25%).	5,288 returns 2,189 reintegrations
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Enhancing Reintegration Assistance for Third-Country Nationals Returning through AVRR Programme of Greece

December 2014–December 2015 (Phase I and Phase II)

The programme was funded by the Swiss State Secretariat for Migration (SEM).	156 reintegrations
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Enhancing Reintegration Assistance for Third-Country Nationals Returning through AVRR Programme of Greece

December 2014–December 2015 (Phase I and Phase II)

The programme was funded by SEM.	156 reintegrations
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Assisted Voluntary Returns of Irregular Migrants from Greece

July 2015–September 2015

The programme was funded by the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration.	103 returns
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The Implementation of Assisted Voluntary Returns including Reintegration Measures

June 2016–May 2019

The programme is co-funded 75 per cent by the European AMIF and 25 per cent by national funds	11,028 returns (up to May 2018) 2,509 reintegration (up to May 2018)
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Annex 2

Information provision from islands from 1 June 2017 to 31 May 2018							
Origin	Lesvos	Chos	Samos	Kos	Leros	Crete	Total
Morocco	187	90	177	32	63	46	595
Iran (the Islamic Republic of)	238	66	53	15	16	45	433
Iraq	1,241	757	481	538	612	336	3,965
Pakistan	433	83	67	626	24	599	1,832
Georgia	-	-	-	-	-	27	27
Afghanistan	624	282	74	22	30	67	1,099
Algeria	582	138	485	27	41	19	1,292
Bangladesh	63	-	2	2	-	14	81
India	-	-	-	-	-	17	17
Ukraine	-	-	-	-	-	3	3
Lebanon	7	9	-	3	2	2	23
Republic of Moldova	0	-	-	-	-	2	2
Ethiopia	8	-	1	-	1	3	13
Nigeria	9	3	1	2	16	7	38
Egypt	106	6	6	1	1	11	131
Jordan	17	10	1	-	2	-	30
China	-	-	-	-	-	8	8
Russian Federation	-	-	-	-	-	9	9
Nepal	98	-	1	-	1	-	100
Sri Lanka	-	1	-	1	-	8	10
Tunisia	21	7	5	1	1	7	42
Dominican Republic	2	-	16	-	-	-	18
Armenia	-	-	-	2	-	2	4
Democratic Republic of the Congo	29	-	2	-	-	-	31
Senegal	13	-	-	-	2	2	17
Burkina Faso	2	-	7	1	1	2	13
Ghana	29	-	4	-	-	1	34
Haiti	3	-	-	-	-	1	4
Cameroon	108	-	19	2	17	8	154
Angola	0	-	-	-	2	-	2
Congo	43	-	18	-	1	2	64
Turkey	0	-	-	-	-	2	2
Sudan	10	1	-	-	-	-	11
Côte d'Ivoire	2	-	1	-	-	-	3
Peru	4	-	2	-	-	-	6
Kuwait	0	13	-	2	4	-	19

Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	9	-	1	-	-	-	10
Equatorial Guinea	35	-	7	-	1	-	43
Sierra Leone	1	-	-	-	1	-	2
Gambia	9	-	2	-	-	1	12
Argentina	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Mali	4	-	-	-	-	2	6
Somalia	-	-	-	3	8	-	11
Colombia	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Zimbabwe	3	-	-	-	-	-	3
Yemen	1	7	-	-	-	-	8
Paraguay	-	-	2	-	-	-	2
Albania	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Burundi	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Chad	1	-	1	-	-	-	2
Togo	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Total	3,942	1,473	1,439	1,282	848	1,253	10,237

Annex 3

Registrations from islands from 1 June 2017 to 31 May 2018							
Origin	Lesvos	Chios	Samos	Kos	Leros	Crete	Total
Morocco	47	31	17	7	7	8	117
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	21	3	4	2	1	2	33
Iraq	162	130	96	95	65	28	576
Pakistan	65	13	11	135	1	115	340
Georgia	-	-	-	-	-	8	8
Afghanistan	26	2	4	3	-	-	35
Algeria	111	32	63	7	4	3	220
Bangladesh	11	-	-	-	-	-	11
India	-	-	-	-	-	3	3
Ukraine	-	-	-	-	-	3	3
Lebanon	2	2	-	1	-	-	5
Ethiopia	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
Nigeria	-	1	-	-	-	1	2
Egypt	13	1	-	-	-	3	17
Jordan	1	3	-	-	6	-	10
Russian Federation	-	-	-	-	-	3	3
Nepal	21	-	-	-	-	-	21
Tunisia	9	2	3	-	1	-	15
Dominican Republic	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Armenia	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Democratic Republic of the Congo	2	-	-	-	-	-	2
Senegal	4	-	-	-	-	-	4
Burkina Faso	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Cameroon	11	-	1	-	-	-	12
Turkey	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Peru	1	-	2	-	-	-	3
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	3	-	1	-	-	-	4
Guinea	1	-	1	-	-	-	2
Gambia	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Argentina	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Colombia	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Paraguay	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Zimbabwe	3	-	-	-	-	-	3
Total	516	220	206	250	85	182	1,459

Annex 4

Returns from islands from 1 June 2017 to 31 May 2018							
Origin	Lesvos	Chios	Samos	Kos	Leros	Crete	Total
Morocco	49	28	21	7	7	7	119
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	19	3	2	2	-	3	29
Iraq	140	94	56	76	43	11	420
Pakistan	94	9	16	139	3	86	347
Georgia	-	-	-	-	-	6	6
Afghanistan	23	1	4	3	-	-	31
Algeria	146	48	77	4	14	3	292
Bangladesh	31	-	3	2	-	-	36
India	2	-	-	-	-	3	5
Ukraine	-	-	-	-	-	3	3
Lebanon	2	3	-	-	-	-	5
Nigeria	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Egypt	16	1	-	-	-	3	20
Jordan	-	4	-	-	4	-	8
Russian Federation	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
Nepal	24	-	-	-	-	-	24
Tunisia	12	2	3	-	1	-	18
Dominican Republic	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Democratic Republic of the Congo	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Senegal	2	-	-	-	-	-	2
Burkina Faso	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Cameroon	9	-	-	-	-	-	9
Peru	1	-	2	-	-	-	3
Plurinational State of Bolivia)	3	1	1	-	-	-	5
Guinea	5	-	-	-	-	-	5
Gambia	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Argentina	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Colombia	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Zimbabwe	3	-	-	-	-	-	3
Paraguay	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Total	584	194	188	233	72	129	1,400

The project is co-funded 75 per cent by European funds
(Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund) and 25 per cent by national funds.

