

# THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ASSISTED VOLUNTARY RETURNS INCLUDING REINTEGRATION MEASURES

**ANNUAL REPORT**  
JUNE 2016 – MAY 2017

**INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION**  
IOM – THE UN MIGRATION AGENCY  
OFFICE IN GREECE

**BULLETIN #1**



**ANNUAL REPORT**  
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HELLENIC REPUBLIC  
MINISTRY OF INTERIOR

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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
EU	European Union
IOM	International Organization for Migration
NGO	Non-governmental organization
TCN(s)	Third-country national(s)
NFI	Non-food item
UMCs	Unaccompanied migrant children
VoT	Victims of trafficking

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International Organization for Migration – the UN Migration Agency (IOM) is the major intergovernmental organization in the field of migration and it is dedicated to promote humane and orderly migration for the benefit of all. In that framework, IOM, since its establishment in 1951, collaborates closely with governments, NGOs and other institutions and assists migrants in need, including refugees and internally displaced persons.

At this glance and throughout its existence, the IOM Office 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. Assisted voluntary return and reintegration is one of the core activities of IOM and has provided vital assistance to tens of thousands of migrants returning home every year. Through, “The implementation of assisted voluntary returns including reintegration measures” (AVRR), our office provides assistance to undocumented migrants with no legal stay in Greece, rejected asylum seekers, asylum seekers who have withdrawn their asylum claim, victims of trafficking (VoT) and other persons in situation of vulnerability. Our purpose is to provide them with the opportunity to return to their countries of origin (CoO) with safety and dignity and support them to create sustainable conditions of living through reintegration measures.

It is with great pleasure that we present this AVRR Annual Report on activities implemented by the IOM Office in Greece for the period 2016–2017. The Annual Report is written in the framework of AVRR is implemented to assist migrants returning voluntarily to their CoO. The project is implemented under the AMIF National Programme 2014–2020, funded 75 per cent by the European AMIF and 25 per cent by National Funds. The activities are described on this report were implemented by IOM Office in Greece in cooperation with IOM Offices in CoO, local stakeholders, international counterparts, Diplomatic Authorities, Greek Authorities, the Ministry of Interior and other collaborative entities.

Throughout the chapters of this report, you may trace significant data for migration trends, understand the know-how procedures followed by our Office and discover the activities undertaken towards the successful implementation of the project and gain an overall view of ideas and feelings of project beneficiaries and staff involved.

Daniel Esdras

Special Envoy of the Director General of IOM to the Government of Greece





IOM, the UN Migration Agency is the world leading Organization regarding AVRR, having assisted 100,000 TCNs to return to their home countries during 2016.

Return migration is a key issue on the agenda of national and international migration policymakers around the world thanks to its social and economic impact on CoO, transit and destination. Within Europe the IOM's mission in Greece is implementing one of the largest AVRR operations mainly related to the recent inflow of migrants. The programme in Greece continues providing an adequate response to those stranded in Greece offering safe and dignified return to their CoO. More than 6,000 TCNs have voluntarily joined the project during the first year of activities.

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. 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.

IOM premises in Athens are visited daily by TCNs asking to be included in our voluntary return programme. IOM Greece, always working together with the consulate authorities and migrant communities, operates with more than 50 specialized staff members, while respectfully implements activities in favor of the migrants and their families.

It is with great pleasure that we present the AVRR Bulletin, capturing information for the first year of the programme's implementation, illustrating the excellent results achieved during the past year to assist migrants returning and reintegrating to their home.

The present publication is also a valuable tool which presents a broad overview of IOM Greece AVRR data on migration profiles, developments and related activities undertaken between May 2016 and June 2017. Equally important, the bulletin intends to emphasize the innovative and effective approaches applied by IOM related to migrants' reintegration in their countries and societies of origin.

The implementation of voluntary return programmes equals above all to the respect of migrant's choice to return, the prevention of the deportation stigma and the effective reintegration to a functional and safe environment.

Rocco Gianluca

Chief of IOM Mission in Greece



## DEFINITIONS

- **Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR) / Assisted Voluntary Returns 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.
- **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.
- **County of Origin (CoO):** The country that is a source of migratory flows (regular or irregular).
- **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 in order to indicate other (possible) destinations.<sup>1</sup>
- **Country of Transit:** The country through which migratory flows (regular or irregular) move.
- **Immigration:** A process by which non-nationals move into a country for the purpose of settlement.
- **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.
- **Migrant:** 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 (1) the person's legal status; (2) whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary; (3) what the causes for the movement are; or (4) 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.<sup>2</sup>
- **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.
- **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.

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<sup>1</sup> European Migration Network (EMN) - Return Migration, published by the Directorate-General Justice, Freedom and Security: [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](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)

<sup>2</sup> Key Migration Terms - IOM: [www.iom.int/key-migration-terms](http://www.iom.int/key-migration-terms)

- **Refugee:** A person who, "owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinions, 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, Art. 1A(2), 1951 as modified by the 1967 Protocol). In addition to the refugee definition in the 1951 Refugee Convention, Art. 1(2), 1969 Organization of African Unity Convention 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, security or freedom have been threatened by generalized violence, foreign aggression, internal conflicts, massive violations of human rights or other circumstances which have seriously disturbed public order."
- **Removal:** Enforcement of the obligation to return; physical transportation out of the country.
- **Returnee:** A non-EU/EEA (i.e. third country) national migrant who moves to Country of Return, whether voluntary or forced.<sup>3</sup>
- **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 to be for a period of time more than three months) in another country. This return may or may not be voluntary.
- **Return Decision:** An administrative or judicial decision or act, stating or declaring the stay of a third-country nationals (TCN) to be illegal and imposing an obligation to return.<sup>4</sup>
- **Third Country National:** A person belonging to, or owing an allegiance to, another State.
- **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.
- **Unaccompanied Migrant Children (UMC)** ( also called Unaccompanied Minors ): are children, as defined in article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child of 20 November 1989 (CRC), "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"<sup>5</sup>.  
For IOM, UMC are persons under the age of majority in a country other than that of their nationality who are not accompanied by a parent, guardian, or other adult who by law or custom is responsible for them. UMC present special challenges for border control officials, because detention and other practices applied to undocumented adult non-nationals may not be appropriate for children.

\*Note:

Source: IOM, Glossary on Migration 2nd edition, 2011: [www.epim.info/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/iom.pdf](http://www.epim.info/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/iom.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. note 1.

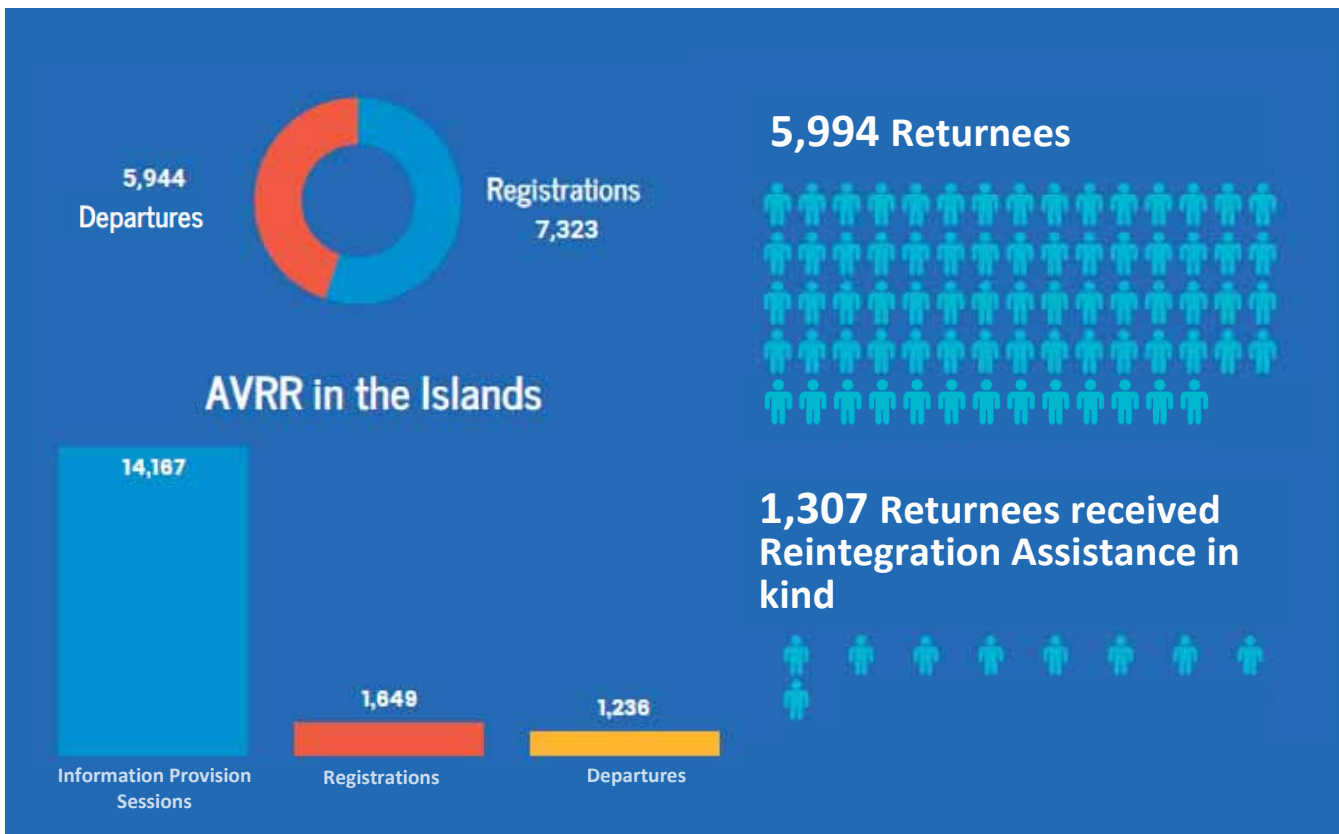
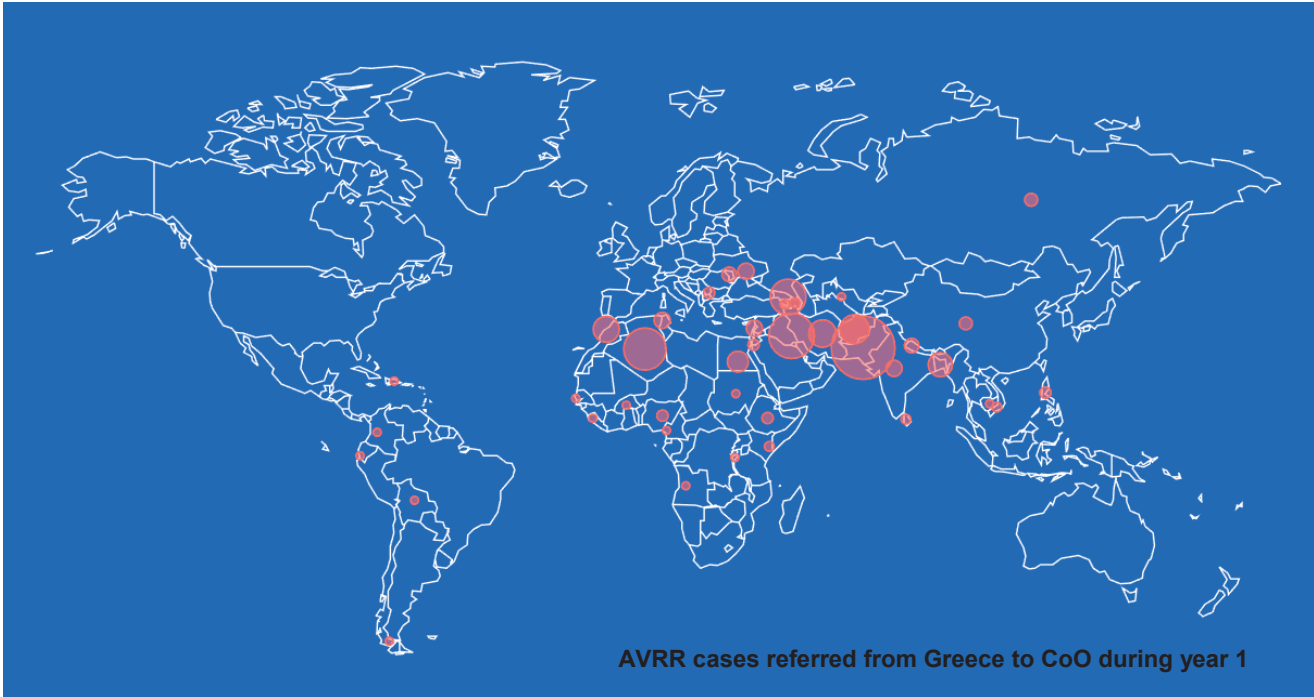
<sup>4</sup> Return Directive - Article 3(4); 6(6), ANNEX RETURN HANDBOOK p.10.

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](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/return_handbook_en.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment n°6, Treatment of Unaccompanied and Separated Children Outside Their Country of Origin, CRC/GC/2005/6, 1 September 2005, para. 7.

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## AVRR ANNUAL ACTIVITIES AT A GLANCE



## PART 1

### IOM AND AVRR



13 IOM return policy

14 Underlying principles of return

15 The returns process

17 The reintegration assistance process

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.

AVRR is one of the core support activities provided by IOM to migrants and Member States. Often implemented in cooperation with NGOs and Diaspora communities, AVRR provides vital assistance to tens of thousands of migrants returning home every year.

AVR(R) entails advantages 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, whilst 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.



IOM defines “assisted voluntary return and reintegration” (AVRR) as “the administrative, logistical, financial and reintegration support to rejected asylum seekers, 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 CoO”.<sup>6</sup>

IOM is mandated by its Constitution to ensure orderly migration, inter alia, through voluntary return and reintegration assistance. Article 1, paragraph 1(d) of the IOM Constitution spells out the various services the Organization can provide, including “voluntary return migration” and “voluntary repatriation”. IOM policy guidelines on the implementation of voluntary return assistance are enshrined in three IOM Council documents.<sup>7</sup>

IOM considers AVRR an indispensable part of a comprehensive approach to migration management that is mutually beneficial to migrants, governments and other sectors of society affected by migration. AVRR is the most desirable form of return, given that it takes the individual’s voluntary decision into account and allows him or her to prepare for return, while avoiding the stigma of deportation and its negative repercussions for successful reintegration. Where feasible, reintegration assistance, in the context of wider community development to ensure greater sustainability, is the process by which a migrant is reinserted into the economic and social structure of the CoO, and becomes self-sufficient and able to earn his/her own livelihood.

IOM also advocates for the establishment of a cooperative approach and partnerships for the management of return migration frameworks by engaging CoO, transit and destination. The cooperation initiated in the context of voluntary return among the various parties involved in the process constitutes a platform on which discussion may be expanded to explore, inter alia, possibilities to establish facilitated regular migration channels between those same countries. In doing so, it enhances the positive value of coordinated migration management, including voluntary return options rather than the unilateral approach that may be adopted to handle such issues.

### **IOM’s Key Policy Considerations**

- ✓ To safeguard migrants’ dignity and rights in operating their return, while seeking adherence to applicable international principles and standards;
- ✓ To ensure that migrants have access to protection and refugee determination mechanisms;
- ✓ To preserve the integrity of regular migration structures and asylum procedures;
- ✓ To enhance cooperation between origin, transit and host countries in the return process and reinforce the responsibility of CoO to their returning nationals;
- ✓ To address the root causes of irregular migration through a rights-based lens;
- ✓ To advocate for the adoption of comprehensive voluntary return approaches, inclusive of post-return reintegration assistance, wherever possible, as a more effective, sustainable and mutually beneficial option that can contribute to addressing repeated irregular migration.

<sup>6</sup> IOM, Glossary on Migration 2nd edition, 2011.

<sup>7</sup> IOM Return Policy and Projects: A Contribution to Combating Irregular Migration, MC/INF/222 (1992); IOM Policy Concerning its Assistance to Unsuccessful Asylum Seekers and Irregular Migrants Returning to Their Countries of Origin, MC/EX/INF/51 (1996); Policies and Practices with Respect to Rejected Asylum-Seekers, MC/INF/236 (1997).

## UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES OF RETURN

For a 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.

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### WHO CAN BENEFIT FROM AVRR?

Beneficiaries of AVRR programmes may include stranded migrants, irregular migrants, regular migrants, 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 vulnerable conditions, such as VoT, elderly people, unaccompanied migrant children (UMC) and migrants with health-related needs.

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<sup>8</sup> [www.iom.int/sites/default/files/our\\_work/DMM/AVRR/IOM-DMM-MAD-AVRR-Factsheet-2016.pdf](http://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/our_work/DMM/AVRR/IOM-DMM-MAD-AVRR-Factsheet-2016.pdf)



The provision of AVRR assistance to potential/actual returnees is developed in different phases including:

## 1. PRE-DEPARTURE ASSISTANCE

The first stage includes pre-departure procedures which are 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 are informed in their native language about the option of voluntary return and how IOM Greece can support them if they decide to participate in the programme.

The following steps are part of pre-departure arrangements and assistance:

- Ascertain the beneficiary's willingness to return;
- Check eligibility for assistance and inform the migrant accordingly;
- Referral to the Hellenic Police for clearance of exit from the country;
- Keep migrants informed of the process while IOM assists them in becoming travel ready;
- Provide further up-to-date information on the situation in the CoO in terms of return and reintegration.

## 2. TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

For the safe and dignified return of AVRR beneficiaries, IOM makes necessary travel arrangements.

The necessary travel arrangements that represent an integral part of the AVRR process are:

- Booking of flights or other means of transportation;
- Conduct family assessments (FA) in case of UMCs with the collaboration of IOM Offices in the CoOs;
- Facilitate the issuance of travel documents when required through liaison with the consular authorities of the CoO;
- Arrange escorts if required (e.g. in the case of UMC or migrants with health related needs);
- Arrange domestic transportation from the place of residence/accommodation in Greece to point of departure;
- Conduct pre-departure meetings to inform migrants of their flights and travel procedures;
- Conduct health assessments in case of migrants with health related needs;
- Ensure the reception and making transit and reception arrangements with IOM Missions including the provision of onwards transportation to the migrant's final destination, where needed;
- Provide departure assistance at the airport/point of departure.

## 3. POST-ARRIVAL ASSISTANCE

Once back home, IOM in the CoO may provide arrival and post-arrival assistance. It should be noted that vulnerable migrants such as UMCs, those with medical needs and the elderly are provided with specific assistance throughout the whole duration of the travel as well as reception/reintegration in the CoO.

Post-arrival assistance in the CoO may include:

- Provision of reception assistance at the airport/point of arrival;
- Facilitation with entry for luggage upon arrival;
- Provision of initial post-arrival information and referral services, as appropriate;
- Support with onward travel to the final destination, when necessary;
- Referral or provision of further health-related support in the framework of reintegration assistance in kind, where needed, as arranged at the pre-departure stage;
- Provision of further reintegration assistance, including monitoring activities.



*On 14 September 2016 a group of 17 migrants returned back to their homeland, to Iraq (Erbil) under the AVRR programme. Two UMCs were included in the group and travelled accompanied by an IOM Operational escort.*

In recent years, numerous efforts have been made towards improving return policy formulation and make return assistance more effective for those in need of such support. Reintegration is an important aspect of the return process and contributes to the sustainability of returns for all parties –migrants, the host countries and origin countries. 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 defined as the re-inclusion or re-incorporation of a person into a group process, for example, of a migrant into the society of his or her CoO. Reintegration is thus a process that enables the returnee to participate again in the social, cultural, economic and political life of his or her CoO.

Apart from financial assistance, reintegration involves also the support to the migrant to access employment, vocational training, education or medical assistance. Reintegration assistance is not only aimed at helping migrants to reintegrate into society, but also place the assistance in a wider context that includes the community affected by the return process. "IOM's expertise has shown that the promise of reintegration support actually represents a valid alternative which makes them consider the voluntary return an option."<sup>9</sup> Indeed this has proven true for migrants with irregular status, especially those who find themselves in difficult situations without clear prospects for the future. Complementary to the above, IOM's expertise also indicates that returns are more sustainable if the migrant's decision to return is an informed and thus voluntary one, supported by appropriate reintegration assistance to facilitate sustainable reinclusion in the host community.<sup>10</sup>

*"Return and reintegration are communicating vessels that one complements the other in an effective way"*

*Zoe Vanikiotis, Head of Reintegration Unit (AVRR), IOM Office in Greece*

Moreover, IOM has long held that return and reintegration policies are more effective when linked with protection of migrants' rights and development opportunities in CoO, particularly those that help addressing the root causes of irregular or forced migration.

Regarding the approach to reintegration, it is vital to underline the fact that no-size-fits-all exists. A tailor made approach towards each beneficiary's plan seems necessary in order to ensure sustainable, measurable, balanced, complementary and innovative plans which may lead to successful reintegration.

According to Ruben et al., for successful reintegration to occur, three elements have to be taken under consideration:<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Reintegration- Effective approaches, IOM, 2015.

[www.iom.int/sites/default/files/our\\_work/DMM/AVRR/Reintegration-Position-Paper-final.pdf](http://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/our_work/DMM/AVRR/Reintegration-Position-Paper-final.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration Handbook, IOM, 2010.

<sup>11</sup> Return Directive - Article 3(4); 6(6), ANNEX RETURN HANDBOOK 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](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/return_handbook_en.pdf)

## THE REINTEGRATION ASSISTANCE PROCESS

1. Opportunities to become self-sufficient;
2. Access to social networks;
3. Psychosocial health.

Additionally, another necessary component for successful reintegration is the migrants' motivation as well as active participation in the reintegration process. It is important for people to know that reintegration assistance is available and that people undertake a proactive role to find the best activity for them along with the help of reintegration counsellors, so as to make their return more sustainable.

At this point it seems necessary to underline the fact that reintegration is a procedure which requires collaboration with the countries where plans are implemented. It is recommended that responsibility of receiving countries for creating reintegration policies be promoted in order to facilitate successful long-term reintegration. Partnerships with CoO also help to better target reintegration assistance and link it to the existing programmes and schemes in the CoO. Thanks to IOMs' global presence, reintegration assistance is available worldwide and implemented successfully.

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

## PART 2

## IOM GREECE AND AVRR



20 IOM Greece Office

21 The need for AVRR

## IOM GREECE OFFICE

Greece is a founding member of IOM and the Office was established in 1952 on the basis of an Agreement between the Greek Government and IOM. The office in Greece has been offering services steadily to any moving population in need for the past 65 years, always preserving human dignity and the right of movement.

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

As of the 1980s onwards, IOM Greece arranged the resettlement of approximately 89,000 foreign migrants and refugees, mainly to the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

Since the early 1990s, the office began implementing a number of other migration management activities which included: integration programmes aimed at combating discrimination in the labour market, programmes to combat human trafficking and AVRR.



*During the 1960s, when IOM Greece assisted thousands Greek national emigrants leave Greece and settle in the United States, Canada, Australia and other overseas countries*



*In 2016, IOM Greece staff meets the migrants at the airport. It assists them with check-in and escorts them during the whole pre-flight procedure.*

Before the geopolitical changes of 1989, Greece was primarily a source of emigration since the 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 EU, Greece remains the main gateway to the EU for hundreds of thousands of people coming from the Middle East, Africa and Asia. Moreover, political and economic instability through the countries of Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa, the Sahel and Asia has increased the number of irregular migrants and refugees travelling to Europe.

IOM Greece is the only entity in Greece that has implemented both small scale and large scale AVR(R) programmes for TCNs and VoT. Small scale AVR programmes were funded in the past by the Hellenic Aid-MFA, the Ministry of Health, the European Refugee Fund and the Community Initiative EQUAL. From 2010, large scale programmes addressed to TCNs were implemented with funding from the European Return Fund (ERF). From the commencement of large scale AVRR programme, the need for continuous provision of AVR(R) 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.

The first project, which started in 2010 aimed to assist 586 persons to return to their CoO and since then IOM has assisted more than 38,000 TCNs to return to their home country. The reintegration assistance was first included as a pilot scheme for 50 returnees (Annual programme 2010) during 2012 to ensure sustainability of the return. The number of beneficiaries for reintegration activities increased in the Annual Return Fund 2011 and in the Annual Return Fund Programme 2013, the returnees who were supported with reintegration assistance reached 2,189. Throughout the years the reintegration component has constituted an integral part of the AVR(R) and consequently more than 4,500 returnees have been provided with reintegration assistance. (See Annex 1)

According to official data provided by the authorities during 2016, 131,847 migrants and refugees entered Greece<sup>1</sup> while the official data of Hellenic Coast Guard indicated that during January and February 2016, 27 per cent of the arriving population was Afghan nationals, 17 per cent Iraqi nationals, 3 per cent Iranian nationals, 3 per cent Pakistani nationals and 3 per cent was from other countries.

It is worth mentioning that IOM Greece throughout the years has developed the capacity to implement efficiently large scale AVRR projects and has established effective mechanisms for the implementation managing assisted voluntary returns and reintegration with various stakeholders and IOM Missions in the main CoO.

In order to respond to the imminent need for AVRR information and assistance throughout Greece, IOM has established 4 sub-offices and has deployed 12 information officers since 2013. IOM sub-offices in periphery are well established in the areas and thus accept lots of eligible beneficiaries in their premises while AVRR field officers in the various locations across Greece are witnesses of the programmes' significance and wide spread recognition. Through the sub-offices in Thessaloniki, Crete, Patra and Ioannina and through the presence in different regions including IOM provided extensive AVRR information and service as even in remote areas of Greece. (For more information read part 6, page 59)

<sup>1</sup> <http://mindigital.gr/index.php/%CF%80%CF%81%CE%BF%CF%83%CF%86%CF%85%CF%83%CF%89%CF%8A%CF%8C%CE%B6%CE%AE%CF%84%CE%B7%CE%BC%CE%B1-refugee-crisis>





## PART 3

# THE VOLUNTARY RETURNS UNDER THE AMIF NATIONAL PROGRAMME 2014-2020



24 The AMIF fund

25 Key priorities of the  
AMIF

## THE AMIF FUND

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:** strengthening and developing the Common European Asylum System by ensuring that EU legislation in this field is efficiently and uniformly applied;

**Legal migration and integration:** supporting legal migration to EU States in line with the labour market needs and promoting the effective integration of non-EU nationals;

**Return:** enhancing fair and effective return strategies, which contribute to combating irregular migration, with an emphasis on sustainability and effectiveness of the return process;

**Solidarity:** making sure that EU States which are most affected by migration and asylum flows can count on solidarity from other EU States.

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

Table 1: Return Policy approach under AMIF

<p><b>MAIN PILLARS OF RETURN POLICY</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective Return Policy/AVR approach</li> <li>• Improvement of living conditions in pre-removal centres by reducing the total number of TCNs in detention</li> <li>• Modifying part of pre-removal centres into open centres for the same target group Reliable evaluation and monitoring mechanism of forced return process</li> <li>• Effective use of alternatives to detention for TCNs</li> </ul>
<p><b>MAIN GOALS</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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</li> <li>• Speed up the forced return process</li> <li>• Enhance the effectiveness of the monitoring system for forced return</li> <li>• Tailor made educational strategy, aiming at the qualitative enhancement of the services provided to irregularly residing TCNs</li> <li>• Proper operation of pre-removal centres by improving the living conditions of irregular TCNs to ensure respect of human rights</li> <li>• Reduce the total number of TCNs in detention Convert part of pre-removal centres into open centres for the same target group</li> <li>• Introduction, development, improvement of alternatives to detention measures</li> <li>• The implementation of EU readmission agreements while strengthening the third countries capacity through the specific actions/other financial instruments</li> </ul>
<p><b>RESULTS TO BE ATTAINED</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective return policy/Increase or at least maintain the average number (2011–2014)of AVR while enhancing and increasing the reintegration measures</li> <li>• Effective monitoring of forced returns by an independent authority</li> <li>• Improvement irregular TCNs living conditions by providing specific services and activities Continuation of the CAVR Programme</li> </ul>

In Greece, according to the Article 9 of Law. 4332/2015, the European and Development Programs Division (E.D.P.D.) 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 (EU) no. 1042/2014.

The implementation of AVRR was the first national programme under the AMIF activated by the E.D.P.D., following a call of proposal on November 2015 for NGOs, international intergovernmental organizations, the International Red Cross Committee (ICRC) or the International Federation of the Red Crescent Organizations.

## KEY PRIORITIES OF THE AMIF

Main axes of the programme entailed:

- 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, flight tickets;
- Reintegration assistance;
- Effective measures for the sustainability of the return and the reception of TCNs in the CoO.

The programme commenced its implementation on June 2016 and will be completed in May 2019.

### ELIGIBLE BENEFICIARIES

As specified in the framework of the call of proposal, the programme focuses on:

- (a) third-country nationals 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) third-country nationals 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;
- (c) third-country nationals 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 third-country nationals whose removal has been postponed in accordance with Article 9 and Article 14(1) of Directive 2008/115/EC.

## PART 4

# VOLUNTARY RETURNS EX GREECE UNDER THE AMIF PROGRAMME



### 28 Procedure

- Pre-departure assistance
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- Post-arrival

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# PROCEDURE

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

The project is implemented through 3 phases: the pre-departure assistance, the travel arrangements and the post-arrival activities which are analysed below.

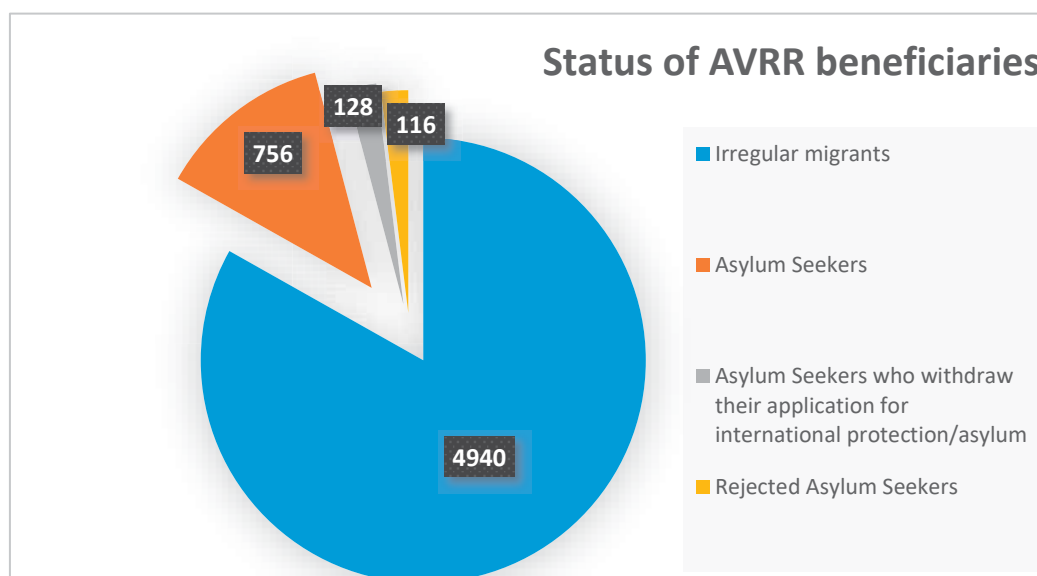
## THE THREE STAGES OF AN AVRR PROGRAMME



1. PRE-DEPARTURE ASSISTANCE

During the phase of the pre-departure assistance IOM Greece implemented counselling sessions with potential project beneficiaries and provided information for the procedures and benefits of the project. The counselling sessions took place in IOM premises in Athens and IOM sub-offices while field officers around Greece conducted sessions during their visits in pre-removal centres, police stations, open accommodation facilities, reception and identification centres, etc. Those TCNs who expressed their wish to return in their CoO under the AVRR project signed the Voluntary Declaration Form and were referred to the Hellenic Police for clearance of exit from the country. Several cases amongst the 5,944 returnees within the first year of the AVRR under the AMIF National Programme were referred to the Asylum Service in order to withdraw their application for international protection/asylum. Below Chart 1 depicts the status of the returnees.

Chart 1. Status of the AVRR returnees during the first year of the project



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, since the beginning of the project until 31 May 2017, more than 1,687 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 are implemented (for analysis in reintegration assistance, see part 5 p.43)

A few days prior to the departure, IOM Greece organized pre-departure meetings and provided the returnees with information for their travel. During the first year of the project 1,093 pre-departure sessions were organized.





Furthermore, IOM Greece collaborated with IOM offices in countries of transit and final destination and arranged the provision of transit assistance and reception assistance when needed.

Table 2: Assistance provided in Transit points (Top 5)

Amman	54 returnees
Cairo	157 returnees
Dubai	1,284 returnees
Doha	183 returnees
Istanbul	1,789 returnees

Table 3: Assistance provided upon arrival (Top 5)

Afghanistan	917 returnees
Algeria	190 returnees
Bangladesh	178 returnees
Iraq	1,008 returnees
Pakistan	1,566 returnees



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. One time cash grant of EUR 500 was given to each returnee in order to address their basic needs after departure from Greece.

### 3. POST-ARRIVAL

The post-arrival assistance is concentrated on activities that take place following the departure from Greece. In particular, this part includes reception assistance upon arrival and reintegration activities for those returnees that are entitled to receive such support. The above activities take place in collaboration with the IOM Offices in CoO. The reintegration assistance in kind includes:

- The start-up of small businesses
- Education
- The implementation of vocational trainings
- Job placement
- Temporary accommodation
- Material assistance
- Medical needs



*IOM GREECE sub-offices*

## MAINLAND

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

Apart from the offices in Athens IOM operates sub-offices in Thessaloniki, Heraklion, Ioannina and Patra in premises kindly provided by the relevant municipalities/ prefectures.

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

Table 4: AVRR Information provisions in Mainland

June 2016 – 31 May 2017						
	OPEN FACILITIES	CLOSED FACILITIES			OTHER	TOTAL
		Pre-removal centres	Reception and Identification Centres (R.I.C)	Police Stations		
EPIRUS	218	0	0	346	281	845
FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA	453	1,060	0	110	543	2,166
PELOPONISOS	0	1,440	0	340	1,591	3,371
CENTRAL GREECE	19	462	0	5	12	498
THRACE	0	21	1,718	11	0	1,750
<b>TOTAL MAINLAND</b>	<b>690</b>	<b>2,983</b>	<b>1,718</b>	<b>812</b>	<b>2,427</b>	<b>8,630</b>

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 is enhanced, the referral pathway among entities is reinforced and consequently beneficiaries are 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 (EASO), UNHCR, etc.



*IOM Greece at the Reception and Identification centre in Fylakio, Orestiada*

In addition to IOM Athens and the remaining sub-offices, AVRR field officers are also present in various other locations across the country. In the mainland, IOM staff has permanent presence in the Reception and Identification Centre in Fylakio and provides AVRR information to newcomers who enter Greece from the northern borders of the country. In addition, IOM staff assists in the provision of interpretation services and supports RIC regarding all matters that concern newly arrived population.

During the reporting period IOM colleagues in Evros conducted 1,718 group and individual sessions to new arrived population after their registration was realized by the responsible authorities. Even though opting for AVRR is not the newcomers preferred option upon their arrival to Greece, it has been proven that knowing the programme and acquiring an information leaflet to facilitate communication with IOM can be beneficial for possible future use.

## AVRR ACTIVITIES

It is significant to mention that AVRR officers strive to follow developments and adapt to current needs in frequently changing environments.



*IOM Greece AVRR field officer puts up an AVRR poster, while conducting an information visit in Lagadikia camp, in Thessaloniki*

Through communicating with each other and with representatives from other agencies they are well informed on migrant population movements within the country and conduct frequent information visits in open sites and accommodation shelters. Upon arrival in the site AVRR field officers distribute leaflets, put up posters, and perform group and individual information sessions to migrants who are interested to acquire additional information on the programme's provisions and formalities. Meetings with representatives from agencies that operate in the field are also realized, contact data are shared and thus IOM staff is accessible to all whenever needed.

A total of 821 beneficiaries returned to their CoO with the assistance of IOM while they were residing in a formal or informal site. The vast majority of returnees were living in the sites of Elliniko (342), Skaramagka (90) and Schisto (62). The rest of them were staying in a facility in Central Greece while a minority was staying in sites in Epirus and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. (See Annex 2)

Frequent presence is also maintained in the Pre-Removal Centres of Amygdaleza, Petrou Ralli, Korinthos, Xanthi and Paranesti as well as in local police stations. Recurrent visits were scheduled upon coordination with the responsible authorities and upon request from detained migrants who either wish to acquire additional information or desire to opt in the program. A total of 2,983 group and individual sessions were conducted in Pre-removal centres across Greece the majority being realized in Korinthos (1,440) with the remaining taking place in closed facilities in Central Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. 632 beneficiaries were registered in the programme while residing in a closed facility, pre-removal centre or local police station. 217 of them were detained in Korinthos while 100 were registered while being detained in a police station in the islands (for figures on returns of beneficiaries in closed facilities see Annex 3).

**Mr SHAKEEL AHMED  
from PAKISTAN**

*“Back in 2010, I decided to leave Pakistan and come to Greece. I wasn’t unemployed or anything, but the smugglers managed to convince me that in Greece I’d make a fortune in a couple of years’ time. I fell for that and I embarked on my journey to Europe.*

*The trip was far from easy. I was walking all night long and was hiding during the day. At the borders between Iran and Turkey, I got captured by some people who demanded 5,000 EUR to let me go. Of course, I didn’t have that much money with me and I wouldn’t be able to find it even if I could ask for money from all my family and friends in Pakistan. So, one day that I was alone in the room, I jumped off the 3rd floor of the building where they held me. I was saved. In total, it took me 25 days to complete the journey. I crossed the river Evros at the Greek-Turkish border and I was finally on Greek soil.*

*Two years ago, I was strolling on a mountain at Heraklion, on the island of Crete and I stumbled upon a crying little puppy. It was a new-born, probably someone who didn’t want it had abandoned it there to die. I took it home with me and I named him Mino. He could fit in a teacup, that’s how small he was! A couple of elderly Germans, my neighbours at the village of Moires, helped me with Mino’s vaccines and other obligations.*

*Since that day, Mino and I are inseparable. I take him with me at work, we play together and we sleep together. He even looks after me when I fall ill. I love my Mino!*

*Many of my compatriots, when they return home from Europe, they bring laptops, TV sets and other electronic devices with them. But I only want to take Mino home with me. I couldn’t leave him behind after all that we’ve been through together. I am not returning to Pakistan without him. I’ve told my children that I am bringing Mino with me and they are so excited! I can’t wait to return to Pakistan and build him a new dog house”.*

### ALFRED and IMMACULATA from KENYA



Alfred and Immaculata are a couple from Kenya who have been living in Greece for a number of years now. The financial crisis that has hit Greece since 2009 and the high unemployment rates means that finding a job got more and more difficult for economic migrants and locals alike. After the arrival of their baby boy the couple decided to apply for AVRR, implemented by IOM Greece.

*“I lived in Nairobi with my older son and worked in a beauty salon. I came here in Greece hoping to get a job and provide for my family back to Kenya. I thought it would be different from Africa, a change for the best. So, I left my son with my mother and moved here. It took me more than a year to finally get a job as a live-in nanny”.* Immaculata says.

*“It’s not easy with the baby, I cannot stay with him because I have to work in a live-in job. But how can I leave my baby to go and live with another family? He’s really young, he needs me, I’ll be punishing him. I have no family here to help me and I cannot afford a babysitter”,* Immaculata explains. *“So, we have decided to go back to Kenya”,* Alfred continues.

*“We found out about the AVRR programme through some acquaintances and we googled it. And so here we are today, waiting for the moment to take the plane back to our homeland”.*

*“And you know, my older boy in Kenya needs me, too. My mother takes care of him but he feels lonely, he often tells me ‘I’m not happy, I want you to come home’. He’s 17 now”,* Immaculata says. *“However, other members of my family cannot believe we want to go back, they say ‘no, stay there, don’t come back to Kenya’. But, when one lives in Africa, even when told that the situation in Greece is not good, they don’t seem to understand it. They don’t get how hard it is here, they don’t have the first-hand experience, they cannot compare. Many of our Greek friends are also suffering under the financial crisis, some of them are planning to migrate to America”.*

*“We will be given some assistance by IOM to start again in Kenya, so I hope to buy a used pick-up truck and start my own transport business, be independent and provide for Immaculata and the boys. And it’s always nice to be home”* says Alfred, smiling.

## ISLANDS

IOM cherishes flexibility and attempts to adapt to developments despite the ever-changing nature of the current migration scene. AVRR staff operates in the hotspot islands of Lesvos, Samos, Chios, Leros and Kos and through engaged presence provides an alternative option to the challenging surroundings filled with tensions and dominant feelings of impatience among migrant population due to frequently changing regulations and imposed restrictive policies. Such developments included the closure of the Greek Northern borders, the EU–Turkish Statement and the geographic restriction of TCNs.



*AVRR Information session addressed to TCNs in Moria, in the hotspot island of Lesvos*

With a permanent presence in the Reception and Identification Centres field officers provided information on the project to new arrivals via individual and group sessions and dissemination of leaflets.

Awareness on the project was established by the current information sessions on stranded population who resided in open sites, accommodation shelters and closed facilities to ensure that information provided was accessible and consistent. Field staff frequently visited Souda-Chios, while occasional visits were taking place in Kara Tepe-Lesvos, PIKPA ('Patriotic Institute for Social Welfare and Awareness) in Lesvos and PIKPA in Leros while contact was established with representatives from agents 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.

**Table 5: AVRR statistics from islands**

01 JUN 2016 to 31 MAY 2017			
GREEK ISLAND	INFORMED	REGISTERED	PROVIDED WITH RETURN ASSISTANCE
LESVOS	4,605	786	600
CHIOS	1,720	255	177
SAMOS	2,880	253	189
LEROS	798	84	58
KOS	2,978	113	82
CRETE	1,186	158	130
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14,167</b>	<b>1,649</b>	<b>1,236</b>

## AVRR ACTIVITIES

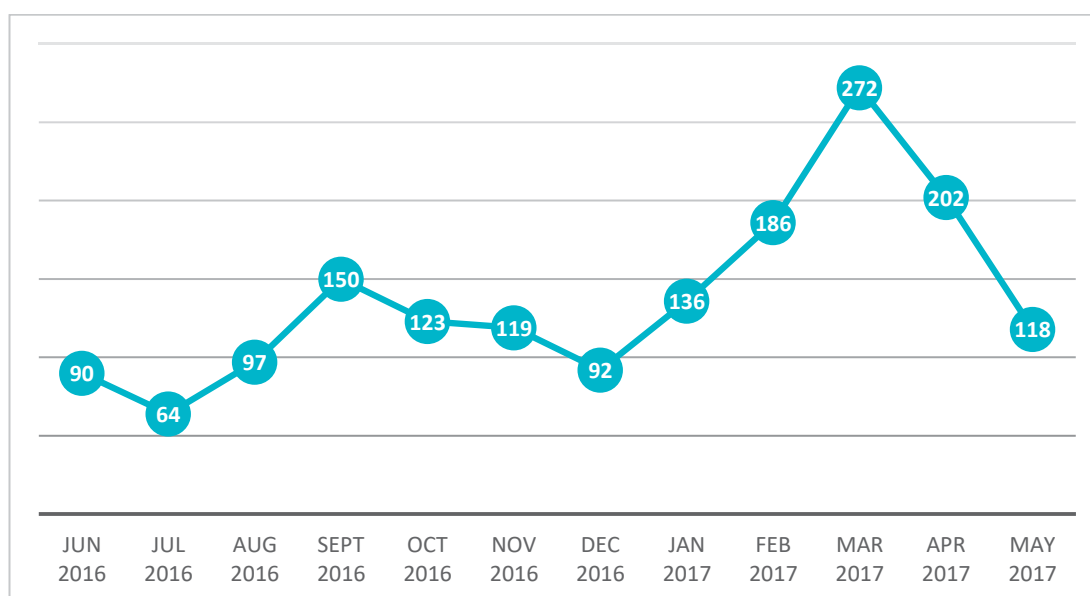
AVRR officers had daily communication with the responsible authorities to facilitate voluntary return procedures and ensure that the beneficiaries were assisted in the best possible way. Through regular presence in meetings with other actors, IOM staff debriefed on the project's provisions and was available 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 both reliable and equally accessible to all.



AVRR in Vial, Chios

It is important to note that IOM staff operating in the hotspot islands engaged in all attempts coordinated by the European Commission to provide unified information to migrant population with regard to available existing options. AVRR field officers had a regular presence in the information kiosk and were easily accessible when someone was requiring additional information on the project.

Chart 3: Total Registrations per month in Hotspot Islands and Crete





Since the beginning of AVRR in Greece staff who was involved in the programme was constantly striving to create and update tools to enhance applied procedures. Such continuous endeavor was essential to accelerate the voluntary return process and ensure that synchronicity and harmony will benefit both the beneficiary and reinforce the organization's credibility. In order to achieve that meetings are 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.

In addition, AVRRs coordination unit schedules occasional capacity-building seminars for all AVRR officers who operate in periphery. Such get-togethers that took place in December and March are considered of vast importance since they facilitate the sharing of experiences between field staff who work in different locations and in diverse settings. The prevailing challenges are presented; ways to deal with difficulties are analysed; suggestions for improving performance are discussed while trainings on current issues and operational matters are included. During these two-day events UNHCR staff debriefs on current legislation and policies, representatives from the Greek Asylum Office discuss on Asylum procedures and relevant matters, the European Commission elaborates on their role in the migration scene while trainings on security issues and early identification of VoT are conducted to ensure the best handling of AVRR beneficiaries.

It is of vast importance to prioritize the strengthening of existing rapports among different departments within IOM and among officers responsible for the implementation of AVRR.



*Capacity-building seminar for all AVRR officers who operate in periphery.*

# COMPLEMENTARY FACILITIES

## Open Centre for Migrants registered for Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (OCAVRR)

*The programme is co-funded by the European Return Fund and Hellenic Ministry of Migration Policy*

The Open Centre for migrants registered for assisted voluntary return and reintegration (OCAVRR) is the first open centre in Europe. This exemplary Open Centre is established near the centre of Athens in order 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 vulnerable migrants, 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, 1,262 beneficiaries were accommodated in the Open Centre for Migrants registered for AVRR. 313 were from Iraq, 387 from Pakistan, 214 from Afghanistan and 348 were from other nationalities while 1,155 were respectfully provided with return assistance to their CoO.

### Gender Breakdown



## Amygdaleza Pre-Removal Centre

After the EU–Turkey statement, most of TCNs have an imposed geographic restriction that does not allow them to freely move in the country but are rather obliged to wait in whichever island they have arrived (whether IOM Greece is present or not, and whether the respective island is a hotspot island or not) until their asylum is granted or their readmission to Turkey is realized. IOM Greece staff in cooperation with the Hellenic Police, assist the beneficiary to arrive at IOM premises in Athens.

Nonetheless it is essential for all AVRR beneficiaries who opt for the programme in the islands to move to the mainland in order to conduct interviews with the consular authorities that are based in Athens. Such step is necessary for the completion of the identification process and issue the travel document that allows one to return to his CoO. Because of that the beneficiary is to be transferred to Athens under the auspices of the Greek Authorities and remain in a pre-removal centre until the required formalities are fulfilled.

The areas improved were two: one for accommodating families of TCNs and one for accommodating single men. IOM improved the areas by providing door locks, purchasing and installing a playground, a child protection fence, a shade protection cloth, constructing two rest areas, purchasing benches, providing and installing air condition units, TVs, refrigerators, water dispensers, kettles, and closets. In addition hygiene kits, dignity kits, clothes, underwear, and cleaning materials were provided to cover the needs of AVRR beneficiaries and other detained migrants.



*The new facilities in Amygdaleza pre-removal centre.*

IOM has established strong partnerships and ties with main actors involved in the assisted voluntary return process that are essential for the successful implementation of the programme.

IOM Greece hosts an UNHCR Office in its premises and through an appointed expert, 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 in order to ensure that the potential beneficiaries are properly informed before making a final decision on their return. Such practice safeguards the voluntary and conscious nature of the AVRR.

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 also cooperates efficiently with Government authorities including the Hellenic Police the Reception and Identification Service (RIS) and 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.



## PART 5

### REINTEGRATION ASSISTANCE



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50 Voices of Returnees

52 Monitoring Visit to Georgia

53 Revision of the project and inclusion of reintegration assistance in cash

## TARGET GROUP AND TYPES OF ASSISTANCE

The Reintegration Unit of IOM Greece provides the returnees with information regarding the implementation of reintegration plans in their CoO. Qualified staff of social workers and psychologists conduct individual counselling sessions with the support of cultural mediators.

The reintegration unit has a yearly target of 1,200 implemented reintegration plans in different kind of countries such as: Afghanistan, Egypt, Georgia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, India, Morocco, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nigeria, Sudan, Senegal and Tunisia. During implementation of year 1 of the project (June 2016–May 2017), it was noticed, that the migration flow was more diverse in comparison with the previous years. Thus, it was deemed necessary to establish new contact channels with countries such as: Argentina, Kenya, Nepal, Ethiopia, Armenia, Ecuador, Indonesia, Jordan, Russian Federation, Ukraine, Republic of Moldova, Lebanon, the Philippines and Uganda in order to explore the possibility of implementing reintegration plans in their country with returnees from IOM Greece, for the first time. Given the fact that the number of people who voluntarily return to these countries is low (i.e. Argentina, Uganda, Nepal) it is worth mentioning that IOM is able to provide 100 per cent full reintegration assistance in kind to beneficiaries who return to these countries.

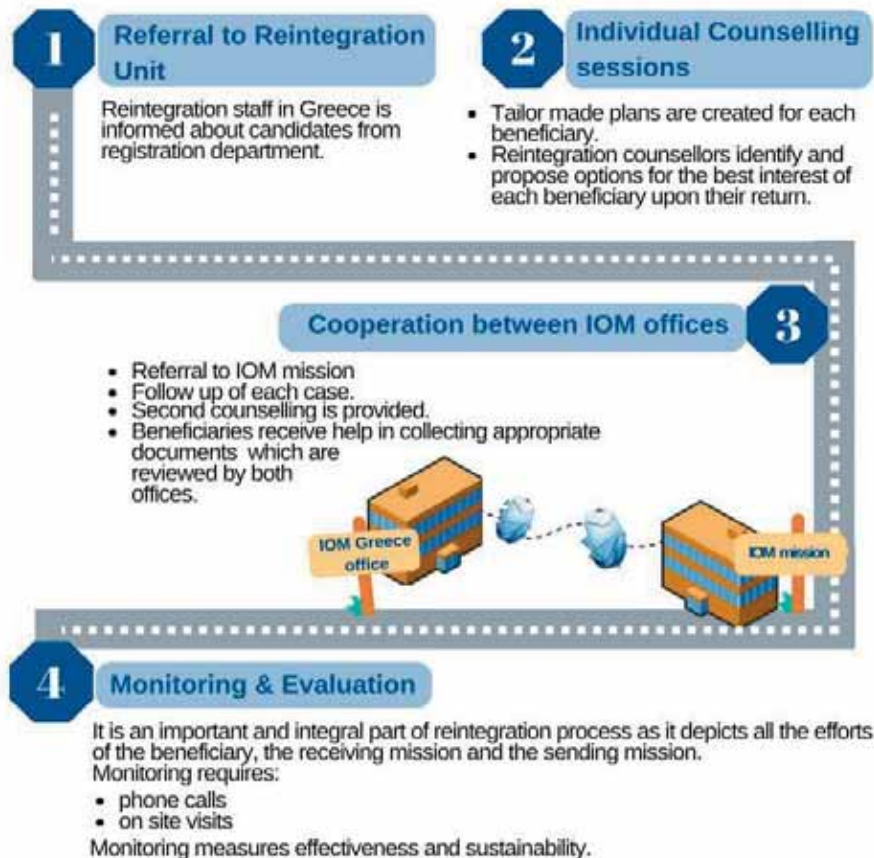
Reintegration assistance under this project is 1,500 EUR in kind and foresees, exclusively or in combination if necessary, the following types:



For the selection of candidates who will receive the reintegration assistance in kind, various parameters are taken under deep consideration such as: vulnerability, work experience, skills and other specifications that can guarantee the duration and sustainability of their reintegration plan. (For reintegration in cash see p.53)

# REINTEGRATION ASSISTANCE PROCESS

## REINTEGRATION ASSISTANCE IN KIND PROCESS



The procedure of each reintegration plan is divided in multiple phases. It pertains several operational procedures in order to accomplish one completed plan in the CoO. Tools that have been constructed for effective follow up of the cases are continually updated and new tools are also created for the needs of the new AVR projects throughout the 4 years of the operation of reintegration unit.

It is worth mentioning that the above procedure is a team effort of several actors, including the sending mission in Greece, the receiving mission in the CoO as well as the beneficiary. In order to reinforce the nexus between return and reintegration, a holistic approach needs to be applied which takes into account an individual level (personal situation of each beneficiary), community level (conditions immediately surrounding the beneficiary), and structural level (the existence or nonexistence of adequate frameworks in CoO).

A tailor-made plan is always created that takes into account not only the needs of the beneficiary but also needs of the community and country specificities. Additionally, the personal circumstances, such as the vulnerability of the beneficiary has to be taken into consideration within the reintegration assistance perspective. As migrants' needs differ, countries differ and migration experiences differ, a balanced approach is very much needed to ensure that the assistance provided is meaningful to the beneficiary and addresses his/her own needs and vulnerabilities.

Reintegration assistance in kind that IOM Greece provides in coordination with IOM missions ensures that all above parameters are taken under consideration. Enabling migrants to reincorporate into the society in their CoO and empowering them to participate again in the social, cultural, economic and political life is the aim of reintegration assistance in order for the return to be sustainable.

# REINTEGRATION ASSISTANCE PROCESS

## COUNSELLING SESSIONS

**2,605**   
INTERVIEWS IN TOTAL

**2,352**   
ELIGIBLE BENEFICIARIES

### Individual Counselling sessions

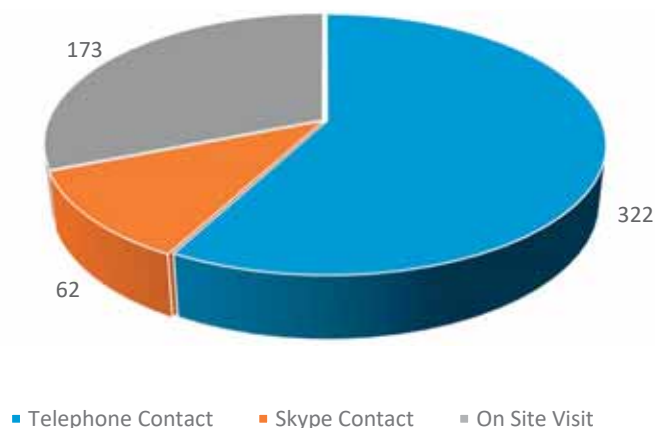
During Year 1 of implementation of the project, IOM Greece conducted in total 2,605 counselling sessions such as to create tailor made reintegration plans for each beneficiary.

A considerable amount of migrants detained throughout Greece were assisted by IOM Athens Reintegration Unit. It seems that flexibility regarding the way of conducting interviews was demanded from reintegration units' side. Consequently, counselling sessions were provided through:

- on site visits to detention centres and pre-removal facilities
- Skype sessions
- telephone sessions

Below statistics depict the large demand of reintegration specifically addressed to detained migrants. IOM Athens Reintegration Unit conducted in total 557 counselling sessions with detained migrants.

Chart 4: Counselling sessions with detained migrants

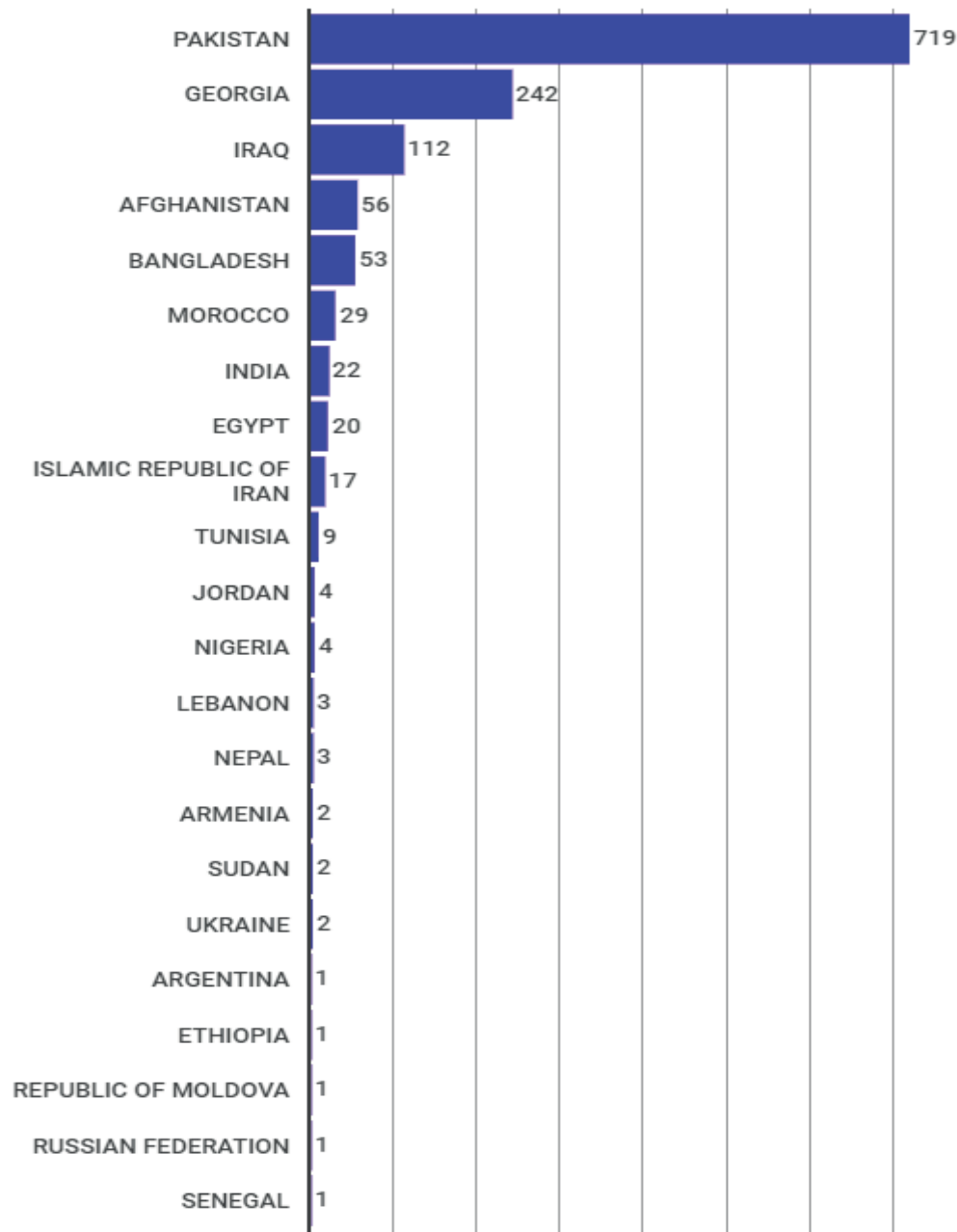




## COOPERATION WITH IOM OFFICES IN COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN

Along with great cooperation between 27 IOM offices worldwide, IOM Greece managed to assist 1,307 beneficiaries to receive reintegration assistance.

Chart 5: Reintegration Assistance provided per country

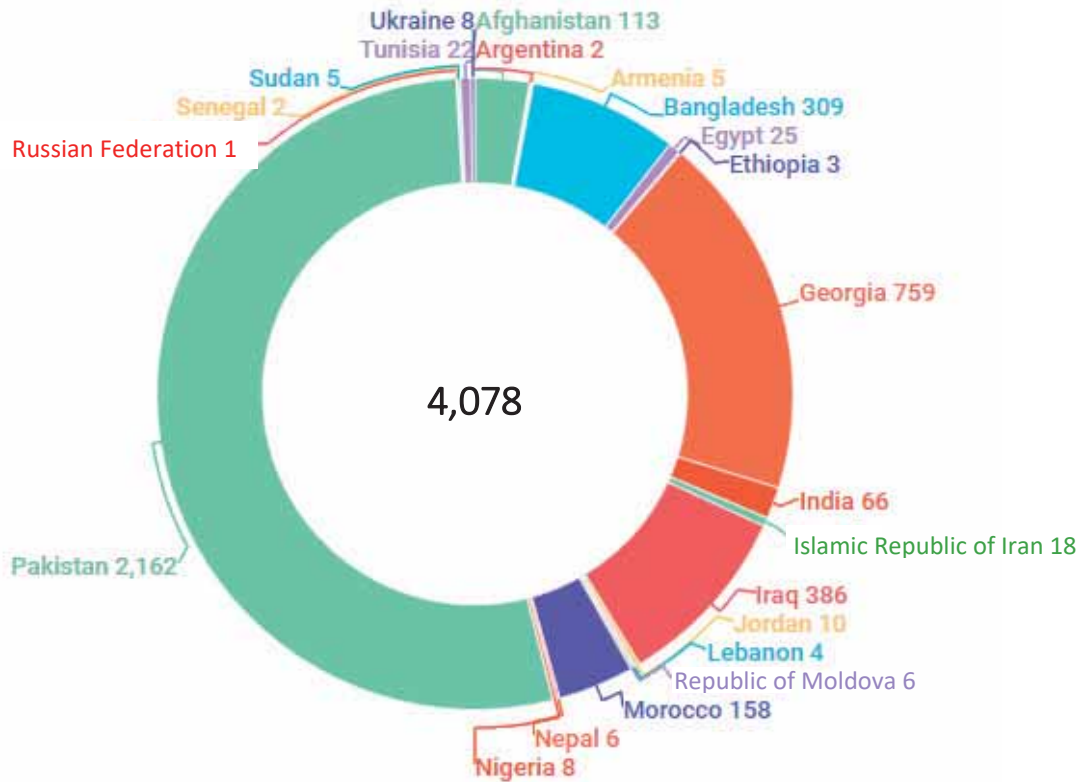


Upon return, beneficiaries receive a second counselling session from respective IOM mission in CoO. This seems to be a good practice as experience has shown that several agreed plans discussed in Greece have to be altered due to the fact that beneficiaries deal with different circumstances in their hometown than thought prior departure. Even though not all plans change, counselling sessions are still important since the beneficiary is informed about all necessary documents that he/she should provide, so as to initiate and implement the plan.

Below is depicted the amount of sessions that have been provided by IOM missions worldwide to beneficiaries ex Greece.

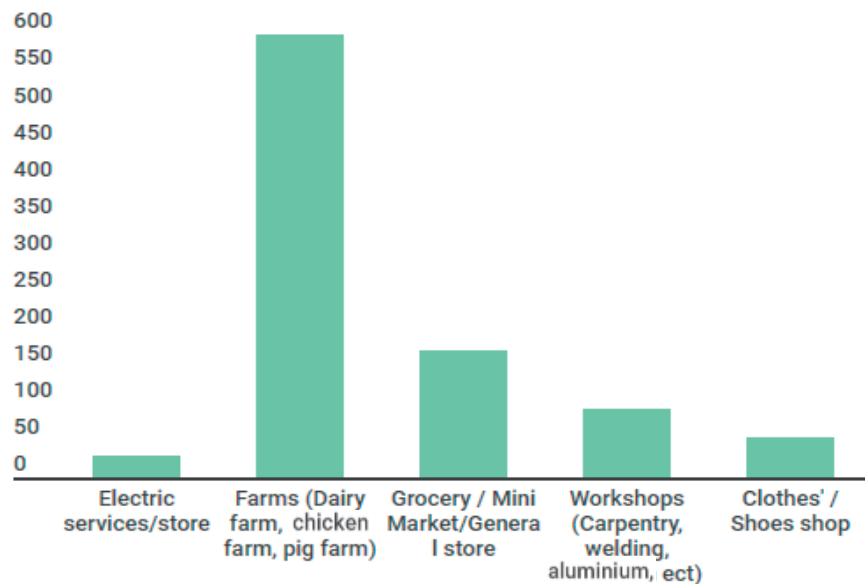
# COOPERATION WITH IOM OFFICES IN COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN

Chart 6: Counselling Sessions in CoO



As migrants' needs differ, countries differ and migration experiences differ, a balanced approach is very much needed to ensure that the assistance provided is meaningful to the returnee. Assistance with business set up is the most popular type of assistance sought for by the returnees because it can provide them with a long-term source of income. The chart below depicts the most popular income generating activities.

Chart 7: TOP 5 Preferred Income Generating Activities



## COOPERATION WITH IOM OFFICES IN COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN

Nevertheless, apart from the top 5 preferred plans mentioned above, it is noticed that in the first year of implementation of this project, innovative plans were also encouraged and it seems that beneficiaries enjoyed a diversity of new plans that were implemented successfully and consequently this action gave the opportunity to the community of each beneficiary to enjoy a service that did not exist before.

### RESTAURANT IN IRAQ



### EMBROIDER DESIGNER IN PAKISTAN



### PRIVATE COACHING SCHOOL IN GEORGIA



### BEAUTY COURSES IN ARMENIA



## VOICES OF RETURNEES

The following part presents three stories which depict the reality of migration in Afghanistan and Georgia. Two countries which are very different from one another and two migrants with different backgrounds but similar goals: to return and reintegrate successfully in their CoO.

### Ms SALOME from GEORGIA

#### After School Day Care Centre



Ms Salome, aged 27, was living in Greece with her mother for more than 5 years when she decided to return in Georgia due to financial issues.

Her plan was to open a after school day care centre for children unlike the usual ones, where children will be involved in various creative and artist activities; not just a place only for reading school books. This plan, which was just an idea for many years, was impossible to be implemented due to financial restraints. However, through the reintegration assistance in kind of IOM Greece, the returnee finally managed to implement her plan with success in her home town, Kutaisi. The after school day care centre opened in November 2017. Fairytales, drawing, reading and TV documentaries or cartoons (depending on the age group) are just some of the activities with which she keeps the children busy. Ms Salome is being assisted by her sister, Sophie, who is

also very experienced in this area. The care centre profits approximately 430 GEL per month, while the school fees are usually 50 GEL per month for every child who is registered in the centre. Beneficiary mentions that the monthly income is very satisfying and is sufficient enough in order to make savings as well.

Ms Salome and her sister Sophie expressed their gratitude towards IOM Greece since this business plan could never be a reality without the Reintegration assistance of IOM. Their near-future plan is to extend the centre, as work is gradually increasing.

## HASSAN HOSSEINI from AFGHANISTAN

### Metal Workshop

In 2016, Mr Hosseini was working in a metal workshop in Afghanistan. It was at this time that he decided to go abroad, hoping for a better future and a higher income. His initial plan was to go to Switzerland. His journey from Afghanistan to Europe was dotted with many difficulties, as he was travelling irregularly.

He made it to Greece where he spent almost eight months, unable to move on to Switzerland. He was fully aware of the risks –which could even be fatal– for people moving irregularly across Europe. So, instead, he opted to return back to his country and join his family, with the support of IOM.

Upon his arrival, he decided to invest in a metal workshop in the capital of Afghanistan, Kabul. He decided to approach his former boss, a metal smith, with whom he had worked before leaving for Europe, hoping that he would be interested in starting a business together. With the assistance of IOM Offices in Greece and Afghanistan, the plan became reality.

Mr Hosseini owns now 50 per cent of the business shares and the workshop is located near his home. Together with his partner they produce a variety of metal products such as window frames, doors, fences, etc. His net income is approximately 200 EUR per month. He spends 28 EUR for the house rent, while he can also provide for his family.

Thanks to his previous experience and motivation,

he has learned very quickly all of his business's activities and now is a qualified metal smith.

Mr Hosseini is very happy with his life and the expansion of the business, as well: the two partners have already hired a worker for their workshop and they plan to start another metal workshop in another area of Kabul, in order to have more clients and increase their income.

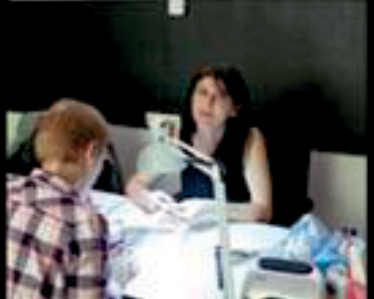


*Mr Hassan Hosseini while working in his metal workshop, located in Kabul.*

*He's very satisfied with his life and said that "I will never go back irregularly to Europe which is waste of time and there is even the risk of death". He is very thankful to IOM for providing assistance in returning home safely and starting a business which helps him support his family and to look forward to a bright future.*

*Prepared by: Mohammad Sharif Sharifi Reintegration Assistant*

## MONITORING VISIT TO GEORGIA



Monitoring and evaluation process is the most important part of reintegration assistance because it depicts all the efforts of the beneficiary, the receiving mission as well as the sending mission. Monitoring involves making phone calls, on site visits as well as establishing the ability to follow the returnees in case they move around the country. Special tools have been created in order to evaluate effectiveness and sustainability of reintegration plans. These tool are used from respective IOM missions during monitoring and evaluation process and shared upon completion with IOM Greece.

IOM Greece conducted a monitoring visit to Georgia in order to evaluate the reintegration progress of the returnees and also to exchange information and experiences with colleagues of the respective mission. Specifically, the visit to Georgia was conducted from 24 to 27 April 2017 where IOM Greece was represented by two staff members of the Reintegration Unit and the Chief of Mission.

Kutaisi and Tbilisi where the two major towns that were visited since the majority of the returnees live in these areas. At this point, several outcomes are worth to be mentioned:

- Most returnees stated that the income generated by their business was enough to meet the basic needs of themselves and their families.
- Almost all beneficiaries that were monitored where fully satisfied with IOM reintegration assistance.
- The majority of the businesses outside the main cities are related with farming activities. Farming business is one of the main and most important income activities in Georgia.
- Georgian beneficiaries are tending to implement more and more innovative plans (i.e. after school day care centre).
- IOM colleagues in Georgia (both in Tbilisi and Kutaisi offices) informed us in detail about the challenges the returnees are facing while collecting the required supporting documents for the implementation of their reintegration plan as well as about the challenges the IOM staff come up with while assisting the beneficiaries.

## REVISION OF THE PROJECT AND INCLUSION OF REINTEGRATION

Since the beginning of current AVRR programme IOM staff, having permanent presence in the sites of interest, had witnessed the numerous challenges created due to the increased influx of migrant population during 2015. The high number of new arrivals in combination with the recently imposed restrictive policies, the closure of the Northern borders and the establishment of the EU–Turkey statement resulted in migrant population unable to leave the islands of North-Eastern Aegean Sea. The existing accommodation structures in the islands seemed inadequate to cover the emerging needs while the high number of asylum applications and the limited capacity of the Greek Asylum Service resulted in delays in their examination. These factors were largely influential on migrants and refugees resulting 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 Reception and Identification Centres.



*AVRR in Samos.*

Such developments were so crucial that they rendered the revision of the project inevitable to make it adapt to current reality while assist in covering recently emerged needs. IOM Greece, taking into account the previously mentioned factors proposed a provision that would enhance the option of voluntary return for the TCNs who remain in Lesbos, Chios, Samos, Leros and Kos. This new 6-month pilot scheme would include a new reintegration package that would be given in cash in the form of an additional 500 EUR grant per returnee. This provision was not to replace the cash grant of 500 EUR that all project's beneficiaries receive prior to departure but instead, it will double the assistance provided to the returnees. The incorporation of the second reintegration would be provided to returnees who are not falling into a vulnerable category, who are in Greece without their families and who opt for AVRR while residing in the islands Chios, Samos, Kos and Leros.

It is significant to note that vulnerable groups from the islands were not to receive the reintegration assistance in cash but would be entitled to the reintegration assistance in kind (1,500 EUR). The revised project foresees that the new reintegration assistance would be given to 1,500 returnees while after its completion and depending on the outcomes, the conditions and challenges, its extension would be considered. The beneficiaries targeted to receive the reintegration assistance in kind will be 3,600 vulnerable cases while the total number of returnees who will receive reintegration assistance will be 5,100 (3,600 in kind plus 1,500 in cash) instead of the initial target which was 4,050. In order to create awareness on the new provision an Information campaign in the hotspot islands was arranged to inform local authorities and various

stakeholders (see page 63). New targeted leaflets were created and AVRR field officers conducted extensive group and individual sessions to eligible beneficiaries in order to update on provisions. Such attempt to create awareness was enhanced with frequent and elaborate presentations of AVRR in coordination meetings and working groups. (See Annex 4)



## PART 6

### INFORMATION CAMPAIGN



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around AVRR in  
Greece

59 Production of  
information material

62 Common information  
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islands in 2016

63 Information visits  
around Greece

## RAISING AWARENESS AROUND AVRR IN GREECE

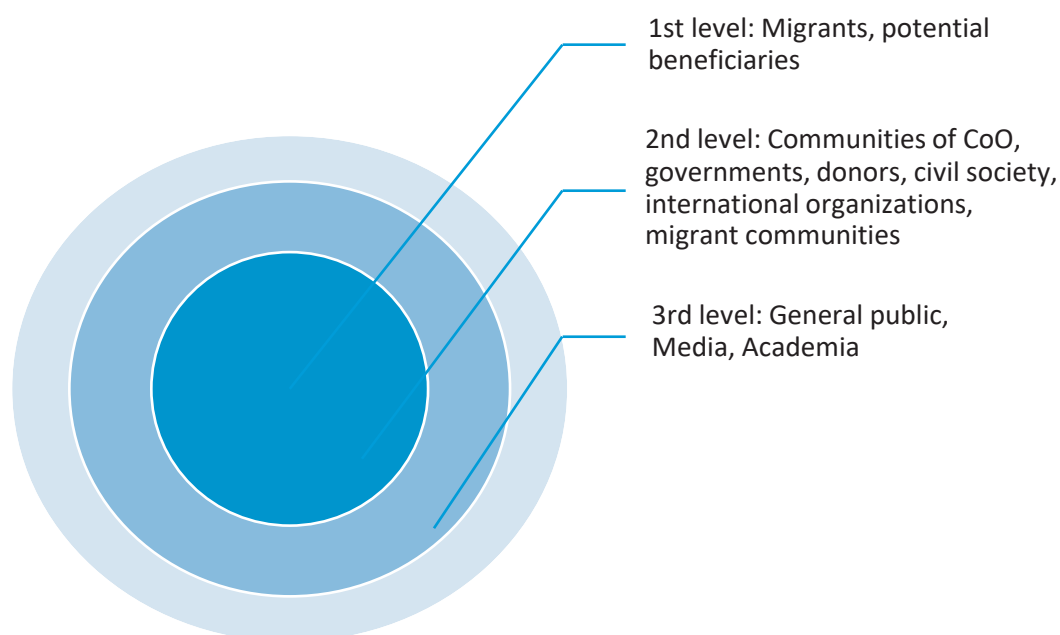
While communicating about AVRR, IOM Office in Greece does not aim at promoting voluntary return or urge migrants to apply for it. AVRR officers rather present it as an option to TCNs, while encourage them to make an informed decision on their future.

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

The first level reflects the target groups IOM Office in Greece has sought to engage with directly through its AVRR programmes such as beneficiaries and potential returnees. These are target groups that IOM Office in Greece has aimed to impact directly through its field activities.

The second level of target groups reflects the type of stakeholders that were indirectly engaged through the implementation of AVRR programmes. These stakeholders have played a complimentary role in the implementation of AVRR activities and it has been therefore essential to involve them to ensure successful coordination. For instance, the support of NGOs and migrant groups were key in relaying information and outreaching migrant communities and potential returnees.

Finally, the third level actors provide an overview of stakeholders that IOM Greece has sought to further strengthen its relationship with. While they have not been involved in the direct implementation of AVRR activities, these stakeholders have played an important role in informing key actors and broadening support for AVRR, such as media and academia. Partnerships with academia has allowed improving research and analysis on AVRR trends, as well as the evaluation of both IOM AVRR and IOM Office in Greece AVRR activities' impact.



# RAISING AWARENESS AROUND AVRR IN GREECE

In the AVRR context, the following communication objectives as well as the actions taken have been identified for our Information Campaign:

OBJECTIVES
<b>1. Increase migrant awareness on AVRR and build trust in IOM and IOM Office in Greece</b>
1.1 Provide migrants with accurate and up-to-date information about AVRR services. 1.2 Inform migrants on IOM and IOM Office in Greece role in implementing AVRR.
<b>2. Foster engagement on AVRR among involved stakeholders and donors</b>
2.1 Increase understanding of donors on how AVRR activities are implemented and how their funds are being used such as to secure their commitment. 2.2 Increase knowledge among migrant communities, partners, public services and civil society on AVRR. 2.3 Encourage participation of stakeholders in AVRR information activities.
<b>3. Broaden the understanding of AVRR among the general public</b>
3.1 Deepen the knowledge of policy makers, academics and governmental representatives about AVRR as a key element of migration management. 3.2 Facilitate an exchange of information on return migration with the general public.

IOM Office in Greece has 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 Office in Greece (<https://greece.iom.int/en>) has played a major role to raise awareness about IOM's activities in general, however, it provides 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. The website contains also the following webpages: 'Press & News', 'Migrants Stories' and 'Photos & Videos', which are monthly and/or weekly updated about AVRR activities and publications, among other programmes.

## SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS:

- **Facebook account:** [@IOMGreece](#)
- **Twitter account:** [@IOMGREECE](#)
- **Instagram account:** [@iomgreece](#)
- **YouTube account:** [IOM Greece](#)



IOM Office in Greece uses 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 we have integrated the [website](#) with the social media accounts.

All inquiries on social media should be directed to [iomathensmedia@iom.int](mailto:iomathensmedia@iom.int)

# RAISING AWARENESS AROUND AVRR IN GREECE

## INFORMATION EVENT IN ATHENS

In the framework of the project, IOM organized an information event in Athens on 30 March 2017 in order to disseminate information for the benefits and procedures of the programme and offer the opportunity for a discussion amongst the representatives. The event took place in the Greek Secretariat General for Media and Communication and delegations from the Greek Government, the Hellenic Police, the European Commission, the Appointed Authority, and the Consular Authorities of the TCNs who participate in the project, journalists and other stakeholders and counterparts of the migration field attended.

The event opened with a video presenting the achievements of the project so far as well as success stories of AVRR beneficiaries who returned to their CoO. Following the presentation the Minister of Migration Policy, Mr Ioannis Mouzalas, briefed on the significance of the AVRR activities especially during the last two years with the massive migration influx. Furthermore, the Alternate General Secretary, Mr Tzannetos Filippakos and representative of the Structural Reform Support Service (SRSS) - European Commission, Mr Ioannis Hadjiyiannis, illustrated the importance of the programme especially in the islands where increased migrant population is stranded unable to reach their preferred European country as was initially planned.

After answering the relative questions from the audience and the exchange of views on the challenges of migration a light lunch followed while a promotional power bank with the programmes logo was distributed to participants.



*AVRR Information Event at the Greek Secretariat General for Media and Communication, on 30 March 2017.*



## Creation of a TV spot



A TV spot based on a film-making project has been created to provide information for the availability of the voluntary return and reintegration, which has been broadcasted by Greek National channels, as a social message during February 2017.

The 44-second spot describes a man, who has left his CoO in searching for a better future.

Unfortunately, he discovered that this future was not what he had imagined, when he embarked on this journey away from his family. The desire to return to his CoO was strong and the assistance of IOM Greece was provided (showing the basic steps of the programme, as referred to the leaflet: Information, Counselling, Airport Tickets, Financial assistance and Possibility of reintegration).

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=ESIR8TYTB14](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ESIR8TYTB14)

**30,000 views**  
in 1 week on Facebook



## 18,000 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) to reach the targeted population.*

## #iReturn - AVRR Common Information Campaign

**22,400 leaflets, 400 posters and a TV spot**

IOM office in Greece for the first time has expanded its capacity and has implemented a common information campaign by creating a recurring theme into diverse media channels, including advertising in newspapers, magazines, television and digital communications tools (websites and social media).

IOM Greece used the hashtag **#iReturn**, which worked as an umbrella to the campaign and accompanied all the communication tools.

The aims of the campaign were:

- to disseminate information for the availability of the project in order to raise awareness on IOM AVRR actions; and
- to describe the benefits and procedures directly to TCNs and/or other involved parties which can communicate the relevant information to the target group.



## 400 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 have included information for the AVRR project (i.e. procedures, benefits, IOM Greece contact details, etc.).

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 approach IOM Greece.

Moreover, targeted material for the new reintegration package was produced in order to disseminate information in potential beneficiaries and collaborative actors in Lesbos, Chios, Samos, Leros and Kos. The leaflets have been translated in 10 languages (Greek, English, French, Arabic, Urdu, Ntari, Farsi, Amharic, Kurdish – Sorani and Bengali).

Last but not least, a special agreement has been reached with the Asylum services on the mentioned islands so that in case of any rejected application to a TCNs, the rejection to be given accompanied by a leaflet.

## 4,400 Campaign Leaflets

*With the Implementation of assisted voluntary returns including reintegration measures, you can return to your country of origin in safety and dignity.*

*If you are in the islands of Lesbos, Chios, Samos, Leros, Kos without your family and do not belong to one of the vulnerable groups, you can benefit from IOM with:*

- Additional financial assistance for Reintegration in your country of origin
- Financial assistance

*IOM also provides:*

- Information and return counselling
- Assistance with issuance of travel documentation
- Issuance of Airport tickets
- Airport assistance



# COMMON INFORMATION CAMPAIGN IN THE ISLANDS

In July and August 2016, the European Commission coordinated an action that involved the cooperation of the Ministry of Migration Policy, the Hellenic Police, IOM, EASO, FRONTEX and UNHCR. Such endeavor was designed to facilitate cooperation among all participating institutions in order to present a unified front and provide consistent information to the migrants who were stranded in the islands.

Coherent, reliable and updated information was presented for all TCNs who entered irregularly Greece after the 20 of March 2016.

Experienced, well-trained representatives from each participating agency conducted collaborative information sessions to groups, following a preformed information script, and were also available for private, confidential counselling for anyone interested. Mixed teams were deployed on the ground, carried out a 'walk-around' action towards the migrants while the material presented covered all options such as asylum, return to Turkey and AVRR. The campaign involved interpreters in Farsi / Dari, Urdu, Panjabi, Arabic, French, Kurdish (Kurmanji) and Pashto, and the information events were held in language sessions.

The information campaign took place on the islands of Lesvos (Moria and Kara Tepe, 25–29 July), Chios (Vial and Souda, 25–29 July), Samos, Leros and Kos Islands (1–5 August).

Approximately 2,000 TCNs were informed on AVRR in group and individual sessions while leaflets were distributed for facilitating information awareness.



Common information campaign in Chios



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**More than 1,800 people were informed by IOM Greece officers and 5,700 leaflets produced**

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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. Visits and meetings were organized for the provision on information in potential project beneficiaries, local stakeholders, governmental counterparts and other actors and service providers involved in the migration field.

### **AVRR INFORMATION CAMPAIGNS ADDRESSED TO STAKEHOLDERS IN THE HOTPOT ISLANDS**

IOM Greece planned an Information campaign which included information visits in the 5 hotspot islands as a means to increase awareness and update on AVRR action. The Chief of IOM mission in Greece, Daniel Esdras, accompanied by members of the organization, participated in a panel discussion organized in each island (Samos, 4 November 2016/ Chios, 17 November 2016/ Lesvos, 22 November 2016 / Kos, 21 February 2017 and Leros, 8 June 2017).

Representatives from the Government such as The Alternate General Secretary of the Ministry of Interior, Police Inspector General for Aliens and Border Protection at the Headquarters of the Hellenic Police, Police Major General, Head of Aliens and Border Protection Branch Brigadier accompanied IOM in the visits and attended the round table discussions. It is noteworthy to mention the presence of Ms Maria Stavropoulou, Head of the Greek Asylum Office, in the round table discussion that took place in Leros. Such attendance emphasizes the strong rapport established between the Government of Greece, its entities and IOM. The presence of the Community Welfare Attaché of the Pakistani Embassy, Mr Syed Haider Iqbal Naqvi, who attended the visit in Kos indicates the deep collaboration that IOM has formed with innumerable diplomatic agencies.



*Panel discussion in Lesvos, 22 November 2016.*

The campaign was largely aimed to inform on the project's revision and the newly added measure of reintegration in cash. The visits involved meetings with local authorities, governmental counterparts and other involving actors. In Kos Mr. Esdras had a meeting with the mayor Mr Kiritsis where they discussed on the challenges that the island faced during the last years. AVRR and its provisions was described while emphasis was placed on IOM's commitment to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society.

The round table discussions were attended by the local authorities, law enforcement representatives, coast guards, health professionals, social service providers, representatives of local governments, representatives of international Organizations and NGOs.

Head of IOM Greece, Mr Esdras, introduced the structure of IOM, performed a brief description of IOMs contribution during the emergency period of 2015–2017 , outlined the core activities undertaken by the Organization according to its mandate and highlighted the main challenges and risks that international and Greek society faces due to the refugee crisis burst during the previous years.

### IN THE MAINLAND

- **EPIRUS**

On 20 and 21 October 2016, IOM Greece implemented an information visit in Ioannina, Epirus, where a sub-office has been established. IOM has a permanent presence in the area during the last four years and fruitful cooperations are created and strengthened among IOM staff and the actors operating in the region. Epirus is considered of vital importance due to the fact that Igoumenitsa port consists one of the main exit points of Greece. Noteworthy is the fact that during the last year five open sites were established in the area Epirus (Katsika, Filippiada, Tsepelovo, Doliana and Konitsa) and accommodated migrants and refugees who reached Greece during 2015.

Following such recent development an information meeting took place in order to provide updated information on AVRR to local counterparts including: local authorities, law enforcement, coast guards, health professionals, social service providers, representatives of local governments, representatives of migrant communities, and representatives from the social departments. The mayor of Ioannina, Mr Begas, addressed welcome remarks and underlined the significance of IOM presence in the region as a way to enhance migration management.

## AVRR INFORMATION CAMPAIGNS

### ADDRESSED TO ELIGIBLE BENEFICIARIES

Additional information campaigns took place in Lesvos and Kos in an effort to tailor the information provision addressed to specific groups of eligible beneficiaries.

In early October 2016, in light of a high number of rejections of asylum applications presented by Pakistani nationals, IOM staff visited the island and conducted a massive information campaign for the project. A total of 238 TCNs were informed on the programme through group



*AVRR Information provision in Kos.*

and individual sessions while information material was disseminated. Representatives from the European Commission were also present during this 3 day visit in order to provide TCNs with updated information on options other than AVRR. In mid-February following the increased arrivals of Algerian and Moroccan nationals in the island IOM staff visited Lesvos in order to conduct an organized information campaign focused on migrants with low asylum recognition rates. After the information provision was realized a total of 42 TCNs registered in the programme, the majority being Algerians with the remaining being Moroccans, Tunisians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, and Egyptians.

- **XANTHI AND DRAMA**

IOM Athens organizes AVRR Information campaigns which include the massive information provision to eligible beneficiaries as a means to increase awareness on the programme and provide clarifications for relevant procedures and provisions. On Friday 2 December 2016 and Thursday the 16 March 2017 IOM Greece implemented information visits in Northern Greece. It should be noted that IOM's recurrent presence in the pre-removal centres is of vital significance for various reasons. Following this line all migrants should be informed and reminded on their options in order to take an informed decision based on realities and existing alternatives. These occasional visits in Northern Greece are considered beneficial since they strengthen IOMs relations with the Hellenic Police, they assist IOM staff to assess and evaluate the situation in the pre-removal centres while AVRR information is enhanced. During the conducted visits in the pre-removal centres of Paranesti and Xanthi a total of 1,164 TCNs were informed on AVRR through individuals, group sessions and distribution of information material. The majority of eligible beneficiaries were 887 nationals from Pakistan. A total of 35 beneficiaries managed to return to their CoO after being registered while residing in the pre-removal facility of Paranesti and Xanthi.

## CONCLUSION

Following the completion of the first 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 project in June 2016, more than 5,900 TCNs were assisted by IOM Greece to return to their CoO under the AMIF National Programme. Moreover, 1,307 returnees received reintegration assistance in kind and developed tailored made reintegration plans such as small businesses, education, job placement, medical assistance, temporary accommodation, etc., while in the framework of a 6-month pilot scheme, 331 beneficiaries who registered with the AVRR programme in the islands of Lesbos, Chios, Leros, Samos and Kos, received reintegration assistance in cash. Additionally, extensive information campaigns took place in various locations across Greece as a means to raise awareness around the procedures and benefits of the project and share updated information to potential beneficiaries and different stakeholders.

Taking into consideration all the above results and achievements, IOM Greece is confident that the first 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 which received 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 textbook 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 least it should be noted that AVRR staff remains dedicated to the programme while strives to serve AVRR beneficiaries in the best possible way. Being hard working, flexible, passionate and person centred while dealing with potential returnees AVRR staff strives to maintain IOM visibility and ensure that IOMs 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

<b>Voluntary Return of Third Country Nationals and reception into their Countries of Origin</b>	
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%)	<b>586 returns</b>
<b>Voluntary Return of Third Country Nationals and reception into their Countries of Origin</b>	
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%)	<b>511 returns</b>
<b>Assisted Voluntary Return Programme including Reintegration measures – Annual Programme 2010</b>	
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%)	<b>3,275 returns</b> <b>35 reintegration</b>
<b>Assisted Voluntary Return of third Country Nationals from Greece</b>	
February 2012–August 10, 2012	
The programme was funded by the Government of the United Kingdom	<b>90 returns</b>
<b>Assisted Voluntary Return of third Country Nationals from Greece</b>	
February 2012–January 2013	
The programme was funded by the EEA Grants	<b>874 returns</b>
<b>Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration Programme for Third Country Nationals in their Country of Origin – Annual Programme 2011</b>	
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%)	<b>8,046 returns</b> <b>167 reintegration</b>
<b>Assisted Voluntary Return of third Country Nationals from Greece</b>	
October 2012–August 2013	
The programme was funded by the Government of the United Kingdom	<b>188 returns</b>
<b>Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration Programme for Third Country Nationals in their Country of Origin – Annual Programme 2012</b>	
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%)	<b>7,408 returns</b> <b>514 reintegration</b>

<b>Addressing the needs of unaccompanied minors (UAMs) in Greece</b>	
January 2013–October 2014	
The programme was co-funded by the European Commission (90%) and by European member states (10%-Sweden, The Netherlands, Denmark and the United Kingdom)	<b>165 returns</b> <b>129 reintegration</b>
<b>Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration Programme for Third Country Nationals in their Country of Origin – Annual Programme 2013</b>	
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%)	<b>5,288 returns</b> <b>2,189 reintegration</b>
<b>Enhancing Reintegration Assistance for Third Country Nationals returning through AVRR Programme of Greece</b>	
December 2014–December 2015 (Phase I and Phase II)	
The programme was funded by the Swiss State Secretariat for Migration (SEM)	<b>156 reintegrations</b>
<b>Assisted Voluntary Returns of Irregular Migrants from Greece</b>	
July 2015–September 2015	
The programme was funded by the Norwegian Directorate FO Immigration (UDI)	<b>103 returns</b>
<b>Assisted Voluntary Return of third Country Nationals from Greece</b>	
January 2014–January 2016	
The programme was funded by the Government of the United Kingdom	<b>1,960 returns</b> <b>73 reintegration plans</b>
<b>Emergency Funding - Migration Management through Assisted Voluntary Return for Irregular Migrants from Greece</b>	
December 2015–May 2016	
The programme was funded by AMIF Emergency Funds	<b>1,464 returns</b>
<b>Assisted Voluntary Return of third country nationals to their country of origin</b>	
March 2016–May 2016	
The programme was funded by AMIF Emergency Funds	<b>1,060 returns</b>

ANNEX 2

RETURNÉES in OPEN SITES- 1 JUNE 2016 to 31 MAY 2017													
AVRR CO-FUNDED BY AMIF AND NATIONAL FUNDS (EC-NATIONAL PROGRAMME)													
CoO	Epirus	former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	Island (Shelters)	Elaionas	Elliniko	Oinoftya	Lavrio	Malakasa	Pireus	Viktoria Square	Skaramangas	Schisto	TOTAL
MOROCCO					1				1				2
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN				14	29	3			12	10	1	1	70
IRAQ	11	32	11	4	17					12	81		168
PAKISTAN				1	4	17			13	7		2	44
GEORGIA							1		5	3			9
AFGHANISTAN		1		19	291	16	16	53	41	11	6	59	513
BANGLADESH									1	1			2
INDIA						1							1
LEBANON			2				2				2		6
REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA										1			1
EGYPT										3			3
RUSSIAN FEDERATION									1				1
BURKINA FASO										1			1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>342</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>821</b>

### ANNEX 3

RETURNEES IN CLOSED FACILITIES - 1 JUNE 2016 TO 31 MAY 2017												
CoO	Amygdaleza pre-removal Centre	Petrou Ralli pre-removal Centre	Korinthos pre-removal Centre	Xanthi pre-removal Centre	Paranesti pre-removal Centre	Fylakio pre-removal Centre	Police Stations in Central Greece	Police Stations in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	Police Stations in Peloponnisos	Police Stations in Epirus	Police Stations in Islands	TOTAL
MOROCCO	5	4	19	1	4		2		1	1	8	45
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN	4	15	5		2	1	4		1	1	1	34
IRAQ	1	12	17			6	2	1	2	5	5	51
PAKISTAN	15	24	38	1	8	1	24	1	4	2	30	148
GEORGIA		1			1	1	4	6		1	5	19
AFGHANISTAN	6	14	6	1	2	1					4	34
ALGERIA	6	26	114	1	6	1	1	1	2	2	18	178
BANGLADESH	2	5	1							1		9
INDIA		2					10	2			1	15
UKRAINE		6					7	2		1	1	17
LEBANON	1	2	1		1						1	6
REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA				1			2					3
NIGERIA											2	2
EGYPT		3	1		2		1				20	27
JORDAN			1									1
RUSSIAN FEDERATION		1				2				1	1	5
TUNISIA		3	13		1					2		19
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC		2	1		2				1		1	7
ARMENIA		1										1
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO										1		1
VIET NAM	1					3						4
ANGOLA							1					1
PLURINATIONAL STATE OF BOLIVIA					1							1
URUGUAY											1	1
CHILE		1										1
AZERBAIJAN								1			1	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>632</b>



## ANNEX 4

AVRR RETURNS PER ISLAND AND NATIONALITY- NEW REINTEGRATION PACKAGE IN CASH						
FEBRUARY-MAY 2017						
CoO	LESVOS	CHIOS	SAMOS	KOS	LEROS	TOTAL
MOROCCO	32	8	1	0	0	41
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN	4	3	0	0	0	7
IRAQ	7	3	3	0	1	14
PAKISTAN	27	0	11	32	0	70
AFGHANISTAN	4	0	1	0	2	7
ALGERIA	91	29	20	0	8	148
BANGLADESH	11	0	7	3	0	21
INDIA	0	0	1	0	0	1
ETHIOPIA	1	0	0	0	0	1
EGYPT	2	0	0	0	0	2
JORDAN	1	0	0	0	0	1
NEPAL	8	2	0	3	0	13
TUNISIA	1	1	0	0	1	3
AZERBAIJAN	0	0	1	0	0	1
COLOMBIA	1	0	0	0	0	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	190	46	45	38	12	<b>331</b>





