

International Organization for Migration

Country Office for Austria



In early September, IOM Director General William Lacy Swing and Deputy Director General Laura Thompson brought together all Chiefs of Missions around the world for the Global Chief of Mission Meeting. During three days of presentations, meetings and exchange - including a reception with keynote speaker Kofi Annan, former Secretary General of the United Nations - the Director General laid out the achievements already made and declared his intention to pursue three additional strategic objectives for the future: continuity, coherence and change. These guideposts are reflected in many of our new policy and management initiatives.

Among others, a migration governance framework will be developed, which sets out clear objectives for migration governance; a migration data analysis unit will be established with the aim to foster better analysis, use and presentation of IOM data; and the role of IOM with regards to the rights of migrants and protecting these should be further looked at in the near future.

In this context, it is important to mention that a widespread external perception exists that IOM is not mandated or able to contribute to protection through its work. To review the IOM policy on protection and update the last institutional document from 2007 towards meeting international standards and circumstances, we have established a Protection Policy Working Group. We think that protecting and assisting migrants is the most fundamental responsibility entrusted to IOM, especially with regards to the humanitarian work IOM implements worldwide. To highlight and strengthen IOM's humanitarian role, including through policy developments and implementing procedures, is therefore a high priority.

In the Austrian context, we are looking forward to putting into practice as many of the new initiatives as possible and to properly updating you on new developments on our new website to be released in October.

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Katerina Kratzmann,
Head of Office

IOM workshop on the UNHCR Long Day of Flight

On 26 September 2014, the Long Day of Flight took place and UNHCR Austria organized a number of activities on this occasion (<http://tag.unhcr.at/>).

Since awareness-raising on migration-related topics is an integral area of activity for IOM, also the IOM Country Office for Austria participated in the Long Day of Flight by offering a workshop on "Myths of Migration" which aimed at deconstructing common stereotypes and prejudices in the area of migration, asylum and integration. This offer was well received by the target group. Pupils were very actively engaged in discussions on various terms and concepts. Also the reflection on what "being Austrian" means was very vivid. All in all, the workshops proved once again the relevance of such awareness-raising activities.





CulTrain – Workshop on masculinity and prevention of violence

The project “CulTrain – Cultural Orientation Trainings for Young Refugees” aims to smooth the integration process of young refugees via building up knowledge about Austria and its people during Cultural Orientation Trainings all over Austria. In addition, the project offers workshops and excursions in order to deepen knowledge acquired during the trainings. Moreover, by pointing out support organizations or cultural offers to the beneficiaries, they are empowered towards more participation in their daily life. These additional offers are conducted in cooperation with thematically specialized service providers. On 14th June 2014, the first workshop took place in cooperation with “poika” (www.poika.at), an association specialized in the work with male youths. By means of games and open discussion, issues such as gender stereotypes, homosexuality, violence prevention, personal space and the responsible use of new media were covered during the four-hour workshop. The trainers showed great sensibility in the work with the young refugees and quickly managed to create an open and comfortable atmosphere. The participants showed great interest in the workshop and thus feedback was very positive.

The project is co-financed by the European Refugee Fund and the Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior.



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IOM Project Helps Identify Trafficked Persons in the Asylum Procedure

Trafficked persons are generally known to be found in the Austrian asylum procedure. However, all too often, these individuals are not recognized. The IOM pilot project IBEMA (the German acronym for “Identification of Potentially Trafficked Persons in the Asylum Procedure”) aims to increase the identification rate of trafficked persons in the Austrian asylum procedure and to improve their access to protection.

The project is targeted towards officials of the Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum and employees of Austria’s Federal Reception Centres, who are in direct contact with asylum-seekers and thus have the opportunity to refer trafficked persons to police or other organizations that can offer further support and protection. The project is mainly comprised of two training courses and the creation of a brochure presenting the most relevant indicators for recognizing asylum-seeking trafficked persons. Furthermore, a study visit to Germany allows participants to compare practices and exchange experiences with actors in the German asylum procedure. The experiences made during the first months of the project have shown that recognizing trafficked persons within the asylum procedure is a formidable challenge. It requires a long-term commitment and methodical training involving all stakeholders, which the IBEMA project has initiated.



Participants of the IBEMA Workshop on 23 June 2014.

The project is co-financed by the European Refugee Fund and the Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior.



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Raising awareness about the difficulties of returnees with health issues

In recent years, IOM has recorded an increase in voluntary returnees and beneficiaries in IOM's Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) projects. Among them, there are also a growing number of cases with medical issues. IOM is currently undertaking enhanced efforts to raise awareness about the preconditions for and implications of the voluntary return and reintegration of persons with medical needs.

The decision on whether or not to return to the country of origin can be a very difficult and far-reaching one. Regardless of a migrant's state of health, it is not always easy to assess how life back home will be and which opportunities for social and economic reintegration will open up. What is true for persons with a good state of health is even more valid for individuals with a mental and/or physical condition: In addition to all the other challenges connected to a return, they also have to consider their health issues, the health system in their home country, the availability of treatment and medicine or even how they will be able to weather the flight back home.

IOM - Organizing a safe journey home

When organizing the voluntary return of a person with a health issue, IOM is faced with several challenges. First of all, the provision of return and reintegration assistance to beneficiaries with a medical condition requires a higher level of coordination and information exchange between all involved stakeholders. For example, the return counsellor and IOM need to be in very close contact regarding the logistical travel details. Depending on the severity of the health problem, IOM also cooperates with the attending physician in order to determine if a person is fit to travel or not and to ensure that the journey does not pose an extra health risk. Medical airport assistance provided by IOM might include the provision of a wheelchair or lifting services. IOM also informs the airline about the necessary support during the flight. This might include special seating (e.g. near the toilet) or special meals (e.g. for people suffering from diabetes). This sometimes lengthy preparation process places high value on the dignity and safety of the assisted migrants, and also safeguards that no risk is posed to the public and other travelers.

Medical support as a part of the reintegration assistance

If the returnee is eligible to participate in one of IOM's reintegration projects, the responsible IOM project coordinator and the return counsellor have to intensify their cooperation as well. The provision of information, such as whether a certain treatment or medication will be available after return, is essential in the decision-making process of a potential returnee. Therefore IOM offers to assist the return counselling organizations by answering individual medical requests.

Whenever possible, IOM puts special emphasis on the provision of appropriate support for returnees with medical needs after their return. Participants in IOM's reintegration projects may file a request for medical assistance in addition to their reintegration grant. Charles O., for instance, a voluntary returnee to Nigeria, decided to invest his reintegration assistance to purchase a car so that he could work as a taxi driver. However, he suffered from severe pain in his back which made it noticeably more difficult for him to work. As a single father and sole breadwinner, it was important to ensure that he can continue to earn a living for him and his six-year-old daughter. He was thus granted additional assistance for back surgery and the needed medication.

There are approximately 215 million international migrants today. If current rates of international migration continue, the number could reach 405 million by 2050. Adding the around 740 million internal migrants to the picture, all in all there are about one billion people on the move today. (...) Ensuring migrants' health means ensuring the health of a seventh of the world's population, and carries positive multiplier effects through improved public health and development outcomes¹.



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Charles O., Nigeria 2013

¹IOM Position Paper: Health in the Post-2015 Development Agenda. Available at: <http://www.iom.int/files/live/sites/iom/files/What-We-Do/docs/Health-in-the-Post-2015-Development-Agenda.pdf> (last access on 22.09.2014).

SAVE THE DATE

National EMN Conference

Young Refugees in Austria and the EU – Circumstances, Policies, Perspectives

18 November 2014 • Vienna, Austria

Save the date: 18 November 2014 - National EMN Conference 2014 “Young Refugees in Austria and the EU”

The IOM Country Office for Austria is organising its annual European Migration Network (EMN) conference on the topic of “Young Refugees in Austria and the EU –Circumstances, Policies and Perspectives” in its capacity as National Contact Point Austria in the EMN. The conference will take place on 18 November 2014 in the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna. The conference will shed light on the circumstances and perspectives young refugees face. The conditions in their main countries of origin will be presented along with an overview of the reasons why they flee their countries. The circumstances of their escape will also be explained. The characteristics and number of young refugees coming to Austria and other EU Member States will also be described. Furthermore, relevant policies and related measures implemented by these states will be presented on the basis of the upcoming EMN Study “Policies, practices and data on unaccompanied minors in 2014”.

A wide range of speakers have been invited to speak in various presentations and panel discussions. Representatives of international organizations, the Austrian government and NGOs, as well as young refugees themselves, will provide their unique perspectives. Young refugees’ potential, plans for the future and role in Austria are a particular focus of the conference, as well as the obstacles they face. Furthermore, the question of how young refugees can be supported in realizing their goals will also be raised. Current projects and initiatives supporting young refugees in Austria will be presented in a market place at the end of the conference. Representatives of these projects will be present and info materials will be available. More information about the conference is available on the EMN Website: www.emn.at



THE USE OF DETENTION AND ALTERNATIVES TO DETENTION IN THE CONTEXT OF IMMIGRATION POLICIES IN AUSTRIA



Study of the National Contact Point Austria in the European Migration Network

Co-funded by the European Union

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EMN Study: The Use of Detention and Alternatives to Detention in the Context of Immigration Policies in Austria

The IOM Country Office for Austria recently published a study on legal aspects and practices of detention and alternatives to detention in Austria. It describes the grounds on which persons can be detained for the purpose of removal, outlines the conditions for alternatives to detention, and provides insight into the practical organization of detention and alternatives to detention in Austria. Furthermore, it presents available statistics and deals with the question of what kind of influence detention and its alternatives have on asylum and return procedures.

The study shows that there has been a steady decrease in both the number and duration of detentions since 2010. Similarly, the total number of decisions providing alternatives to detention also decreased from 2009 to 2013. The study also identifies some challenges regarding individual assessment procedures, which are required to be conducted in all cases of potential detention in Austria. Furthermore, an accommodation facility in Vienna was identified as a good practice example of an alternative to detention. In addition, the study describes a new type of detention facility opened in 2014, which is intended to provide particularly humane accommodation for detainees.

The results of the study will be incorporated into a comparative synthesis report that provides an overview of the use of detention and alternatives of detention across EU Member States. Furthermore, an EMN Inform summarizing the synthesis report will also be published in English and translated into German.

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