

# Report

## Transnational Exchange V Workshop: Update on AVRR Counselling systems in Europe

**17.03.2021, online**

### Content

1. Germany .....	1
2. Portugal.....	3
3. Denmark .....	4
4. Belgium.....	6
5. Norway.....	9
6. Switzerland.....	11
7. Austria.....	13
8. France.....	14
9. The Netherlands.....	16
10. EU return policies and the growing role of Frontex.....	18

This workshop hosted by the Caritas Association of the Diocese Augsburg aimed at providing an overview concerning AVRR counselling systems and current trends in different EU countries. The information was presented by speakers from the respective country. The following report summarized the presentations and is not exhaustive, figures and data were taken from the presentations. For more information regarding the project visit our website: [www.caritas-augsburg.de/transnational5](http://www.caritas-augsburg.de/transnational5)



## 1. Germany

Information provided by Lena Prodöhl, Caritas Association Leipzig

### AVRR counselling providers

- Local authorities such as foreigners' offices, social welfare offices
- NGOs / welfare organizations
- IOM
- Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (only since 2019 in Saxony for example)

### AVRR counselling structure

- One stop shop assistance: the counsellor usually provides the counselling and applies for the plane ticket from IOM as well as for the reintegration grants
- However there aren't any national laws in place which mandate the accessibility to AVRR counselling for (rejected) asylum seekers and which also don't specify any counselling standards – only very basic guidelines; several NGOs created their own guidelines

## Return and reintegration budget

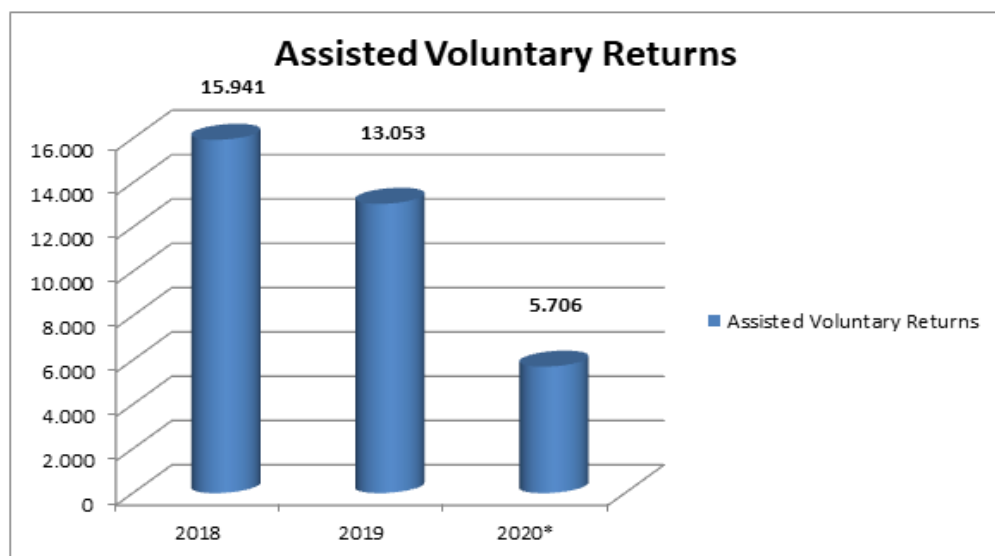
Return:

- REAG: 200,00 € per adult
- Decreased REAG of 50€ per adult for the following countries: Republic of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Northern Macedonia, Montenegro, Republic of Moldova, Republic of Serbia and Ukraine
- GARP: 44 countries of return outside the EU 1.000,00 € per adult; maximum per family 3.500,00 €
- Children usually receive half the budget

Reintegration:

- Starthilfe Plus (additional reintegration budget) + Covid 19 support: 2500€ in the country of return
- ERRIN: up to 2.200 € (before COVID-19 only 2.000 €) per adult; families max. 3.500 € before COVID
- States, municipalities or NGOs may have additional support programs

## Return numbers



Source: Numbers refer to returns that were financed by IOM Germany. Germany has only started to gather more data on voluntary return since May 2020

## Countries of return

Year	Ranking	Country of return	Number of returns
2019	1.	Iraq	1.796
	2.	Georgia	1.064
	3.	North Macedonia	989
2020	1.	Iraq	683
	2.	Georgia	518
	3.	Republic of Moldova	444

## News

- Return budget increased distinctly due to COVID-19
- Funding for counselling: the European Asylum, Migration and Integration Funds (AMIF) which is the main source of funding for AVRR counselling offered by NGOs decreased its allocated budget

for voluntary return distinctively; the funding for voluntary return varies from federal state to federal state even during Covid-19 times; a budget cut in the return field is expected due to Covid-19 expenses in other areas

- There has been an increase of AVRR counselling provided by local authorities; as mentioned above the Federal Migration for Asylum and Refugees in Saxony which processes the asylum requests started its pilot phase in 2019 offering return counselling as well

### Political agenda

Political agenda and social discourse are shaped by ambiguities:

- National vs. local government responsibilities:  
On a national level Germany focuses on and funds AVRR, whilst the provision and funding of the AVRR counselling is decided by the federal states which can have very different views on the matter.
- No unity on what AVRR-counselling should be:  
Media reports on AVRR are mainly focusing on negative examples and are highly critical which results in a negative view of the counselling itself while politicians describe it as a great opportunity for migrants.  
Society has no holistic image of AVRR. This is being reinforced by the arbitrariness of the mode of counselling available. Not only the target group may have divergent views of AVRR but also the governments and even the counsellors.

### Publication recommendation

- Child sensitive return by UNICEF, November 2019  
<https://www.unicef.de/informieren/materialien/child-sensitive-return-report/203376>



## 2. Portugal

Information provided by Luis Carrasquinho, IOM Portugal

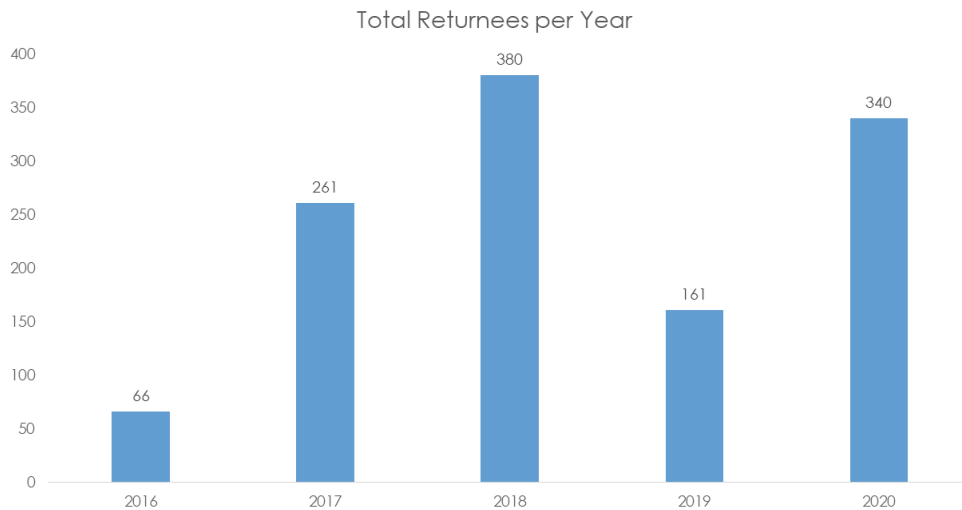
### AVRR counselling providers

- IOM since the late 1990s; gradual change from national funding to EU (AMIF) funding over the years; now 75% AMIF funded ARVoRe VIII Project January 2021 to December 2022
- In 2007 the Counselling and Information Network was founded in Portugal under a project named Surria; it includes now more than 40 members including national and local migration support centers, IOM, municipalities, shelters, etc.

### AVRR counselling structure

- decentralized information and counseling is provided by local actors which offer all types of migration support counselling aside from AVRR counselling throughout the territory
- Once the client has made his or her return decision the case is being referred to IOM which organizes the return flight and reintegration assistance

**Return numbers**



**Countries of return**

Approximately 10% of the returnees receive a reintegration budget  
 Source: IOM Portugal return numbers

Year	Ranking	Country of return	Number of returns
2019	1.	Brazil	151
	2.	Others	10
2020	1.	Brazil	333
	2.	Others	7

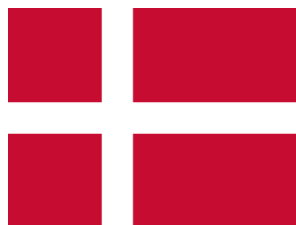
Explanation: Brazilian migrants are the majority of migrants in Portugal due to a common language and visa-free entry; the majority of the Brazilians do not seek asylum but seek employment opportunities in Portugal  
 Source: IOM Portugal

**Political perspective**

- Voluntary return is preferred over forced return
- AVRR is not discussed much in the media

**Publication recommendation**

- <https://www.retornovoluntario.pt/en/>
- <https://reintegracaobrasil.com/?lang=en>



**3. Denmark**

Information provided by Signe Soendergaard, Danish Refugee Council

**AVRR counselling providers**

- Danish State Return Agency (opened only in summer 2020)
- Danish Refugee Council (has been offering AVRR counselling since 2014)
- Center against Human Trafficking

**AVRR counselling structure**

Return counselling:

- Counselling is offered by the three above mentioned actors
- The plane ticket is provided by the Danish authority

Reintegration support:

- ERSO. Network of European Reintegration Support Organizations through which reintegration is made available in a wide range of countries, 30+ countries
- ERRIN Service Providers, 12 countries
- DRC Somalia. Bilateral agreement
- DRC Partnerships. Partnership with local NGOs to provide reintegration support to victims of human trafficking, 8 countries but expanding.

**Return and reintegration budget**

- ERSO & ERRIN  
In kind support: up to app. 2,600 EUR in kind (per adult/child)  
No cash
- Somalia program  
In kind support: up to app. 2,600 EUR in kind (per adult/child)  
Cash support: app. 1.000 EUR
- Victims of Human Trafficking & Unaccompanied Minors (UAM)  
In kind Support: 5.350 EUR adults and UAM's / 1.200 EUR children  
Cash support: 1350 EUR / 2.700 EUR (parents)  
Individualized support for special needs (airport pick up, special vulnerabilities)
- Extensive Medical Care  
For all. Serious medical cases.

**Return numbers**

- 2019  
In total: 2.826 returns  
of which 448 of them were returns of rejected asylum seekers
- Jan – July 2020  
In total: 777 returns  
of which 123 of them were returns of rejected asylum seekers  
Source: The Danish Police <https://politi.dk/statistik/udsendelser>

**Countries of return**

Voluntary return of rejected asylum seekers:

Year	Ranking	Country of return	Number of returns
2019	1.	Georgia	85
	2.	Iraq	44
	3.	Albania	39
2020	1.	<i>Not available</i>	
	2.	<i>Not available</i>	
	3.	<i>Not available</i>	

Tendency: preliminary main countries of return for all (rejected and granted) asylum seekers in Denmark: Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan

**News**

- The Danish State Return Agency was only established in August

2020 with the goal to provide return counselling and organize the return for all of Denmark; all tasks related to return are taken care of by one state agency (instead of the police, the immigration service, the NGOs)

- The Danish Refugee Council lost its funding for AVRR counselling in 2020 completely; now it offers independent AVRR counselling on a smaller scale through a smaller contract with 7 return counsellors and 2 program specialists
- Covid-19  
Waiting time and increased uncertainty  
Less departures  
Prolonged detention periods

### Political agenda

- Law proposal on a Return Law.  
Alternative support options for returnees to countries of return which are not eligible yet for reintegration support so that every returnee may receive a financial return budget; the reintegration support so far has been fixed, but it may get changed to a diminishing system --> the return budget will get lower according to the length of stay in Denmark after the asylum rejection --> Support amount is regulated depending on the individual case;  
The “Go and Prepare” system allows one family member to fly ahead to prepare the arrival of the rest of the family regarding housing, schooling, etc.
- Law proposal on Externalization  
Possibility to transfer asylum-seekers to asylum processing and accommodation in third countries; the ministry of immigration aims to have a partnership with a third country by next year

### Publication recommendation

- Policy Brief: Return Counselling. Supporting Informed Decision-making through impartial, independent, and non-directive counselling. DRC  
<https://drc.ngo/media/b5fjkzpz/drc-policy-brief-return-counselling-february-2019.pdf>
- Upcoming: Return Counselling: The DRC Evidence-based Return Counselling Method. Description of how DRC counsels rejected asylum seekers in Denmark.



## 4. Belgium

Information provided by Laurens Dickx, Caritas International Belgium

### AVRR counselling providers

- Fedasil
- IOM
- Caritas International Belgium
- (Forced returns only by Fedasil and ibz)

### AVRR

The migrant interested in return gets in touch with any return

## **counselling structure**

partner such as the staff of reception centers, the state-run return desks or social services (e.g. Caritas). If the client is eligible for more than pocket money and a plane ticket, the client is referred to either IOM or Caritas International Belgium for reintegration counselling where he or she specifies the needs in the home country after return. Both organizations have their own network of reintegration partners in the countries of return. In several cases a first business plan is drafted. The travel arrangements are parallelly done by Fedasil or IOM.

## **Return and reintegration budget**

- Return budget: plane ticket and 250€ per adult; plane ticket and no cash prime for returnees from visa-free countries
- Reintegration budget: for (rejected) asylum seekers in general 700€ per adult cash and 1500€ in-kind assistance for a business start-up in the country of return;
- Children always receive half the budget

For all migrants (from visa-required or visa-free countries):

- Vulnerability support: 500 EUR in-kind assistance per vulnerable person for specific purposes such as medical needs, elderly, pregnancy; the family unit may receive a maximum of 1000€ for vulnerability
- Family support: 500€ per family

AMIF Budget: reinforcement of basic budgets to improve chances of sustainable return

- Five focus countries: Caritas International Belgium (Palestine, Armenia, Russia, Cameroon, Morocco), IOM (Armenia, Russia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Ethiopia) -->Business top-up (€1500),business training, temporary accommodation (max. 3 months), psychosocial support for children
- Non-focus countries (if visa-obligation): Business top-up (€1500), business training

AMAAR: medical assistance

- Heavy debilitating problems: physical/psychological
- If €500 standard medical budget would not suffice
- Medical team Fedasil, doctor in Belgium & partner in CoO
- Needs for first six months covered

Balkan administrative support

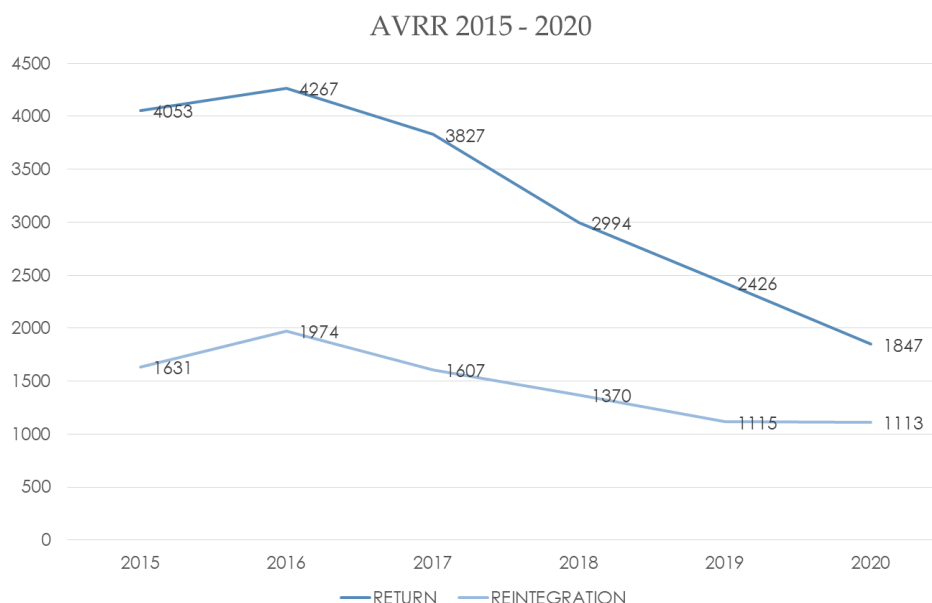
- €250 per file
- ID-cards, health insurance, driver's license, school material...

Reinforcement for businesses

- to support entrepreneurship and boost projects
- Returned 6 to 18 months ago
- Max €2000 (based on real expenditure)

Extra support for UAM

## Return numbers



## Countries of return

Year	Ranking	Country of return	Number of returns
2019	1.	Brazil	458
	2.	Romania	348
	3.	Ukraine	292
2020	1.	Brazil	480
	2.	El Salvador	134
	3.	Georgia	104

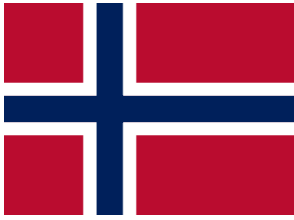
## News

- Increase in Latin American returns
- COVID flexibility: digital counseling in beginning, keep flights going, contact with embassies...
- AMIF (2020-2021), CONEX & REACH-OUT: projects to inform migrants about future options in Belgium or in their home countries; work with diasporas, extension of return network, sharing correct information to counter misinformation
- Increase in vulnerable cases: medical complex cases and long stay in Europe

## Political agenda

- New Secretary of State for Asylum & Migration with a focus on voluntary return for coming years, opportunity to weigh on the new policy; he/she can keep in mind the following recommendations: human-centered approach, importance of pre-departure counseling, increase reintegration opportunities, reinforce local partners





## 5. Norway

Information provided by Anders Stenersen, Caritas Norway

### AVRR counselling providers

- Main pre departure counselling actor is IOM. IOM does return counselling at reception centers.
- General AVRR counselling also provided by several civil society organizations (like Caritas Norway) and other private actors that meet migrants in different settings.

### AVRR counselling structure

- The returnee may apply for AVRR through the Norwegian migration authorities (UDI)
- If accepted, IOM provides pre-departure counselling and organizes the return.
- Exception, Danish Refugee Council offers counselling and organizes return to Somalia
- Cooperation with Caritas International Belgium regarding reintegration assistance in Morocco

### Reintegration budget

General reintegration budget is split into two categories:

- 1. Category: if the application for reintegration support is sent before the departure deadline or if the applicant is not registered in Norway, the applicant (adult or minor) may receive NOK 15 000 per person (approx. € 1471); on top of that minors receive NOK 10 000 per person (approx. € 981) extra
- 2. Category: if the application for reintegration support is sent after the departure deadline, the applicant (adult or minor) may receive NOK 5000 (approx. € 490)

Extra financial support for the following countries:

- Ethiopia: Agency for Refugees and Returnees Affair (ARRA) in Ethiopia is taking applications to support from Ethiopians that wants to return. This comes in addition to the support Ethiopians can apply for from Norwegian authorities.
- Afghanistan: NOK 15 000 per person (approx. € 1471)+ NOK 15 000 in Afghanistan; NOK 25 000 per returning minor + NOK 10 000 per person (approx € 981) as extra reintegration support for each child who travels with family or tutor; this support is only available who apply for reintegration support before the departure deadline; after the departure deadline the amount for an Afghan returnee (adult) is 13 000 NOK in Norway and 13 000 NOK in Afghanistan; + 2000 NOK per person upon arrival in Kabul to spend on accommodation etc.
- Somalia/Morocco: if the returnee applies for reintegration support before the departure deadline, minors receive 25 000 NOK plus an extra reintegration budget of NOK 10 000 per person (approx. € 981)
- In addition, unaccompanied minors who can return to a family member, an appointed guardian or another justifiable care offer may receive up to NOK 22,000. The subsidy can be given in the form of

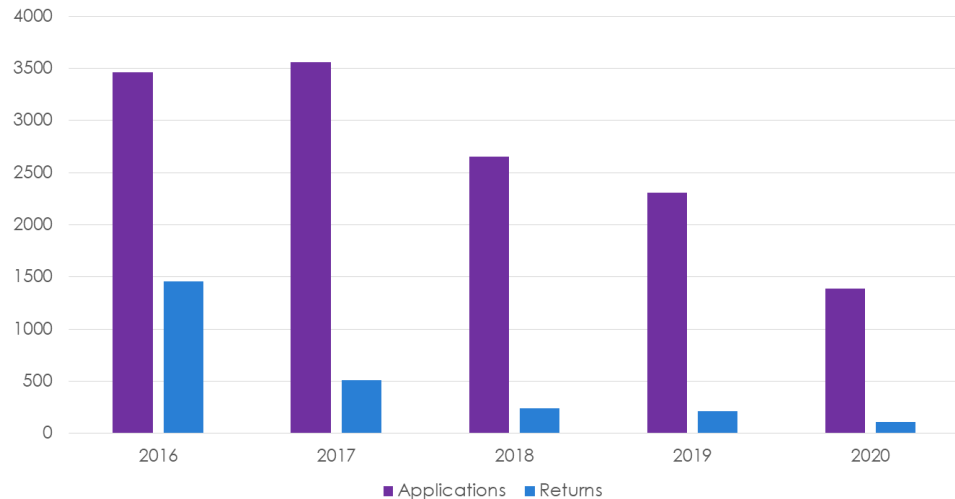
services such as education, work training, help with starting a business or the like.

In addition, NOK 10,000 in grants is given directly to a family member or appointed guardian to whom the child returns.

- Vulnerable clients may receive an extra 22 000 NOK may be granted after the return. The subsidy can be given in the form of services such as school, work training, help with starting a business or similar

Source: <https://www.udi.no/en/return/return-programmes-and-schemes/>

## Return numbers



## Countries of return

Year	Ranking	Country of return	Number of returns
2019	1.	Ethiopia	41
	2.	Somalia	33
	3.	Iraq	16
2020	1.	Russia	20
	2.	Ethiopia	11
	3.	Iran	11

## News

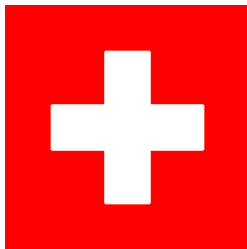
- The AVR system changed in 2019 with IOM getting a smaller role in the application process. With General Data Protection Rule as the main argument, the UDI started handling all the applications for AVR. IOM is only getting personal information about those returnees to whom the UDI grants the AVR option, meaning rejected applicants would not be known to IOM.
- A new tender was launched for organizations which would be interested in providing information about AVR to potential returnees who are not living in reception centers
- The rules regarding assisted return were until 2019 so-called “circular” (rundskriv). This means that content in theory could change without a public democratic process. In 2019 the rules regarding assisted return were moved from a “circular” to a “regulation”. The main change from Caritas perspective was that reintegration support for vulnerable groups became less if you apply after departure deadline.

**Political agenda**

- AVRR has not been on the political agenda in Norway and has not gotten any media attention the last couple of years.

**Publication recommendation**

- Losing the right to stay (2019)  
[https://www.udi.no/globalassets/global/forskning-fou\\_i/utlendingsforvaltningen/rapport-9-19-losing-the-right-to-stay-web.pdf](https://www.udi.no/globalassets/global/forskning-fou_i/utlendingsforvaltningen/rapport-9-19-losing-the-right-to-stay-web.pdf)



**6. Switzerland**

Information provided by Mialy Cannella, IOM Switzerland

**AVRR counselling providers**

In Federal Asylum regions level (at airports, federal asylum centers):

- Cantonal authority
- IOM

At a cantonal level (at cantonal offices):

- Cantonal authority
- NGOs: Caritas, Red Cross, KKF-OCA
- Private sector: ORS

**AVRR counselling structure**

- One-stop-shop assistance: the AVRR counsellor is the hub between the beneficiaries and the numerous and various AVRR stakeholders to ensure that

**Return and reintegration budget**

- Swiss return assistance benefits since March 2019 are determined according to a SEM-conceived federal digressive benefits system

	Legal status	Inscription date	Cash benefits (CHF)			Project
			Adult	Couple	Family	
Federal level	Asylum seeker	Up until the first interview	1'000.-	1'500.-	2'000.-	3'000.-
		Immediately after asylum decision	500.-	750.-	1'000.-	
		Afterwards	250.-	375.-	500.-	
Cantonal level	Asylum seeker	Processed asylum procedure	No SEM funding At Canton's discretion			
		Pending asylum procedure	1'000.-	2'000.-	+ 500.- per child	3'000.-
	Residence permit holder	At any time				Up to 5'000.-
	Undocumented		At Canton's discretion			

The yellow color stands for returnees from countries which require a visa to enter Switzerland and which border with the Schengen area. The blue color stands for returnees from all other countries requiring a visa to enter Switzerland.

- Further support is available to certain countries of origin with special reintegration programs or vulnerable returnees

Source: IOM Switzerland

**Return numbers**

Number of voluntary returns from Switzerland

2018	2019	2020
1006	1076	667

**Countries of return**

Year	Ranking	Country of return	Number of returns
2019	1.	Georgia	228
	2.	Algeria	99
	3.	Kosovo	55
2020	1.	Georgia	126
	2.	Iraq	37
	3.	Republic of Moldova	33

**News**

- The SEM introduced a new federal digressive system regarding financial support for returnees in March 2019 as a consequence of the Swiss asylum system reshuffling (OA2-Law 142.312). This digressive system was put on hold in 2020, though, due to the pandemic resulting in granting every returnee the maximum return support possible.
- In March 2019 the SEM also declared asylum seekers subject to a Dublin transfer eligible for return support and reintegration projects
- In 2020 a new target group, returnees to visa-free countries, was declared eligible for benefits (adult 500 CHF, minor 250 CHF, family up to 1000 CHF)

**Political agenda**

- The Swiss authorities used to and are still very committed to supporting voluntary return
- Even though the asylum requests decreased notably (28% from 2019 to 2020), the 2021 SEM AVRR budget estimate is stable compared to 2020 despite the pandemic
- Funding for reintegration projects increased steadily by 4% since 2018
- A convention took place on the 02.02.21 to create more synergies between different federal departments (Justice, Economy, Foreign Affairs) for a global and coherent migration policy

**Publication recommendation**

- AVRR for vulnerable people - Practical handbook, IOM Switzerland, 2016  
[https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/un\\_guide\\_pratique\\_gn.pdf](https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/un_guide_pratique_gn.pdf) (available in French and German)

- Reintegration Counselling: A Psychosocial Approach, IOM, 2019  
reintegration-counselling.pdf (iom.int)
- IOM Reintegration Handbook, IOM, 2019  
Reintegration Handbook - Practical guidance on the design, implementation and monitoring of reintegration assistance - | IOM Online Bookstore

## 7. Austria

Information provided by Michael Hajek, BBU Austria

### AVRR counselling providers

- Current counselling provider/s since end of 2020:  
BBU (Federal Agency for Reception and Support Services) – Federal Agency under the Ministry of Interior
- Former counselling providers:  
Caritas Austria and Association for Human Rights Austria

### AVRR counselling structure

Counselling system:

- BBU offices in 9 Austrian federal states
- Counselling in detention centers
- Counselling in accommodation centers

### Return and reintegration budget

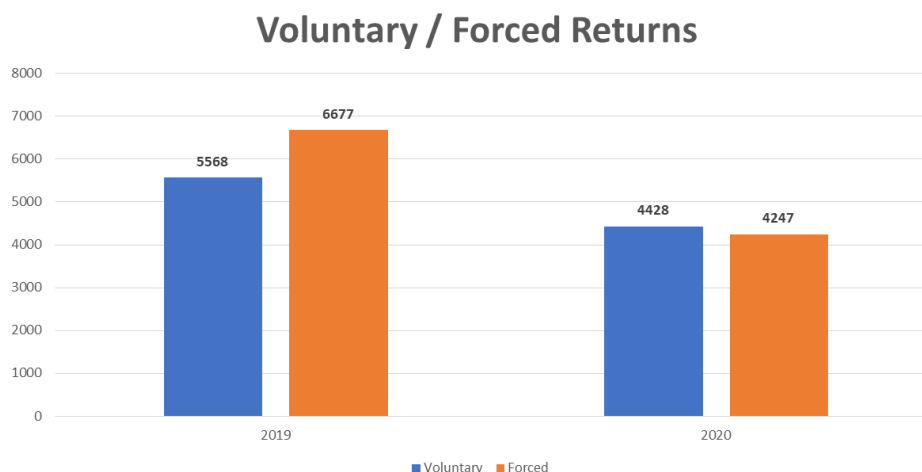
Return budget

- 900 Euro - during asylum procedure / one month after return decision / legally staying in Austria
- 250 Euro / later than one month after return decision
- 1000 Euro for medical cases
- This return budget is not eligible for returnees to the Western Balkan States nor visa-free countries, EU member states; their return budget is 50€

Reintegration programs:

- average amount: 3.000 – 3.500 Euro (in kind) for social and economic reintegration and medical support
- Run by IOM (Afghanistan, Iran, Tunisia), Caritas IRMA plus (only for vulnerable returnees), ERRIN, OFII

## Return numbers



Source: Austrian Ministry of the Interior

Countries of return	Year	Ranking	Country of return	Number of returns
	2019	1.	Serbia	319
		2.	Iraq	302
		3.	China	197
	2020	1.	Serbia	146
		2.	Romania	110
		3.	Iraq	68

## News

- In the end of 2020 a new federal Agency, Federal Agency for Reception and Support Services, was established with three divisions: voluntary return, legal counselling, management of the reception centers and accommodation for refugees on a federal level
- Many counsellors of Caritas and the Association for Human Rights, the former providers of AVRR counselling, switched to the agency which means that the know-how could be saved and the clients continued seeing the same counsellors
- NGOs (Caritas and VMÖ) provided counselling until December 2020



## 8. France

Information provided by Sara Pakzad, French Office for immigration and integration (OFII)

**AVRR counselling providers**

- OFII, public structure under the authority of the Ministry of Interior

**AVRR counselling structure**

Information on AVRR

- Outreach activities through the ERRIN pilot action “Reach Out” in the north of France
- 50 OFII’s regional offices and headquarters in France; partner structures (reception center, situation examination center)
- To rejected asylum seekers

Appointment with the return counsellor

- Return desk in OFII’s regional offices --> counselling on national AVR program and ERRIN
- The reintegration counselling is offered by OFII staff members who are located in the country of return (OFII has offices in 7 different countries of return; neighboring countries are partially included so that 15 countries of return are covered)

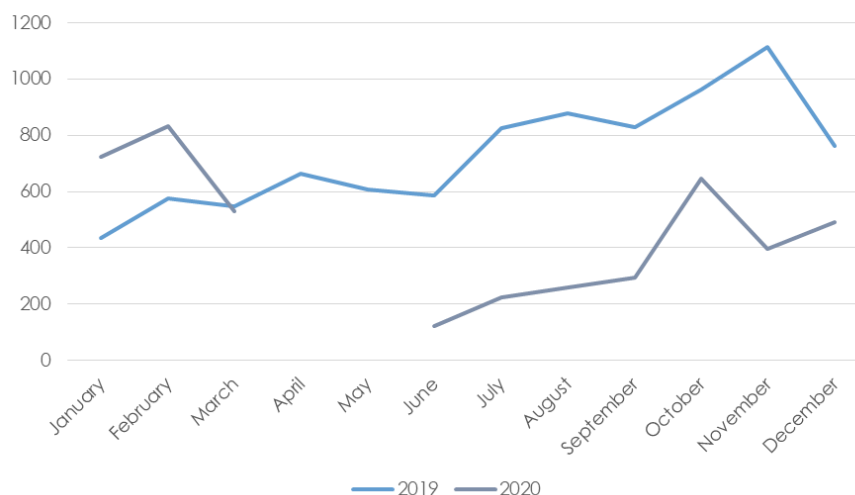
**Return and reintegration budget**

National OFII’s return and reintegration program

- Return financial support (fixed amount)  
650€/person for third country nationals subject to visa requirements  
300€/person for third country nationals exempt from visa requirements and Kosovo
- Reintegration financial support (maximum amount)  
Level 1 – Social assistance : 400€/adult 300€/child  
Level 2 – Employment assistance : coverage of 60% of the monthly salary, 4000€/project with feasibility study, 2000€/vocation training cost  
Level 3 – Business creation assistance : Between 3000€ and 6300€/project depending of the country
- ERRIN program : 3000€/case
- URA reintegration program in Kosovo : 3500€/person

**Return numbers**

Return numbers 2019-2020



In 2019: approx. 8700  
In 2020: approx. 4500

Countries of return	Year	Ranking	Country of return	Number of returns
	2019	1.	Albania	1959
		2.	Georgia	1459
		3.	Serbia	727
	2020	1.	Georgia	1124
		2.	Albania	1103
		3.	Serbia	255

### News

- First quarantine April - May : suspension of outreach activities, closed airports, no return activities
- Covid-19 affected the counselling in several ways (the return counsellors had to deal with the stress and impatience of the candidates, more difficult organization of departures due to cancelled flights or charter flights, access to current information on the sanitary situation in the countries of return and reintegration, required mandatory paid Covid-19 test in some countries of return)

### Publication recommendation

- Mapping system of stakeholders and return and reintegration assistance – Cameroon, Mali, Morocco, Senegal ; ERRIN-OFII Pilot Action  
[http://www.ofii.fr/IMG/pdf/Mapping\\_system\\_ERRIN\\_OFII\\_2021.pdf](http://www.ofii.fr/IMG/pdf/Mapping_system_ERRIN_OFII_2021.pdf)



## 9. The Netherlands

Information provided by Liesbeth Fontein, Dutch Council for Refugees

### AVRR counselling providers

LVV – National program for undocumented migrants (DCR, INLIA, Bridge to better, other) since 2018 --> open centers in 5 large cities in the Netherlands; 6 – 18 months with empowerment training, professional training and AVRR counselling

- Emergency shelter
- ROS (Rotterdam Support Undocumented persons)
- Goedwerk Foundation
- Solid Road
- INLIA (Groningen)
- Wereldwijd Foundation
- IOM
- Dutch Council for Refugees

For all other returnees:

- IOM



**AVRR counselling structure**

- DT&V (Dutch immigration services)

The client

1. Receives AVRR counselling
2. Makes a decision about return
3. Selects the best suited return program (NGOs or IOM); the return budget is the same but the services as well as the reintegration partners in the countries of origin differentiate

Returnees to visa-free countries, Dublin Cases and returnees to EU surrounding countries are excluded from the services

**Return and reintegration budget**

- Adult € 2000: in-kind 1500 + Cash 300 + (IOM) 200 & flight/test
- Child €3000: in-kind 2500 + Cash 300 + (IOM) 200 & flight/test

Extra support for:

- Medical cases (250 – 1000 Euro)
- Vulnerable cases (case by case evaluation)
- Target group specific projects

**Return numbers**

2019	2020
3035	1815
<i>Source: IOM Netherlands</i>	

**Countries of return**

Year	Ranking	Country of return	Number of returns
2019	1.	Albania	467
	2.	Moldova	380
	3.	Azerbaijan	264
2020	1.	Albania	280
	2.	Brazil	182
	3.	Moldova	158

**News**

- Dutch Council for Refugees ended its nationwide AMIF-funded AVRR counselling in Nov. 2020 after four years.
- LVV (open centers for undocumented migrants) – Switch from client initiative approach (the client comes to the organization with a request for counseling) to a municipal program approach (everyone in de LVV participates in future orientation).
- ERRIN: DT&V started working with ERRIN on voluntary returns to Afghanistan and Iraq (so far ERRIN in the Netherlands was only available for forced returnees) in anticipation of Frontex development

**Political agenda**

- There is a tendency for a more centralized AVRR counselling approach.
- Critical media attention for LVV:

- the allocated budget was found too excessive for the measurable results (few returnees)
- questions about the courses and training offered because of particular framing (participants who said on camera they don't wish to return but wish to participate in the training).
- the types of courses offered (e.g.vlogging) don't always offer (obvious) perspective for return.



## 10. EU return policies and the growing role of Frontex

Information presented by Victoria Rietig, German Council on Foreign Relations

- Return directive by the EU Commission (published in 2008 and it was recast in 2018) is the frame of all EU return policy, it sets the common standards for all EU-member states of how to return non-EU nationals (the recast proposes special border procedures to accelerate returns, a new maximum detention period (instead of 3 to 6 months, up to 12 months), that returnees should be obliged to confirm their identity and get travel documents, etc. ; research assessed, however, that the impact of the Return Directive would be relatively low. Therefore, some more changes by the parliament were suggested: decrease the border procedure, general detention ban for families, general extension for organizing the voluntary return (30 days instead of 7 days), etc. A final recast has not been decided.
- Frontex regulation (legal tool from 2019 which expanded the role of Frontex into all areas of return) -->increase in budget (the budget tripled to 1.3bn, personal (standing core of 10.000 staff) and the technical equipment to give more support to member states regarding forced and voluntary return
  - Frontex's tasks include now to coordinate and organize return flights of different EU member states, to support the acquisition of travel documents (technical and administrative tasks), chartering planes, etc. ; technically the AVRR counselling and implementation of voluntary return is also part of the Frontex mandate. However, Frontex is still in its infancy shoes regarding voluntary return and reintegration and collects information on this topic currently (Frontex Industry Days)
  - Concerns about the work of Frontex: push-backs by Frontex (example OLAF investigation); debate about better monitoring (either internal or external)
- Visa code amendment: policy tool which was proposed in 2018 and came into force in 2020: introduction of Article 25a which states that the level of cooperation of third countries on assistance regarding returns of their own nationals should be assessed annually and put pressure on less cooperative countries; first assessment of the cooperation concluded that 33% of the countries of origin are cooperative, 33% of the countries are sometimes cooperative, and the last third is not cooperative at all.
- New pact on migration and asylum in 2020: new frame for migration policies which emphasizes the importance of return for the entire asylum system

- Readmission agreements: member states have agreements with countries of origin to practically map out the returns of rejected asylum seeker (formal and informal agreements)
- New papers on national levels to improve returns such as the German presidency proposal (internal, not published)



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Bayerisches Landesamt für  
Asyl und Rückführungen



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