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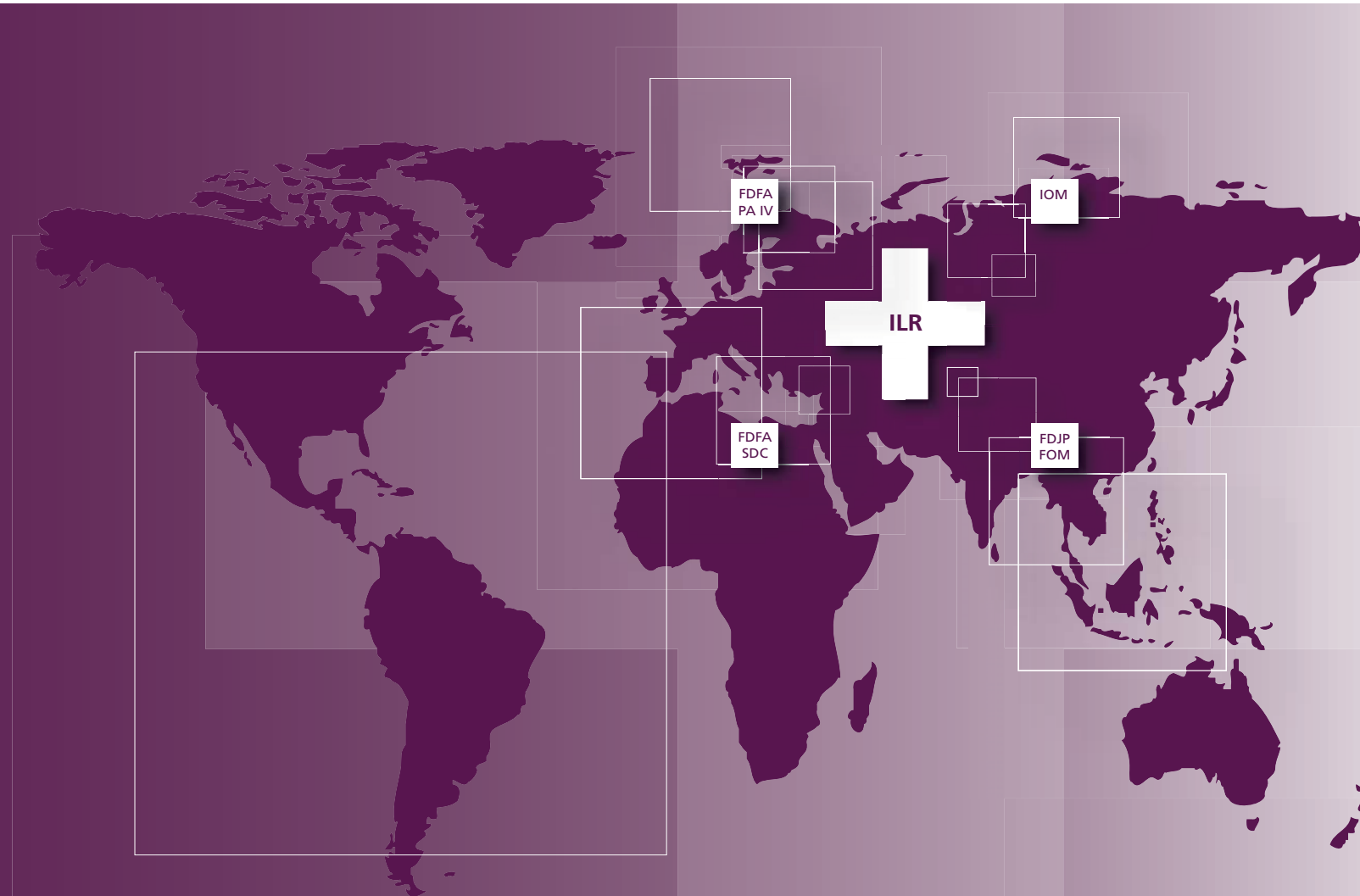
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Preface



Urs Betschart

Urs Betschart | FOM Vice-Director, Head of FOM's Entry, Stay and Return Domain

A consistent yet humane return policy is one of the cornerstones of present-day Swiss migration policy. The political debate on asylum policy long has been centered on topics such as providing protection to asylum seekers and shaping appropriate administrative procedures. Other major issues in asylum policy were approval rates of asylum applications, the duration of asylum and appeals procedures, the creation of a coherent asylum practice, and the efficiency of asylum authorities.

In view of the increasing proportion of asylum seekers who do not have a legitimate right to protection under the asylum law, more people must be turned away today than in the past. With that, return and reintegration of people have surfaced as pressing issues and increasingly entered political awareness.

For more than a decade, the Federal Office for Migration (FOM) has offered return assistance to asylum seekers. The most important objective of federal assisted voluntary return activities is to provide incentives for the voluntary and independent return of persons subject to the provisions of the Asylum Act and certain persons subject to the provisions of the Foreign Nationals Act. Those who are returning voluntarily are assisted in reintegrating into their home countries.

Return programs include return counseling provided in the cantons, individual return assistance, structural aid abroad on location, projects for preventing irregular migration, and country-specific return programs. These specific return programs are crucial to furthering dialog with the authorities of migrants' native countries, thus contributing to establishing migration partnerships.

Combining tools of domestic and foreign policy calls for both innovative concepts appropriate for implementing political mandates and new forms of cooperation. Headed by the FOM and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the Interdepartmental Steering Group on Return Assistance (ILR) is the body that decides whether reintegration programs, structural aid projects, and projects aimed to prevent irregular migration should be carried out in partner countries. The ILR is also responsible for aligning assistance projects and programs with Swiss foreign policy and migration interests in migrants' home countries. The ILR is thus a valuable partner in cross-department and international cooperation in migration matters.

This publication outlines the major fields of ILR activity, gives an overview of the development of migration tools, and illustrates instances of return assistance and reintegration aid.



Toni Frisch

Toni Frisch | SDC Deputy Director, Delegate for Humanitarian Aid and Head of the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit (SHA)

Return assistance programs for displaced persons from Bosnia Herzegovina began in 1996, immediately after the Dayton Agreement) was signed. Since the Federal Department of Justice and Police (FDJP) and the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) were jointly responsible for return assistance activities, the conceptual and operational implementation tasks for these programs were given to the Federal Office for Refugees – as the Federal Office for Migration (FOM) was known at the time – as well as to the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) in close cooperation with the FDFA's Directorate of Political Affairs (DPA) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). In addition to enabling displaced persons to return to their home countries in dignity and receive individual financial support, this program also included reconstruction projects in the home countries so as to raise the living standards of the populations that had been left behind. Having had minimal prior exposure to return policies, the SDC saw this as a good opportunity to strengthen its long-term commitment in the region. Created at this time, the Interdepartmental Steering Group on Return Assistance (ILR) ensured optimal interdepartmental cooperation. In 1999 and 2000, the ILR had to face a greater challenge: the return of 41'000 refugees from Kosovo.

The strong relationship of trust established between the partners involved in these programs back then continues today, ten years later.

In the meantime, the nature of the ILR has changed. It now deals with more complex themes and a wider range of different countries and target groups. Return assistance programs have been established for countries such as Georgia, Guinea, Iraq, the Maghreb states and Nigeria and include projects in the areas of health, combating trafficking in human beings or affording protection and assistance to migrants stranded in transit countries. Previously, such projects were practically unheard of. Deeper dialogue between countries of origin, transit countries and host countries can also increasingly be seen reflected in the ILR's operational activities.

The SDC's new Global Program Migration was launched within the framework of implementing the Federal Council Dispatch on the Continuation of Technical Cooperation and Financial Assistance for Developing Countries (South Dispatch). The Global Program Migration is expected to create even greater synergies between migration and development activities. The Global Program Migration seeks to bring coherent added value to existing migration activities, which can also free up resources for projects outside SDC priority countries. These activities and initiatives are intended to benefit mainly migrants as well as countries of origin and transit. At the same time, they should help ease the asylum situation.

Migration has become one of the most pressing issues for both policymakers and societies worldwide. If Swiss migration management is to have any beneficial impact for everyone involved, then coordinated action among all stakeholders is more important than ever. The ILR is a good example of what can be achieved.

List of Abbreviations

AENEAS EU	Program providing funding and technical assistance to third countries in the area of migration and asylum
AKF Aga Khan	Foundation (Afghanistan)
AsylA	Federal Act of 26 June 1998 on Asylum (Asylum Act, SR 142.31)
AuG	Federal Act of 16 December 2005 on Foreign Nationals (Foreign Nationals Act, SR 142.20)
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
EU	European Union
FDFA	Federal Department of Foreign Affairs
FDFA PA IV	FDFA's Directorate of Political Affairs Division IV: Human Security
FDJP	Federal Department of Justice and Police
FIZ	Women's Information Centre (NGO specialized in matters relating to the trafficking of women and women migration)
FOM	Federal Office for Migration
FOR	Federal Office for Refugees (FOM since 2005)
ILR	Interdepartmental Steering Group on Return Assistance
IAM	Interdepartmental Working Group on Migration
ILO	International Labor Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MMTF	Mixed Migration Task Force
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PiM	Prevention of irregular migration
RCO	Cantonal return counseling office
REZ	Return assistance services provided at reception centres
SATP	Social Assistance to Trafficked Persons (Georgia)
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SFM	University of Neuchâtel's Swiss Forum for Migration and Population studies
SMA	State Migration Agency (Armenia)
SRC	Swiss Red Cross
UN	United Nations Organization
UNHCR	Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNWRA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
WFP	World Food Program
WHO	World Health Organization

1 General Introduction

1.1 Return Assistance and the ILR

Urs von Arb | Head of FOM's Return Division

Switzerland's first experiences with interdepartmental cooperation began with return assistance activities back in 1985. The first working group on return assistance was comprised of representatives from the Refugees Division of the former Federal Police Office (FPO, now Fedpol) and the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA). The following year, country-specific working groups were established for Chile, Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo) and Turkey. Implementation of a return assistance program for Bosnia and Herzegovina¹ (1996-1999) by the FOM, the SDC and IOM was the beginning of broad-based support for return assistance initiatives at the federal level as well as institutionalization of interdepartmental cooperation on return assistance within the Federal Administration. The positive experiences prompted the Federal Office for Refugees (FOR), as the FOM was known at the time, to create a new Return Assistance Section in 1999. The existing network of cantonal return counseling offices was also set up at the same time. People began to realize that a combination of suitable incentives, targeted information and adequate counseling could increase the rate of return of refugees and asylum seekers. The Interdepartmental Steering Group on Return Assistance (ILR) was also set up that same year.

The positive experiences from return assistance programs for the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia) led to the planning and implementation of subsequent reintegration programs in the partner country. Return assistance programs were established for Sri Lanka, Ethiopia, northern Iraq, Somalia, Angola, Iran, Macedonia, Iraq, Turkey,

Democratic Republic of Congo, Armenia, Georgia, Afghanistan, the Maghreb states and the West African countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Cape Verde, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo). In many respects, these programs were not comparable to the major Balkan programs: the reasons for migration were different as were the situations in the various countries of origin; at the same time, the programs differed in terms of the number of returnees and program costs.

Good coordination during the development and implementation phases of return assistance programs is absolutely essential. The ILR coordinates all return assistance activities, considers potential synergies that can be created between the SDC's development initiatives, the FOM's return assistance programs and the activities of other partners; and links all of these measures together through the IAM Committee². The FOM and SDC take turns organizing and chairing IAM Committee meetings. The head of the IOM office in Bern and a representative of the FDFA's Directorate of Political Affairs (specifically, Political Affairs Division IV: Human Security) act as permanent advisors to the ILR. When necessary, representatives of other federal agencies as well as external consultants or organizations may be called in to act as experts. The ILR must nevertheless adapt to migration policy developments and the new legal basis. In 2005, the ILR's mandate was adjusted and updated for the first time.

¹ Cf. chapter 3.1 Priority Region: Western Balkans. ² The Interdepartmental Working Group on Migration (IAM) and the IAM Committee coordinate Swiss migration policy and help develop migration partnerships.

This report seeks to provide readers with an overview of the ILR's work in relation to Switzerland's commitment to return assistance activities. It also seeks to show how cooperation in the field of migration can be coordinated and implemented alongside development activities.

The report begins with a brief presentation of return assistance instruments and figures. The main body of the report provides detailed coverage of the various priority regions for return assistance activities: the Western Balkans, the South Caucasus, West Africa, the Maghreb states and the Near East. The closing portion of the report discusses the ILR's activities in relation to a chosen set of priority themes such as prevention of irregular migration and combating trafficking in human beings.

1.2 Chronology of Return Assistance Activities

- 1959** Police Division of FDJP opens case file "Return of Refugees to their Home Country" following a request for assistance to obtain identification papers for two Hungarian refugees who wish to return to their home country.
- 1970** 1970s to mid-1980s: Issuance of airline tickets or payment of transport costs plus travel expenses for individual cases, mainly involving South American refugees.
- 1985** First Interdepartmental Working Group on Return Assistance, comprised of representatives from the Refugees Division of the former Federal Police Office (FPO) and the FDFA.
- 1986** Interdepartmental working groups established for Chile, Zaire (now Democratic Republic of Congo) and Turkey. The revised Asylum Act contains a provision regarding return assistance activities.
- 1987** Implementation of the first return assistance program ("Program for Return Assistance and Occupational Reintegration of Chilean Nationals"); first return counseling offices in Switzerland. In Chile, the program was run by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), previously known as the Intergovernmental Committee for Migration (ICM).
- 1993** FOR (now FOM) creates Switzerland's first return assistance concept and places a project manager in charge of return assistance activities.
- 1994** Opening of the IOM office in Bern.
- 1996** Launch of a pilot program for Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- 1997** Information about return counseling offices and individual return assistance services provided to all asylum seekers. Creation of network of return counseling offices. Launch of the return assistance program for Bosnia and Herzegovina (1997–1999).
- 1998** Return assistance provisions added to the Asylum Act.
- 1999** FOR creates the Return Assistance Section; ILR becomes institutionalized. A return assistance program is established for Kosovo (1999–2001).
- 2000** Return assistance program established for Sri Lanka (2000–2004); Switzerland launches occupational and social development projects to help displaced persons after their return to their home country (2000–2005).
- 2001** Return assistance programs for Ethiopia (2001–2002), the former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (2001–2003), northern Iraq (2001–2003) and Somalia (2001–2002).
- 2002** Return assistance programs for Angola (2002–2007), Iran (2002–2003), Macedonia (2002–2003), Kosovo minorities (2002–2003); Adjustments made to individual return assistance services: in addition to financial assistance, returnees now have the opportunity of receive follow-up assistance in their country of origin.
- 2003** Return assistance programs established for vulnerable persons from the Balkans (2003–2006), Iraq (since 2003) and Turkey (2003–2005).
- 2004** Return assistance programs established for Armenia (2004–2008) and Democratic Republic of Congo (2004–2006).
- 2005** ILR mandate is adjusted; return assistance programs established for Nigeria (since 2005) and other West African countries (2005–2008, Guinea started in 2009); implementation of program to provide return assistance services at reception centers in Basel, Kreuzlingen, Altstätten, Chiasso and Vallorbe.
- 2006** Return assistance programs established for Ethiopia (2006–2008), Afghanistan (2006–2008), Georgia (2006–2009) and Maghreb states (2006–2008).
- 2007** Interdepartmental Steering Group on Return Assistance (ILR) drafts strategy paper on its contribution to migration partnerships between Switzerland and the Western Balkans (2007–2010); return assistance programs established for vulnerable persons from the Balkans, including Kosovo minorities (2007–2010).
- 2008** Amendment of Art. 93 of the Asylum Act "Return assistance and prevention of irregular migration"; responsibility for the prevention of irregular migration transferred to FOM's Return Assistance Section; with entry in force of the new Foreign Nationals Act (AuG), specific categories of persons subject to AuG provisions qualify for return assistance services (Art. 60 AuG) – first AuG pilot project begins (2008–2010).
- 2009** Pilot project launched to provide return assistance services during airport transit in Zurich and Geneva (REZ airport).

1.3 Return Assistance Instruments

Eric Kaser | Head of FOM's Return Assistance Section

Article 93 of the Asylum Act, "Return assistance and prevention of irregular migration", forms the legal basis for Switzerland's return assistance activities. The following pages provide an overview of the following return assistance instruments used by Switzerland: individual return assistance services, return counseling offices (RCOs), return assistance from reception centers (REZ) and swissREPAT. As a complement to return assistance services provided to displaced persons in Switzerland, follow-up activities are also carried out in the partner country in the form of structural aid projects.

Individual Return Assistance Services

Most return assistance services provided to displaced persons take the form of individual return assistance services before their departure from Switzerland and reintegration programs in the partner country after their return. Over the past few years, the individual return assistance services have been expanded and made more flexible. Nowadays, individual return assistance and return programs tend to be closely coordinated with one another, both in terms of scale and scope. All voluntary returnees subject to the provisions of the Asylum Act (SR 142.31), regardless of their country of origin, have the right to receive non-binding return counseling services from a return counseling office in their canton of residence, to have travel arrangements for the return trip home handled for them and to receive reimbursement of travel expenses. Voluntary returnees who have resided in Switzerland for at least three months are also entitled to start-up aid in the form of a lump-sum payment of CHF 1'000 for adults and CHF 500 for minors. Up to CHF 3'000 per case is also available for reintegration assistance (material follow-up assistance). Voluntary returnees may choose one of

several options: occupational support, accommodation, transport of materials or support from family members (Cash for Shelter, Cash for Care). If voluntary returnees are able to produce a medical certificate, they will also receive medical care for a limited duration after their return to their home country.

IOM missions, Swiss diplomatic missions or non-governmental organizations called in to act as local implementing partners are responsible for all reintegration services: e.g., payment of start-up aid, occupational support and search for social or medical structures.

However, return assistance services and follow-up reintegration programs in the partner country can only help ease the return and reintegration process. IOM reintegration services are usually provided for six months to one year after the returnee's arrival under the return assistance program. However, after this period has elapsed, no further support will be given. It is also important to note that the provision of return assistance and follow-up reintegration services are no guarantee that the return/reintegration process will be successful.

With entry into force of the new Asylum Act in 2008, the return assistance entitlement may only be withheld if the individual has a criminal record, is uncooperative or already has adequate financial resources. Nationals of EU/EFTA member states and traditional emigration countries (USA, Canada, and Australia) are also legally excluded. Individuals may receive return assistance services only once. Voluntary returnees who file another asylum application in Switzerland will be required to pay back the return assistance funding received.

Return Counseling Offices

Return counseling offices (RCOs) were established and are run by the cantons and funded by the FOM.

RCOs are responsible for helping qualifying individuals understand the various return assistance options available to them. This includes providing information to potential voluntary returnees, maintaining dialogue with the target group and networking with cantonal and communal authorities. By handling each case individually (case management), RCOs guide returnees from their first counseling appointment to the moment of departure. RCOs also network with the FOM's Return Assistance Section and the IOM office in Bern.

Return Assistance Services provided at Reception Centers (REZ)

Return assistance services at reception centers (REZ) were introduced in 2005. With this service, asylum seekers receive limited return assistance services (return counseling plus start-up aid payment of CHF 500) from the moment they arrive at one of Switzerland's four reception centers and the FOM's transit centre. The IOM office in Bern is responsible for implementing this project.

swissREPAT

The section airport within FOM with its departure organization unit swissREPAT works closely with RCOs, and makes all of the necessary departure arrangements for return assistance recipients. If necessary, these units at the Zurich and Geneva Airports have the responsibility for activities such as accompanying returnees and paying the first portion of the start-up aid.



Structural Aid Projects

The ILR decides how structural aid projects are to be implemented. Up until 2008, structural aid projects were tied to reintegration programs in the partner country. With greater importance given to individual return assistance services, structural aid projects can now be carried out in every country whose nationals have received return assistance services from the FOM. This enables the ILR to implement structural aid projects more quickly.

Structural aid projects are designed to achieve the following:

- Reduce disparities between returnees and the populations left behind by improving overall living standards for everyone;
- Provide incentives for countries of origin to readmit their nationals and show commitment towards reintegration measures;
- Help develop migration management capacities in the countries of origin.
- Help develop migration partnerships and encourage migration dialogue.

The ILR decides which structural aid projects will be actively implemented by the SDC in cooperation with locally active international organizations or non-governmental organizations. Cooperation between the FOM and the SDC is based on Article 72 of the Federal Ordinance 2 of 11 August 1999 on Financial Matters (SR 142.312). The FOM's return assistance budget is used to fund structural aid projects, which the SDC manages as an additional activity. FOM-funded structural aid projects are subject to SDC eligibility criteria. The FOM therefore benefits from the SDC's expertise in the selection of eligible projects and partners.

1.4 Role of IOM Bern in the ILR

Erika Laubacher | Head of IOM Bern

The IOM office in Bern was established in 1994 amid major refugee flows from the wartorn former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. A contract was signed between IOM and the FDJP in 1998 whereby the IOM office in Bern would help the FOM and particularly the FOM's Return Assistance Section with providing return assistance services to persons subject to the provisions of the Asylum Act (SR 142.31) as well as certain persons subject to the provisions of the Foreign Nationals Act (SR 142.20). The IOM office in Bern would also lend support to the FOM with specific migration projects in individual countries of origin. The IOM office in Bern is a member of the ILR and acts in an advisory capacity.

In the early days of its existence, the IOM office in Bern worked with the former FOR (now FOM) to develop and implement large-scale return assistance programs for Bosnia and Herzegovina and later for Kosovo. Coordinated and managed through the ILR, and working with partner organizations in Switzerland and in the regions of origin (UNHCR, SDC), the IOM is responsible for the operational aspects of return assistance and the reintegration in the various countries of origin.

Covering a wide range of different activities, return assistance services remain a top priority: specifically, IOM Bern helps cantonal return counselors with return and reintegration procedures by providing them with reliable preliminary clarifications from its field offices in the countries of return. Working with Swiss authorities, IOM Bern makes the necessary arrangements for the return trip home and coordinates the necessary support measures (including medical care) during the trip, while in transit and upon arrival in the country of origin. IOM in Bern helps returnees by providing follow-up reinte-

gration services in the country of origin (occupational support, long-term housing, medical care, etc.). It also monitors the situation on the ground through the various IOM field offices. For each country of origin, these three components (i.e. preliminary clarifications, return trip arrangements and follow-up reintegration services) come together in the form of a Return assistance program that furthers Swiss migration policy interests and is based on a comprehensive approach.

Within the ILR, IOM Bern acts in an advisory capacity for all migration-related themes such as combating human trafficking, structural aid projects in countries of origin, transit migration, migration and health, cooperation with the European Union and prevention of irregular migration.

IOM Bern is active in various capacities in the ILR's regional and thematic subgroups. One important role that IOM Bern plays in all ILR bodies is to act as a liaison office for the implementation of FOM-funded projects that the IOM implements in the countries of origin. With migration themes becoming increasingly complex, this role has gained in importance over the past few years. The IOM office in Bern, therefore, strives to ensure that IOM projects implemented in partner countries adequately reflect Swiss interests.

The relations between IOM Bern and the ILR, and particularly with the FOM, are based on mutual respect, trust and a proper allocation of roles; the ILR's performance record thus far shows that this partnership works and brings the desired added value to all participants.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is an intergovernmental organization comprised of 127 member states (including Switzerland) and a number of states holding observer status. IOM has 6'500 employees worldwide and a strong operational presence with over 400 field locations in every corner of the globe. IOM carries out migration activities worldwide and is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. (<http://www.iom.int>)



2 Return Assistance Statistics and Analysis

Thomas Lory | Deputy Head of FOM's Return Assistance Section

2.1 Overview

Since 1997, nearly 68'000 persons have received return assistance services from Switzerland. The chart below provides an overview of return assistance activities since the first major program was launched after the end of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Individual return assistance figures (including return assistance services provided at reception centers - REZ) and country programs are shown separately.

Figure 1 clearly shows two phases in Swiss return assistance activities: the first phase between 1997 and 2000 with the two major return assistance programs for Bosnia and Herzegovina (10'000 returnees) and Kosovo (40'000 returnees) and the second phase from 2000 onwards. The paragraphs that follow relate mainly to the second phase, with emphasis being placed on the last five years. During

this period, roughly 1'400 people have returned to their countries of origin under a return assistance program.

A decrease in the number of voluntary returnees and a simultaneous increase in the number of asylum applications were observed in 2008. This phenomenon was mainly the result of a special program set up specifically to handle the voluntary return of 400 Romanian nationals, which heavily impacted the figures. If we exclude this population group, the observed decreased in 2008 compared to 2007 would stand at 15% instead of 40%. Secondly, in 2008, nearly half of all new asylum seekers came from Eritrea, Somalia, Iraq and Sri Lanka, i.e., countries where conflict and crisis are currently raging. Many of these newcomers are not considering the option of returning to their home countries. Already back in 2005, there was a similar but small-

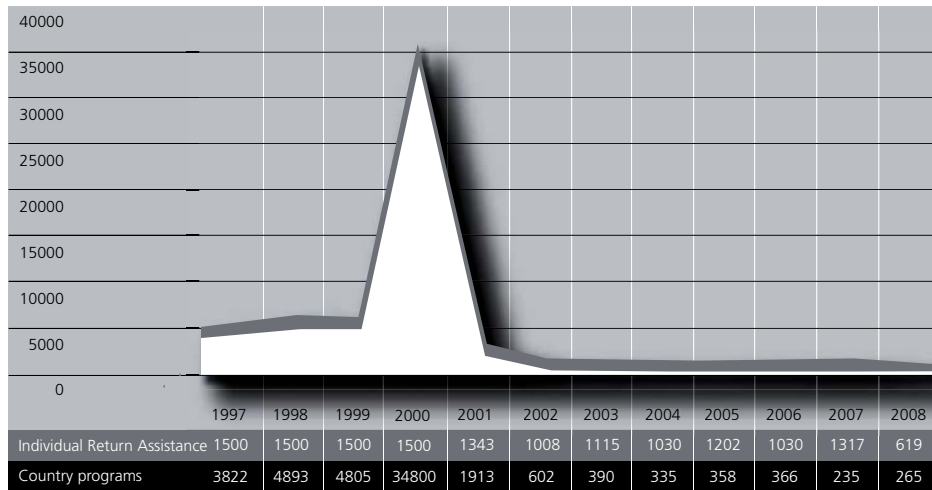


Figure 1

Return assistance recipients, 1997- 2008. Between 1997 and 2001 there were no precise statistics kept on individual assistance. Therefore, the figures indicated are estimations only | Source: FOM's Return Assistance Section, 2009.

ler-scale flow of returnees to Bulgaria. As we can therefore see, Bulgarian and Romanian nationals no longer appear in the following charts. This is because the returns in question were only exceptional group-related occurrences that skewed the statistics and because the returnees in question were nationals of two EU member states. Since mid-2007, EU nationals as well as nationals of third states such as the USA, Canada or Australia are no longer entitled to receive return assistance services.

2.2 Breakdown by countries and regions of origin

Figure 2 shows the ten countries of destination that received the most voluntary returnees over the past five years. The various return assistance services (program assistance, individual return assistance and return from reception centers) are presented as consolidated figures.

The trend over the five-year period indicates that the largest group of voluntary returnees was comprised of nationals from the Balkan states with a higher than average rate of increase. This is particularly the case for nationals from Bosnia and Herzegovina. Nationals from Kosovo and Serbia once again account for the largest groups of returnees from the Balkan states³. For each of the five years, an average of nearly 400 nationals from the entire West Balkan region (including Macedonia) voluntarily returned home thanks to return assistance services. Turkish nationals follow a similar curve pattern as the one observed for Balkan state nationals: over the same five-year period, roughly 90 Turkish nationals voluntarily returned home thanks to return assistance services. In 2008, however, the number of Turkish returnees was only one-fifth of the number in 2005. In recent years, return assistance services have gradually been extended to countries from the former

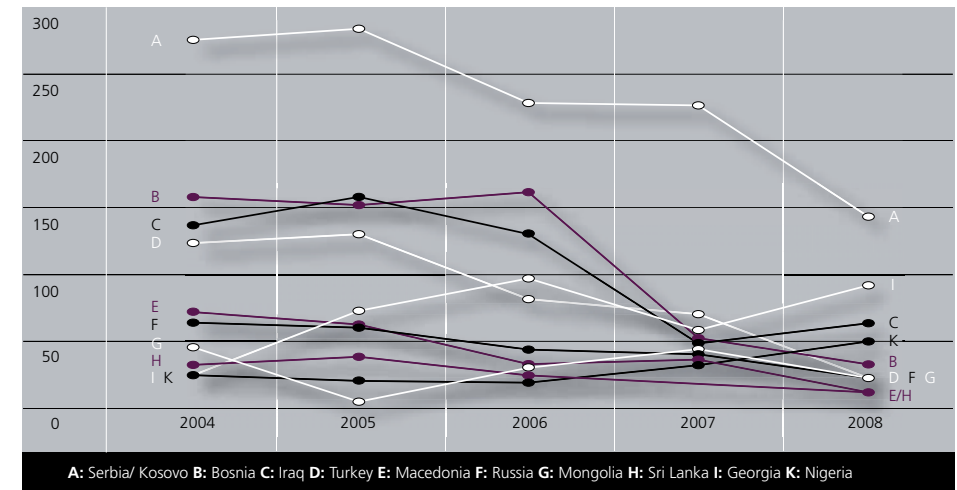


Figure 2

Top ten countries, 2004-2008 (number of voluntary returnees) | Source: FOM's Return Assistance Section, 2009.

³ Cf. chapter 3.1 Priority Region: Western Balkans. Reliable itemised figures will only be available for Kosovo/Serbia in 2009 since Kosovo only became an independent state in February 2008.

Soviet Union and Africa. Specific groups include Russian nationals and especially Georgian nationals, with an average of 70 voluntary returnees each year and rising⁴. In Africa, the largest group of returnees is comprised of Nigerian nationals⁵. In 2008, the number of Nigerian returnees surpassed previous year totals.

Specific political events also have an impact on return assistance figures: over the five-year period, 110 Iraqi nationals (mainly from northern Iraq) returned voluntarily to their home country; the highest

return figures occurred in the two years that followed Saddam Hussein's removal from power⁶. The figures and trends described for the various countries can also be seen clearly in the following chart which shows return figures corresponding to region of origin.

The decline in return rates for Europe from 59% to 38% between 2004 and 2008 is surprising but nevertheless the continuation of a trend that started back in 2003 when roughly 75% of all voluntary returnees were European nationals. With the decline

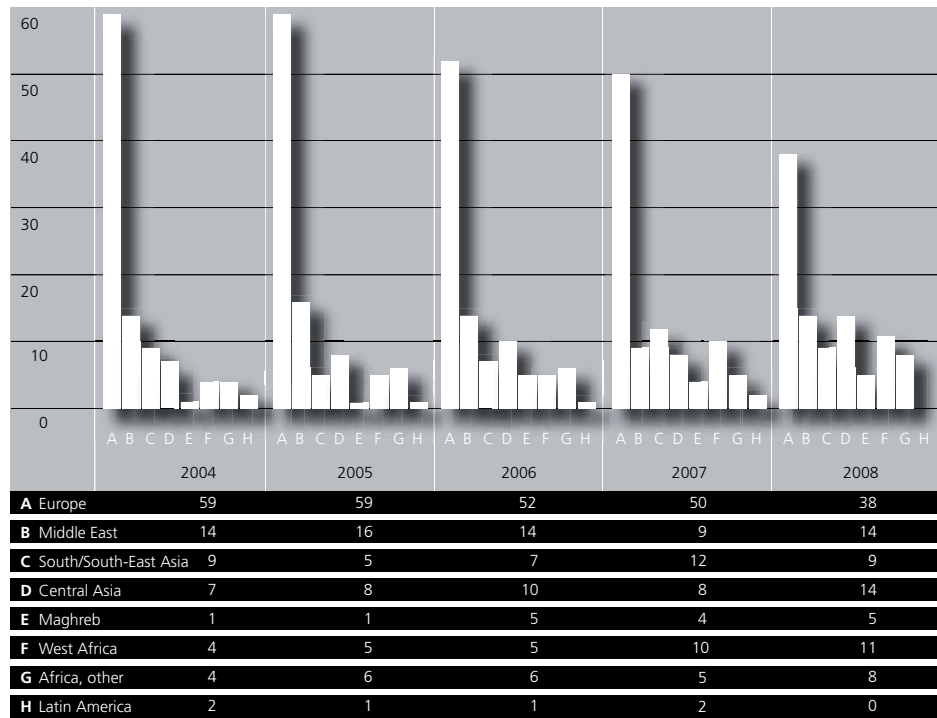


Figure 3
Proportion of returnees by region of origin, 2000–2009 | Source: FOM's Return Assistance Section, 2009.

⁴ Cf. chapter 3.2 Priority Region: Southern Caucasus. ⁵ Cf. chapter 3.3 Priority Region: West Africa. ⁶ Cf. chapter 3.5 Priority Region: Middle East – Iraq.

in the number of European returnees, other nationals began to fill the gap: nationals from Central Asia (mainly Georgia), West Africa (mainly Nigeria but also Guinea and Cameroon), Maghreb states (Algeria), and other regions of Africa (Angola).

2.3 Breakdown by type of return assistance service provided

Return assistance services are tailored to suit the needs of returnees. In addition to having their travel arrangements taken care of, returnees are provided with various follow-up reintegration services: start-up aid, medical care, occupational support, housing (i.e., rent, renovation costs) and special measures for vulnerable persons.

The figures shown above are based on data from IOM, which provides guidance and support to returnees after they arrive in their home country. Since the proportion of return assistance services has remained relatively constant over the past few years, comparison of individual years would not be very revealing. It is more interesting to see that during this period the number of cases handled by IOM in the countries of origin has increased, which has led to significant improvement in the quality of return assistance services. The availability of a contact person who can help returnees after arriving in their country of origin is a highly appreciated service that often has a more lasting impact than simply providing returnees with financial assistance.

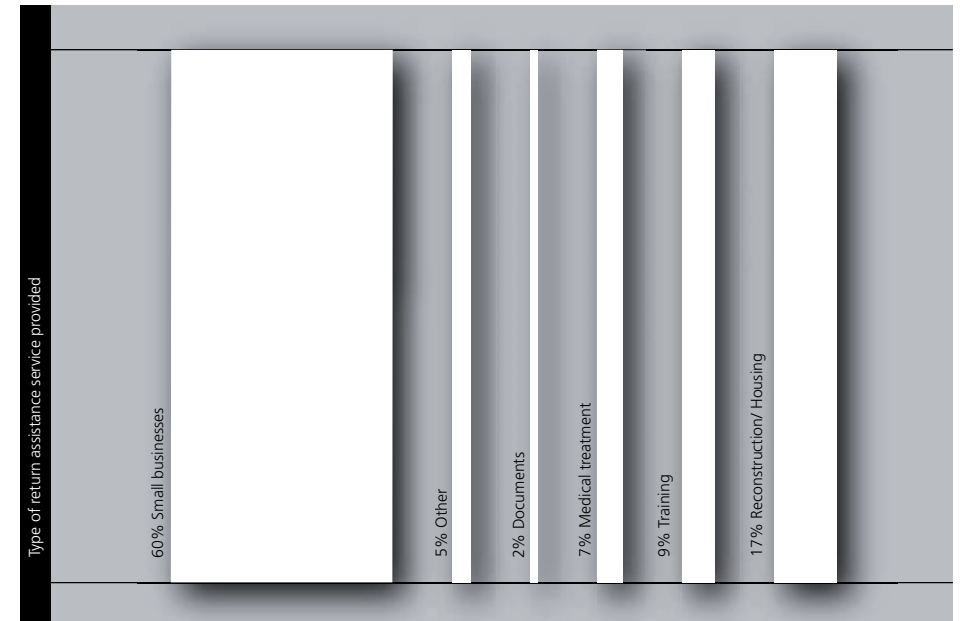


Figure 4
Type of return assistance service provided, 2008 (in %) | Source: IOM Bern, 2009.

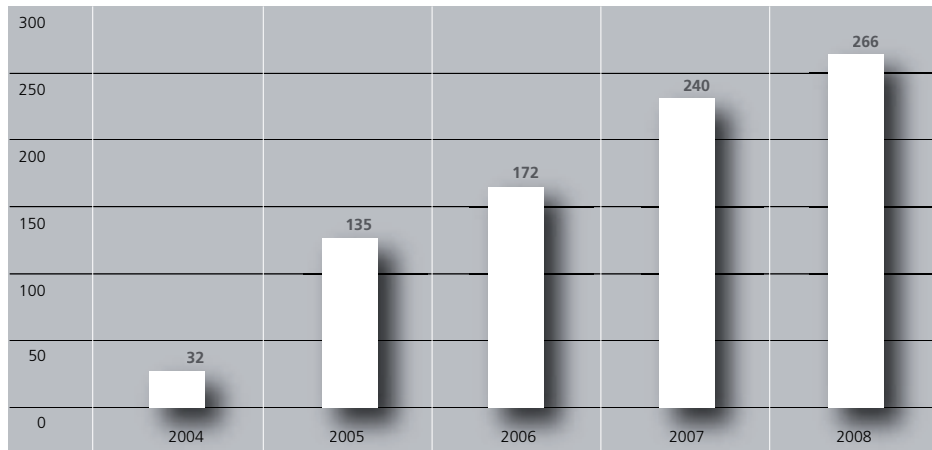


Figure 5

Number of cases handled by IOM in the countries of origin, 2004-2008 | Source: IOM Bern, 2009.

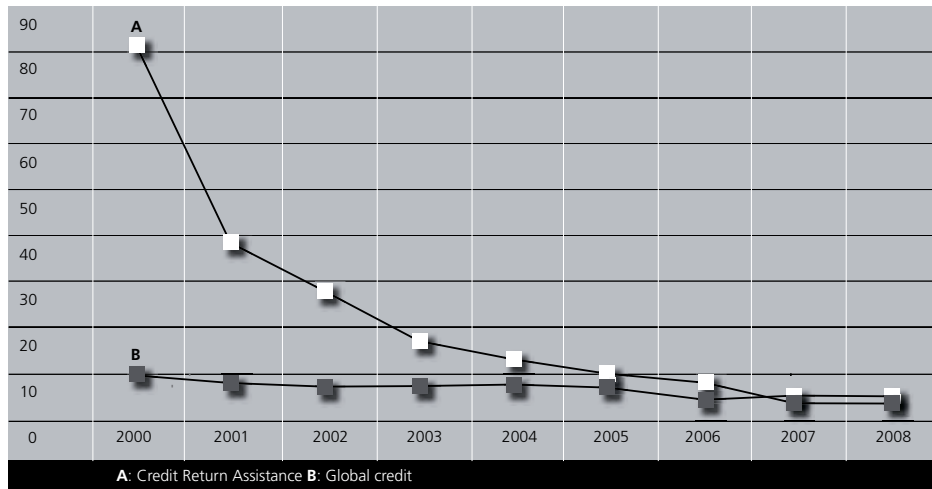


Figure 6

Return assistance expenditure, 2000–2009 (in CHF million)⁷ | Source: FOM's Return Assistance Section, 2009.

⁷ Generally speaking, the return assistance budget is used to provide return counseling and individual return assistance; the Federal Council-approved commitment budget is used for country programmes and structural aid projects. In 1999, the Federal Council approved a commitment budget of CHF 235 million in response to the Kosovo conflict.

2.4 Overview of return assistance funding

With the number of voluntary returnees decreasing since the large-scale Balkan programs, the return assistance budget and effective expenditures have been cut accordingly. Likewise, structural project expenditures drawn from the Federal Council-approved commitment budget established in response to the Kosovo conflict steadily declined before leveling out in 2006. During this time, as mentioned earlier, greater focus was placed on new countries and regions which led to increased implementation of structural aid projects as well as projects to prevent irregular migration in these regions⁸.

⁸ Cf. chapter 5 Prevention of irregular migration.

3 Return Assistance Programs and ILR Project Team Activities

3.1 Priority Region: Western Balkans



3.1.1 Return assistance programs and structural aid projects in the region

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Roman Windisch | IOM Bern

The FOM has actively sought to encourage the voluntary and independent return of displaced persons from the Balkans since 1997. The first comprehensive return assistance program was set up to help nationals from Bosnia and Herzegovina (1997–1999). Over the two and a half years of this program, a total of around 10'000 displaced persons returned to their home country.

After hostilities ended in Kosovo and peacekeeping troops were stationed there, the FOR (as the FOM was known at the time) began working with the SDC and IOM on a return assistance program for Kosovo. An unprecedented CHF 184 million was spent on the program. In addition to return assistance services, the funding was also used to pay for reconstruction projects in Kosovo which was not only beneficial to the returnees but also to the entire population. The SDC was responsible for preparing and implementing these structural aid projects. Over the course of the return assistance program for

Kosovo (1999-2001) roughly 41'000 displaced persons voluntarily returned to their home country.

Although these two return assistance programs for the Western Balkans were exceptional in scope and scale – both in terms of the high number of returnees and the total costs – the positive experiences gained from them formed the basis for the programs that would follow.

Between 2001 and 2003, smaller-scale return assistance programs were established for asylum seekers from the former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia excluding Kosovo (440 returnees), from Macedonia (238 returnees) as well as members of minority groups from Kosovo (107 returnees). From mid-2003 to the end of 2006, a return assistance program for vulnerable persons from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro (including Kosovo) was established, which led to the successful return of 205 displaced persons. Even these small-scale programs included various return assistance measures such as return counseling and individual incentives (start-up aid, occupational support, equipment, medical care) and structural project components.

Current activities are described in the following paragraphs.

ILR's contribution to migration partnerships between Switzerland and the Western Balkans 2007–2010

The Federal Council's strategy paper for the Western Balkans, which was formulated in October 2005, explicitly pursues the objective of establishing international cooperation in the area of migration and increasing the effectiveness of prevention and return measures. In the Annual Report 2006, implementation of return assistance activities and migration partnerships was explicitly mentioned among several

other objectives. The Western Balkans is, therefore, a priority region for Swiss foreign policy. Given the sheer number of voluntary returnees and asylum application figures, it is also one of the most important regions for return assistance activities. With the partial revision of the Asylum Act and enactment of the new Foreign Nationals Act, a legal basis was established that explicitly provided for the development of bilateral migration partnerships between Switzerland and selected countries. Switzerland's commitment to provide return assistance services to Balkan nationals was further consolidated in the spring of 2007 with the strategy paper *"ILR Contribution to Migration Partnerships between Switzerland and the Western Balkans 2007-2010"*. This strategy paper describes the operational aspects of the Interdepartmental Working Group on Migration's (IAM) coordinated action to facilitate migration partnerships between Switzerland and the Western Balkans.

The ILR's contribution to migration partnerships between Switzerland and the Western Balkans pursues the following four objectives:

- Helping to develop migration partnerships between Switzerland and the following countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Kosovo
- Encouraging the voluntary return of migrants, particularly members of minority groups and vulnerable persons
- Strengthening migration management capacities of participating states
- Preventing irregular migration by providing structural aid projects to foster social and economic development

Return assistance components were specifically intended for vulnerable persons from the three countries mentioned above as well as for members of Kosovo minority groups. Assistance is tailored to suit the individual needs of returnees, once clarifications from the home country have been obtained. This enables returnees to receive comprehensive and individual return assistance services that match the precise needs of the chosen target group. In 2007-2008, a total of 93 nationals from the three countries were able to return home under the return assistance program.

Structural aid projects focus on three main priority themes:

- I. Strengthening migration management capacities of local authorities
- II. Social and economic development of specific population groups experiencing strong migration pressures
- III. Reintegration services to returnees from all countries as well as migration information services

Structural aid projects should focus on migration policy areas that both Switzerland and local authorities in the partner country consider important. For this reason, the priority themes of structural aid projects are identified and agreed upon within the framework of bilateral migration dialogue between Switzerland and partner country. The SDC and its offices of cooperation in the various partner countries are responsible for designing projects and preparing project proposals to be submitted to the ILR. The ILR then decides how much funding will be provided to the projects to be managed by the SDC. The overall budget for structural aid projects is established by the FOM. The Principality of Liechtenstein also makes a contribution to this budget.

3 Priority Region: Western Balkans

Structural aid project funding may also be provided (covering up to 50% of project costs) to Swiss charities⁹ that share the same objectives, target groups, thematic and geographic focus as those established in the ILR's strategy paper. These charities are, therefore, included in discussions on the ILR's contribution to migration partnerships between Switzerland and the Western Balkans.

The ILR strategy paper is a reflection of good inter-departmental cooperation. The ILR's operational measures are coordinated at the policymaking level within the IAM. Local project implementation in the partner country is handled on the basis of migration dialogue between the SDC's cooperation offices, Swiss embassies and local authorities on an increasingly complex array of subjects. After ten years of comprehensive ILR commitment to return assistance activities in the Balkan states, we see that the situation in the region has become more stable and that readmission agreements work reliably. The region nevertheless remains a major Swiss migration policy concern. Other migration aspects and requirements have emerged within the framework of migration partnerships. The comprehensive return assistance packages provided by the ILR may very well have been an important consideration when migration partnerships were established.

In April 2009, Bosnia and Herzegovina was the first country that signed a migration partnership with Switzerland as the basis for various bilateral agreements and migration projects. In June 2009 Switzerland signed a similar agreement with Serbia. Both countries have agreed to work together in the following areas: managing migration flows, readmission of returnees, Return assistance and follow-up reintegration services in the partner country, combating human trafficking, issuance of visas, and provision of basic and continuing training.

3.1.2 Return assistance in practice:

Kosovo, Prizren

Mr. G. and his five-person household voluntarily returned to their hometown in Kosovo in May 2008 under the return assistance program for the Western Balkans. His family received support in the form of occupational support, continuing training and housing as part of a local long-term housing project.



Thanks to the FOM's Return Assistance program, the family was able to contribute to the construction work being done on an already existing structure. After only six weeks, the family was able to move into their new home. IOM Pristina provided support to returnees for the entire duration of the housing project and paid local suppliers directly for the FOM-approved materials purchased.

In order to facilitate school enrolment for the family's four children, IOM also made arrangements for them to attend Albanian language courses in their hometown. It also arranged for the translation

of various documents that were required for official enrolment.

Cattle were purchased to help Mr. G.'s farming business get started. His oldest daughter will receive grants to help her continue her education and training after she graduates from compulsory education. The G. family now has real long-term prospects thanks to the occupational, social and housing support that they received after their return.

3.1.3 Structural aid projects Western Balkans:

Cooperation with charities

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Caritas: "Return Drinatal" 2008-2009. The aim of this project is to help 50 families that are currently displaced in the districts of Sarajevo or Gorazde to return to the Upper Drinatal. The project seeks to rebuild houses destroyed in the war, to restore basic infrastructure in association with public utility agencies, and to provide economic support to returnees.

Swiss Red Cross (SRC): "Community Development, Local Governance and Social Inclusion in Rural Areas 2008-2010". This project is intended for around 5'000 people in six communities and seeks to strengthen the communities and improve cooperation between the population and political bodies. It focuses on improving organizational capacity at the municipal level and is being implemented in conjunction with partners of the Red Cross Society in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Serbia

Swiss Interchurch Aid (HEKS): "Integration Roma", July 2007 - December 2009. The aim of this project is to promote the social inclusion of Roma and improve living conditions in two Roma settlements in

Vojvodina. The project comprises the following three components: "Information and Social Integration of Roma Returnees", "Integration of Young Roma into the Labor Market" and "Settlement Hygiene and Improvement of Living Conditions".

Kosovo

Caritas: "Community Building among Minorities", 2007-2009: This project seeks to improve the living conditions of ethnic minorities and especially poor families in the communes of Prizren and Gjakova and foster peaceful coexistence and cooperation between the ethnic groups.

Swiss Interchurch Aid (HEKS): "Improvement of Living Conditions of Roma, Askali and Egyptians (RAE) in Eastern Kosovo", October 2007 – October 2010. In conjunction with local RAE, NGOs and community-based organizations, this project focuses on professional training and increasing income in the communities of Ferizaj, Lypjan, Podujeva and Pristina (Gracanica).

3.1.4 Structural aid projects Bosnia and Herzegovina: Vulnerable Roma

For the 2008-2011 period, the ILR is responsible for providing support to a UNHCR Project to help vulnerable Roma groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina, particularly with state registration procedures.

Although the Roma are the largest group of 17 national minorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, an estimated 20% of the Roma population are not registered as Bosnian citizens, which means that they do not enjoy the rights that come with citizenship. Internally displaced Roma and Roma-returnees to Bosnia and Herzegovina must also overcome greater hurdles than other minority groups when

⁹ Cf. 3.1.3 Structural aid projects Western Balkans: Cooperation with charities

3 Priority Region: Western Balkans

it comes to registration and (re-)integration. Persons who lack identification papers are unable to enjoy the rights that come with citizenship such as social benefits or education opportunities. They also run the risk of becoming stateless. Poverty, unemployment and social exclusion are the consequences. The UNHCR received a mandate from the UN General Assembly to reduce statelessness and promote greater protection of stateless persons. For this reason, it has already gained experience working with Roma in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Working as an implementation partner for UNHCR,



the NGO *Vasa Prava* has extensive experience with matters relating to citizenship registration. It is also responsible for identifying and registering Roma who have not yet claimed their right to citizenship. *Vasa Prava* maintains contact with various partners such as municipal, sub regional and national authorities, hospitals and NGOs. National authorities do not yet have the capacities needed to address the citizenship registration issue.

The project pursues three main objectives:

- Provide legal advice for stateless Roma and help them with the citizenship registration process
- Create awareness both among the Roma and national authorities of the importance of citizenship registration
- Strengthen national citizenship registration capacities

3.1.5 Structural aid projects Western Balkans: Psychiatric facilities, Kosovo

Since 2001, the ILR has worked to complement return assistance programs for the Western Balkans by supporting projects at the municipal, sub national and national levels for the construction and reconstruction of psychiatry clinics in Kosovo. During the conflict, the region experienced a sharp increase in the number of mental health cases. There is a close correlation between the lack of medical structures and migration. In 2004-2005, the ILR provided funding for the creation of a psychiatric intensive care unit at the Pristina University Hospital and a two-year training project for health workers. The project was implemented by the Swiss Red Cross with the help of the Basel Psychiatric University Hospital.

Thanks to the positive experiences of the previous years, a decision was reached in relation to the ILR's strategy for the Western Balkans 2007-2010 to provide funding to a consolidation phase over and above broader and long-term project support.

This consolidation phase will continue until February 2011 and will pursue the following five objectives:

1. Continued efforts to make the Pristina University Hospital a psychiatric competence and training centre for the whole of Kosovo;
2. Improved integration of the modernized intensive care unit within the Pristina University Hospital;
3. Development of specialized competencies in forensic psychiatry and in the treatment of drug addiction;
4. Further institutionalization of the partnership established with the Basel Psychiatric University Hospital establishing networks with psychiatry clinics in the Balkans and, more generally, in Europe;
5. Increasing the level of national funding and pursuing project fund-raising activities.

The implementing partners for this project are the Basel University Hospital, the local NGO Kosovo Health Foundation and the Kosovo Ministry of Health.

3.2 Priority Region: South Caucasus



3.2.1 Return assistance program and structural aid projects in the region

Tanja Brombacher | IOM Bern

In April 2005, a readmission agreement was signed between Switzerland and Georgia. At the time, Georgian nationals were the third largest group of asylum seekers in Switzerland. The readmission agreement provides for operational cooperation in the area of migration, particularly combating human trafficking and reintegration of returnees.

After this readmission agreement was signed, the ILR established a return assistance program for Georgian nationals. In the planning phase, it quickly became clear that the target group was comprised of a large number of persons suffering from drug addiction. In order to address this situation, the return assistance program for Georgia includes a comprehensive medical component that is also open to people who are not part of the return assistance program. The return assistance program for Georgia was launched in January 2006 and will continue until the end of 2009. Once this period has elapsed, Georgian nationals wishing to return to their home country will be able to benefit from individual reintegration services.

3 Priority Region: South Caucasus

During the first two years of the return assistance program for Georgia, IOM Tbilisi was responsible for organizing some reintegration services such as picking up returnees at the airport upon arrival in Georgia, providing returnees with start-up aid and ensuring that returnees received adequate medical care. The *World Vision Georgia* organization, for its part, provided returnees with occupational support services. In the first three years, a total of 63 Georgian nationals returned home under the return assistance program.

In order to simplify the structures of return assistance programs, the ILR decided that starting in January 2008, follow-up reintegration services would be provided by only one local implementing partner in the country of return. Since then, IOM Tbilisi has been the sole implementing partner for all follow-up reintegration services in Georgia. Since the program started, the number of returnees has increased each year. In 2008, a total of 49 Georgian nationals returned to their home country under the return assistance program. Of this total, 28 received follow-up individual reintegration services. In early 2008, virtually all of the occupational projects were geared toward the creation of taxi or transport companies. Although this certainly constituted a desirable occupation for some returnees, the ease with which motor vehicles could be paid off was perceived as a risk factor undermining the sustainability of the occupational project. Program managers therefore turned their attention to occupations requiring higher competency levels, which led to a considerable broadening of business ideas. Moreover, partnerships were established with local companies which brought added value to the return assistance program. For one thing, returnees were able to take advantage of already existing structures. At the same time, companies were able to expand their activities thanks to the influx of new

employees. Project sustainability is monitored on a long-term basis.

Given the specific nature of the problems faced by this target group, emphasis was placed on drug-related illnesses and their treatment (Hepatitis C, HIV, detoxification, methadone substitution, etc.). From the start of the return assistance program, a network was established in Georgia to provide returnees with corresponding follow-up care. As a case in point, returnees are able to continue their methadone substitution treatment after they return to their home country. Because methadone substitution is essential for many returnees, in October 2007, the ILR began providing funding for a structural project to rehabilitate and reintegrate drug addicts receiving methadone treatment¹⁰. IOM Tbilisi is responsible for implementing this project.

Against this backdrop, the ILR decided in March 2009 to commission the IOM office in Bern to conduct research on migration and addiction using Georgia as an example. This study should lead to a greater understanding of addictive behavior in relation to the migration process and enable assessment of return assistance services to this target group.

Since 2002, Switzerland has played an active role in the *Cluster Process*¹¹: a dialogue platform between individual EU member states (e.g. Germany, Czech Republic) and countries of the South Caucasus (Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan). The aim is to coordinate activities to better manage legal migration and reduce irregular migration. The constructive exchange of information through this platform was quite useful during preparations for the readmission agreement signed with Georgia.

Cluster-like relations were also a feature of Switzerland's return assistance program for Armenia (2004

to end of 2008). This program was unusual in that it was the *State Migration Agency (SMA)* that acted as the local implementing partner.

ILR-funded structural aid projects in Armenia included employee training in the provision of support and guidance to returnees and the use of some State Migration Agency structures. Initially reintegration services were rendered only to returnees coming from Switzerland. As the years went by, capacities increased and reintegration services were extended to include all Armenian returnees, regardless of which host country they were returning from. Returnees also benefited from psychological counseling. Since 1 January 2009, all Armenian nationals returning to their home country now qualify for individual reintegration services and are referred directly to the SMA, which handles payment of the reintegration services and supervises project implementation.

3.2.2 Return assistance in practice: Georgia, Akhaltsikhe

In June 2008, Mr. A. returned voluntarily from Switzerland to Akhaltsikhe, Georgia. Prior to his departure he had discussed the return with the cantonal return counselor who gave him the relevant information that IOM had gathered for him in view of his return and reintegration.

With this information, Mr. A. decided to participate in the return assistance program for Georgia. In addition to other services, the FOM also provided him with the follow-up reintegration services in the form of funding for an occupational project and with medical care.

The possibility of receiving a new prosthesis for his right forearm after returning to Georgia was very

important for Mr. A. and facilitated his professional reintegration. The medical costs for the prosthesis were covered by the return assistance program.



Concerning his occupational project he planned to enter into a partnership with an owner of a stationary shop in Akhaltsikhe. Thanks to the reintegration funding given to him within the framework of the return assistance program, he was able to purchase a partnership stake in the shop. Although Mr. A. does not have any experience in this type of economic activity, the stationary shop constitutes an economically viable source of long-term income.

3.2.3 Structural aid projects in Georgia: Drug-related work

Acting on behalf of the ILR and under SDC guidance, IOM has implemented a structural aid project to rehabilitate Georgian nationals suffering from drug addiction. Launched in October 2007, this project seeks to tackle the drug problem in Georgia within the framework of the national anti-narcotic strategy established by the Georgian Ministry of

¹⁰ Cf. 3.2.3 Structural aid projects in Georgia: Drug-related work. ¹¹ The Cluster Process is part of the EU's AENEAS programme (2004): "Informed Migration – An Integrated Approach to Promoting Legal Migration through National Capacity Building and Inter-Regional Dialogue between the South Caucasus and the EU".

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Labor, Health and Social Affairs. With this project, emphasis is placed on social work in the rehabilitation of former drug addicts and providing methadone as substitution treatment. New addiction treatment methods are also discussed between Georgian and Swiss policymakers and medical specialists. In this context, we should also mention the renovation of state methadone distribution centers which are being made available to this target group as part of an occupational project. In autumn 2008, four additional methadone distri-



bution centers were opened. Based on Switzerland's lengthy experience with drug rehabilitation, the foundation *Contact Netz Bern*¹² was called in to take part in the project.

The following activities have been implemented thus far:

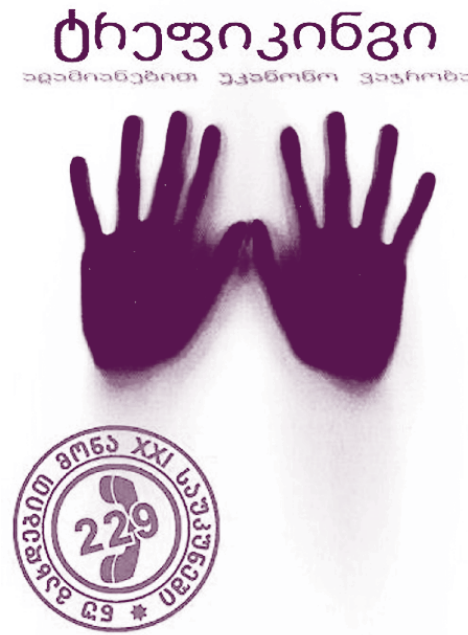
- Social workers have been trained by Contact Netz Bern to conduct outpatient counseling
- Two outpatient counseling centers have been set up (Tbilisi and Batumi) in association with the local NGO *Tanadgoma*
- Social counseling services are being provided to outpatients who have taken part in a drug rehabilitation program or a methadone program
- Occupational reintegration services are being provided by various means, such as basic and advanced training, help in finding jobs, etc.
- Information events have been held to raise public awareness of the drug problem and associated health risks (HIV, Hepatitis C, etc.)
- Conferences and workshops have been organized to enable Swiss and Georgian medical specialists, policymakers, etc. to exchange specialized know-how

Georgian nationals suffering from drug addiction and drug-related illnesses who voluntarily return from Switzerland also benefit from the project.

3.2.4 Structural aid projects in Georgia:

Human trafficking

In 2006, various measures were taken in Georgia to combat human trafficking. A new law was passed and a fund created for victims of human trafficking¹³. In addition, a national action plan was set up to address the issue of human trafficking. As a contribution to this action plan, the ILR supported the project "Social Assistance to Trafficked Persons" (SATP). From December 2006 to November 2008, the project was implemented by World Vision in association with the Georgian NGO *Women for Future*. The objective was to reinforce structures to combat human trafficking as set forth in the readmission agreement. The contents, specifically victim support training of social workers, were established by an expert on the basis of a fact-finding mission.



The following activities have been implemented thus far:

- In February 2008, an anti-trafficking module was added to the social work degree program at the University in Tbilisi;
- 33 social workers, 33 medical personnel and 10 government officials have received training on how to handle victims of human trafficking;
- A three-digit emergency number has been introduced;
- A nationwide information campaign (radio, television and print media) has been launched;
- 11 possible victims of human trafficking were identified and referred to the government foundation. Seven of these victims were formally recognized as trafficked persons and were therefore able to benefit from reintegration measures.

In December 2008, the SDC decided to adopt the program for a further two-year period. The program is part of the Anti-trafficking program (CAT) of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) which was launched in May 2008 and will continue until April 2011.

¹² More information can be found at the following Website: <http://www.contactnetz.ch/de/home.html>.

¹³ Cf. chapter 4.2 The topic of Human Trafficking in the ILR.

3 Priority Region: West Africa

3.3 Priority Region: West Africa



3.3.1 Return assistance programs and structural aid projects in the region

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Odile Robert | IOM Bern

Since 2002, return assistance programs in the region of West Africa have become increasingly important. At that time, 13% of all asylum applications in Switzerland were filed by asylum seekers from fourteen West African countries. Migration dialogue and negotiations on readmission or transit agreements with the countries in this region were already at an advanced stage. The ILR therefore examined the idea of introducing a return assistance program that would run in parallel to structural aid projects. Based on experience with the various return assistance programs in the Balkans region, the ILR developed a concept tailored to the needs of West Africa. The new return assistance program would seek to facilitate adjustments to the current political situation as well as to developments in the asylum sector.

Nigeria was chosen as the first country for the new return assistance program for various reasons: the particularly high volume of asylum applications; the relatively stable situation in the region; and the exist-

ence of a readmission agreement. Launched in January 2005, the Nigerian return assistance program comprises return counseling, travel arrangements for the return trip home, and follow-up reintegration services such as start-up aid, medical care if required and occupational support (for vocational training or to set up a small enterprise). A regional return assistance program was also set up in the same year to provide similar services to nationals from Mali, Burkina Faso, Guinea and Sierra Leone.

Over the first four years of implementation, the Nigerian and regional return assistance programs experienced different degrees of success: 102 displaced migrants taking part in the Nigerian return assistance program had returned to Nigeria by the end of 2008, 89 of whom had started up their own occupational projects. In contrast, under the regional return assistance program, 58 persons had returned to Mali, Burkina Faso, Guinea and Sierra Leone, 48 of whom to Guinea. A total of 48 occupational projects were implemented in these countries, 40 of which in Guinea. As an example of the latter, we can mention the numerous taxi projects in Conakry and the projects in the spare parts business in Lagos. But there were also less mundane ideas, such as the creation of a business to extract palm oil¹⁴ or a computer-training course and subsequent opening of a business centre in Nigeria. Together, the design of both the Nigerian and regional return assistance programs have proven successful for West Africa.

Given the different degrees of success of these two programs, the ILR decided to extend the Nigerian return assistance program until the end of 2010 and to scale back the regional program for Mali, Burkina Faso, Guinea and Sierra Leone to a country specific return assistance program for Guinea. Returnees to the other West African countries can benefit from individual return assistance services. The programs

undergo regular assessment and are adapted to the needs of displaced migrants. In this respect, for example, communications with potential returnees have been improved and conducted more selectively. The exchange and dialogue with persons after their return have contributed to an understanding of why they had sought their fortune in Switzerland. A further example of successful adaptation of the return assistance program is the organization of local job training courses in small business management which are designed to provide returnees with more long-term prospects.

At the same time, the implementation of structural aid projects has been part of the ILR's strategy for West Africa from the outset. Since 2005, various projects have been carried out. Some of these projects were intended to build migration management capacities of local authorities. The project "Essentials of Migration Management in Guinea," for example, enabled government officials and representatives of the civilian population in several provinces to be trained in legislation, migration policy and best practices in the migration sector. This triggered dynamic changes in the migration policy and led to greater regulation and management of migration flows. Special projects were also developed to combat human trafficking. There were, for example, two projects for the reinforcement of state structures in Nigeria to rehabilitate and reintegrate victims of human trafficking. A regional project, covering Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Guinea, the Ivory Coast, Mali and Senegal has likewise helped strengthen regional cooperation between the six countries. In this way, several national structures have been created to deal with the problem of human trafficking. Links between various NGOs and institutions have also been established with justice and law enforcement agencies. This project has led to improved coordination of mechanisms and

processes to protect and support victims and to prosecute human traffickers.

In addition to the above-mentioned projects designed to strengthen capacities, other projects were directly intended for the local population, potential migrants as well as the host community. As an example, there is the ILR project "Development of micro-enterprises for the benefit of deprived youth¹⁵." Further structural aid projects in research, gainful employment or technical cooperation supplement the wide range of projects supported by the ILR in this region.

3.3.2 Return assistance in practice: Nigeria, Anambra State

Mr. C. voluntarily returned to Nigeria in June 2008. Two months earlier he had enrolled in the FOM's return assistance program.



¹⁴ See below 3.2.2 Return assistance in practice: Nigeria, Anambra State.

¹⁵ See below 3.3.4 Structural aid projects in Guinea: Micro enterprises for the benefit of deprived youth.

3 Priority Region: West Africa

IOM Nigeria provided reintegration services to Mr. C. upon his arrival in Lagos and discussed his occupational project with him. Mr. C. finally decided to return to Anambra State and to invest the funds received in the extraction of palm oil. In mid-June, Mr. C. completed his business plan and submitted it to the FOM for approval. Mr. C. was then able to buy the necessary materials and equipment. His project concept is unique in the FOM's return assistance program for Nigeria since no other occupational projects have so far been carried out in this sector.

In the following months, Mr. C. built up his occupational project and registered it under the name "OSWIZ Ventures," wishing to combine the names "IOM" and "Swiss" to reflect the support he had received.

The business is located outside the town of Owerri in Anambra State where the fruit of the palm is sold in the surrounding villages. The residue from the production process is used for fire-lighters while the kernels are used to produce soap, candles and paraffin. When IOM Lagos carried out a monitoring visit six months later, it was seen that this venture is very capital-intensive and that more expenditure would be needed in order to generate a profit. Mr. C. employs up to 10 persons in his business at times and also supports his family. As an additional source of income, he deals in used electronic spare parts. Nevertheless, Mr. C. is satisfied with his reintegration project and the support received.



3.3.3 Return assistance in practice: Guinea, Conakry

In January 2008, Mr. C. returned to his country of origin within the framework of the regional return assistance program for Mali, Burkina Faso, Sierra Leone and Guinea.

On his return to Guinea and with the support of IOM Conakry, Mr. D. elaborated a project plan to set up a cosmetics business in Conakry. Having noticed how expensive life was in the capital, he decided to return to his home town of Labé in order to open a spare parts business for motorbike and bicycle wheels there.

During an IOM monitoring visit, Mr. D. explained that the high cost of living made everyday life in Guinea difficult. He appreciated the help he had received within the context of the return assistance program but also admitted that he had hoped for a better life. "I'd like to stay in Guinea but that depends on my financial situation. If I can get enough money together to extend my business, I'll stay."

3.3.4 Structural Aid Projects in Guinea:

Micro enterprises for the benefit of deprived youth

Acting on behalf of the ILR and under SDC guidance, IOM is implementing the project "Développement de la Micro Entreprise en faveur de la jeunesse déshéritée de Guinée." In this venture, IOM works with the Guinean Ministry for Youth, Sport and Culture as well as with other local partners. The regions of implementation are Kindia and Labé. Launched in August 2007 and running until July 2009, the project sought to foster Guinea's socio-economic development and reduce irregular

migration caused by poverty and unemployment. In order to achieve this objective, support was given to young Guineans to enable them to set up and develop micro-enterprises and obtain micro-credits.

Within the context of the project and under the management of local, specialized NGOs, 200 young people with university degrees or higher vocational qualifications were able to take part in the first training modules at a workshop held in November and December 2007. The aim of the workshop was to elaborate business ideas, develop entrepreneurial skills, learn how to create a company, establish a forum of young entrepreneurs and develop business plans. Once drafted, these business plans were then submitted to micro-credit institutions, whereby the best 115 projects were granted a loan. Among the sectors selected were: agriculture, transportation, trade, services, communications as well as building construction (above ground) and civil engineering (underground). Five months after the micro-credits were granted, the monitoring process showed very positive reports in terms of business development training and continuous repayment of the micro-credits granted. On the whole, the borrowers are very keen to take part in the planned second training module on business management. This second module will focus on business administration, the investment of income and business consolidation.

At the beginning of 2009, micro-credit institutions began providing technical support to help beneficiaries organize themselves into a federation of young entrepreneurs, the so-called "Forum des Jeunes Entrepreneurs de Guinée" (FOJEG). In addition, plans are currently underway to create an autonomous fund which will be administered by a local micro-credit institution in each region.

3 Priority Region: Maghreb

3.4 Priority Region: Maghreb



3.4.1 Commitment of the ILR in the Maghreb states

Jürg Zumstein | SDC's Europe and Mediterranean Region Division
Jérôme Crausaz | FOM's Return Assistance Section

General situation

For years, the most important migration routes from the countries of West Africa have led northwards via Dakar to Morocco and from Agadez to Algeria and Libya. In North Africa, migration flows from East to West and vice versa have also been registered. This route becomes active whenever opportunities to reach the Canary Islands or Lampedusa open up.

In view of the sometimes massively diverse migration flows from West Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa and the Maghreb states, Europe has not remained inactive and has constantly reinforced border protection with the help of North African countries. It has, therefore, become more and more difficult for migrants to reach Europe unless they have sufficient financial resources with which to pay the increasingly greedy traffickers and boat owners. Mediterranean crossings have become increasingly dangerous, continuing to claim a high death toll.

The result is a growing number of migrants who are stranded in North African countries. They cannot go further because they very often do not have the money. They cannot go back because they have cut off ties with their home country. They try to survive by means of poorly paid odd jobs and begging. Those without vocational skills languish in the slums of the big cities. Women and children are particularly vulnerable.

Above and beyond the problems caused by transit migration, we should mention the emigration of mostly young nationals from the Maghreb states to the E.U. and Switzerland. They leave their country to escape difficult socio-economic environment in the region. This phenomenon is particularly accentuated in Algeria.

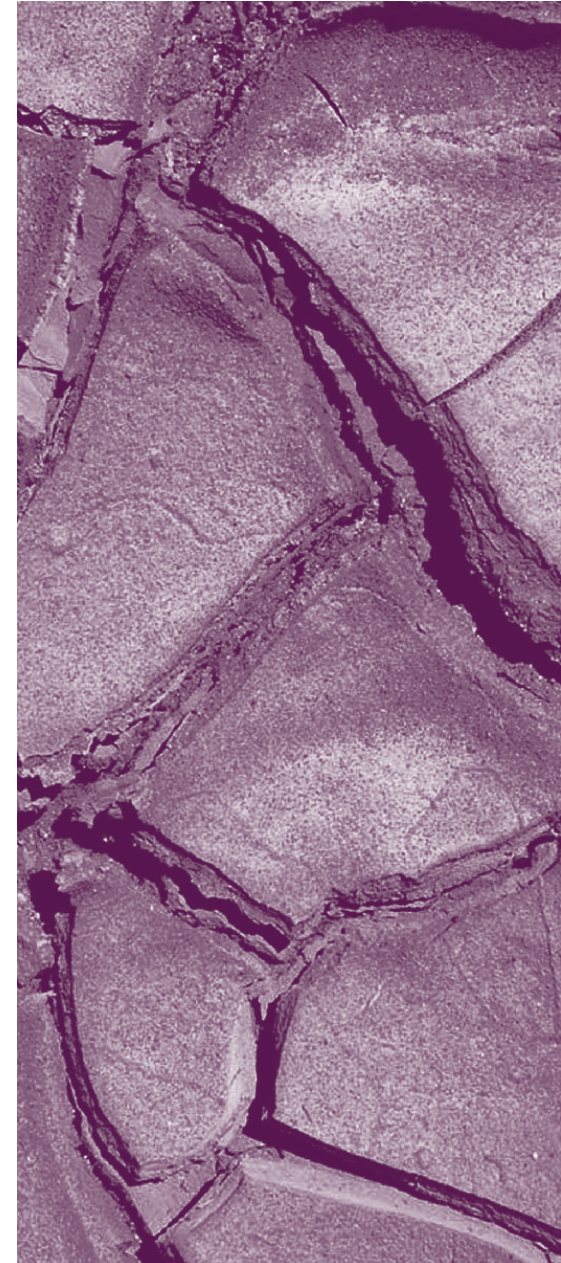
Return assistance program for the Maghreb States

Considering the above-mentioned migration challenges, which also had implications for Switzerland, the ILR devised a concept for the implementation of a return assistance program for Maghreb states (Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia). The return assistance program was launched on 1 November 2005, originally for a period of 2 years. In September 2007, the ILR approved extension of the program until the end of 2008.

The program was intended for Maghreb state nationals whose stay in Switzerland is subject to the provisions of the Swiss Asylum Act. It offered financial support of CHF 2'000 for their voluntary departure from Switzerland as well as CHF 3'000 to fund an individual occupational project as well as medical care if needed. This funding enabled 66 occupational projects to be carried out with the support of IOM field offices in Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Mauritania as well as the Swiss mission in Algeria. The most frequently chosen occupational projects were

in transport (taxis) and retail (groceries). In August 2008, IOM monitored the progress made in Libya. All the interviewees who had returned within the framework of a return assistance program stated that while they had been well prepared for their return, the CHF 3,000 they had received was rather low considering the cost of living in Libya. In Algeria, for which 63 returns were registered, IOM was unable to monitor progress because it has no field office there. Between 1 November 2005 (when the program was launched) and 31 December 2008, a total of 111 persons left Switzerland under the return assistance program for the Maghreb states. The relevant returns are distributed among the various countries as follows: Algeria 63, Libya 39, Morocco 4, Tunisia 4 and Mauritania 1.

In addition to individual return assistance provided to returnees, the program also helps strengthen the capacities of local authorities to manage migration flows and prevent irregular migration. In this context, several ILR-sponsored structural aid and PiM projects were carried out¹⁶. The ILR was, above all, active in Morocco, helping stranded migrants return and reintegrate in their country of origin. The projects were supported by IOM and the SDC in association with local authorities and partners. They pursued the objective of offering persons in particularly vulnerable situations a humane alternative by streamlining return assistance procedures. They also helped raise awareness among local authorities in transit countries of the return assistance concept and provided training to help them manage migration flows more effectively. Projects of this nature fall perfectly in line with the ILR strategy to prevent irregular migration and complement the humanitarian aid that the SDC provides to transit migrants in this region who are mostly on their way to Europe. Switzerland plays a leading role in this region and receives funding from other European countries and the European Commission.



¹⁶ Cf. chapter 5 Prevention of irregular migration.

3 Priority Region: Maghreb

The ILR also sponsors projects to build the capacities of local authorities in countries of origin. In Algeria, Switzerland has funded two training modules for high-ranking officials in the prosecution of crimes and illegal economic activities.

Based on the somewhat lower volume of voluntary returnees with respect to other Return assistance programs, the ILR decided not to extend the program for the Maghreb states beyond 31 December 2008. In the future, returnees from the Maghreb states can benefit from individual return assistance services. At the same time, however, the ILR announced its intention to continue its activities within the framework of structural aid projects and the prevention of irregular migration.

3.4.2 Structural aid projects in Morocco:

Voluntary return of stranded migrants and reintegration in their country of origin

Acting on behalf of the ILR and under SDC guidance, IOM began working with the Moroccan authorities and other local partners on a project to promote return assistance services for stranded migrants in Morocco and follow-up reintegration in the countries of origin.

The project focuses on migration routes through the Maghreb region. The Maghreb states are no longer pure emigration countries in the direction of Europe but have become transit countries or countries of destination for migrants from Sub-Saharan countries. Only a small number of these migrants reach Western Europe and most often end up as stranded migrants in Morocco for several years. Through the possibility of voluntary return, the project offers persons caught in this hopeless situation the alternative of a new start in their home country; it also helps prevent irregular migration.

The project pursues the following objectives:

- Providing return assistance counseling, information and support to help migrants stranded in Morocco return to their home country, especially vulnerable persons (women, families, the elderly)
- Making the necessary arrangements for the return trip home and providing follow-up reintegration services in the countries of origin
- Strengthening partnerships with Moroccan authorities and local partner institutions and building their migration management capacities
- Contributing to the management and prevention of irregular migration in Morocco

In the first phase of the project (March 2007 to July 2008), 171 migrants stranded in Morocco were provided with return assistance services. The return trips home were primarily made to the countries of Central and West Africa. Returnees were often young men but also vulnerable persons, such as women with children, unaccompanied minors or persons with medical problems. The majority of the 112 implemented reintegration projects were micro-projects in the commercial and service sectors.

Originally planned for a period of 12 months, the project was extended by one year in 2008. Norway, Belgium, Italy and the Netherlands agreed to co-fund the second phase of the project.

In this second phase, 171 stranded migrants voluntarily returned home to 15 different countries and received reintegration services up until the end of January 2009. The composition of the target groups did not change with respect to the first phase. The 117 occupational projects were mainly implemented in the commercial sector (clothing and grocery shops).

Since March 2009, the project received additional funding from the EU under the title "Migration and Asylum, the Return and Reintegration of stranded Migrants in Morocco and Libya"

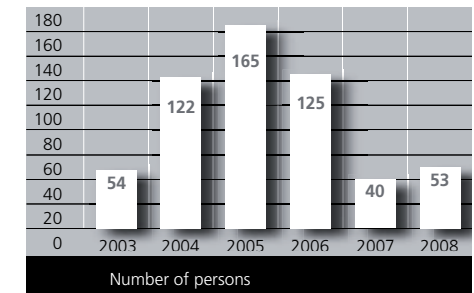
3.5 Priority Region: Middle East – Iraq



3.5.1 Return assistance program for Iraq

Fabio Pisanello | FOM's Return Assistance Section
Sylvie Heuschmann | IOM Bern
Amandine Mazreku | IOM Bern

Following an ILR decision reached in June 2003, the FOM commissioned IOM in July 2003 to provide reintegration services to Iraqi nationals returning home under the return assistance program. Just three months had passed since the invasion of Iraq by the U.S.-led "coalition of the willing." In Switzerland at that time, there were initial signs of increasing interest on the part of Iraqi asylum seekers in the possibility of returning to Iraq. However, no one had expected that this interest would be so high. 54 returns were registered in the first six months of the return assistance program for Iraq.



3 Priority Region: Middle East – Iraq

Thus far, Iraq has regularly ranked in the top ten countries in terms of the number of asylum applications filed each month in Switzerland. As a target group, it represents a priority for return assistance activities. By mid-February 2009, a total of 570 persons had traveled back to their home country within the scope of the return assistance program for Iraq.

Coordinated and approved by the ILR, the return assistance program for Iraq was extended by two years in July 2008. Since this date, IOM has provided Iraqi returnees with reintegration services over and above the start-up aid payment received after their arrival in Iraq.

Returnees begin planning and elaborating their reintegration projects in consultation with the corresponding cantonal return counseling office in Switzerland. Once in Iraq, the returnees finalize their projects and implement them locally with the help of IOM. The projects chosen are, for example, taxi enterprises, groceries, house renovation, a bakery, a garage, a bed-cover business, a clothing shop, an electronics shop and sheep breeding.

3.5.2 Structural aid projects in Syria: Support and protection of Iraqi refugees

The conflict in Iraq triggered major refugee problems in the Near East, Syria being the most severely affected country. Against this background, the ILR decided in 2007 to address the situation by sponsoring structural aid projects for Syria. The SDC helps Syria manage refugee problems through targeted projects which are planned and implemented together with the local authorities. In addition to rebuilding schools and protecting refugees, the SDC provides funding to international organizations such as UNHCR, WFP, WHO, UNICEF, UNWRA as well as the Syrian Red Crescent.

The FOM co-funded the renovation of nine schools in Damascus districts where there was a high concentration of Iraqi refugees. Over the years, these schools had taken in 20-40% more children from Iraqi refugee families and were in great need of renovation. The schools were opened in September 2008.

Switzerland's targeted efforts to help Syrian authorities manage refugee problems in Damascus can be considered a great success and represents an indirect contribution to the prevention of irregular migration.



3.5.3 Structural aid projects in Afghanistan:

Vocational education and training programs

Within the framework of the return assistance program for Afghanistan (October 2006 - September 2008), the FOM provided funding for the structural project *"Strengthening Vocational Training Services in Rural Areas in Central and Northern Afghanistan."* This project was implemented by the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) in association with the SDC. Since 2005, the AKF has sponsored vocational training programs in Afghanistan in order to combat the

lack of qualified manpower and to reduce the rural exodus towards the larger towns or abroad.

Within the existing vocational training program, the AKF has developed a concept to improve the quality, diversity and sustainability of vocational training in rural areas by pursuing the following specific objectives:

- Increasing the skills and performance of trainers
- Developing a trainer certification system in cooperation with the Ministry of Labor
- Monitoring and improving existing vocational training programs
- Providing certain professional groups with optimized training programs
- Informing trained persons about employment opportunities

Parallel to these measures, vocational training sessions for approximately 400 persons will be offered within these structures. The target group comprises persons from rural households in the provinces of Baghlan and Badakhshan as well as returnees from Switzerland and other countries. In addition to undergoing training in various types of construction-related and other occupations, returnees will also have a chance to develop special skills needed to set up and run small and micro-enterprises. They will also be taught strategies enabling them to increase their incomes in the form of activities that can be carried out in their own households.

The sustainability of the project is guaranteed through cooperation with the national authorities (Ministry of Education and Labor, Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development) whose strategic plans are heavily focused on education and training.

4 Return Assistance under the Foreign Nationals Act (AuG)

4.1 AuG-Return Assistance Pilot Project

Jarmila Mazel | FOM's Return Assistance Section
Tanja Brombacher | IOM Bern

With the entry into force of the Foreign Nationals Act (AuG) at the beginning of 2008, certain groups of persons subject to the provisions of the AuG qualified for federal return assistance programs for the first time. On this new legal basis, an ILR project team elaborated the concept of a pilot project

for newly-entitled persons under Art. 60 para 2b¹⁷. The pilot project will enable the team to gather experiences over a two-year period within this new context so that it may be given a definitive form.

The FOM launched the pilot project on 1 April 2008 in association with cantonal return counseling offices, the SDC and IOM. It is intended for the victims and witnesses of human trafficking, including cabaret dancers, who are in an exploited situation in Switzerland. The objective of the project is to help entitled claimants return to their country of origin or reintegrate into a third country. Returnees are offered individual reintegration services (start-up aid, additional material support, medical care) with due account taken of the particular situation of the new target groups.

The context of the two target groups differs from that of asylum seekers. In particular, combating human trafficking calls for coordinated action by many different stakeholders. Since the cantons use different organizational structures, they were prepared in advance for project implementation in their respective canton. A two-day training event was organized with law enforcement, victim support and migration specialists.

Working closely with various governmental agencies and NGOs in the countries of return, IOM handles the necessary preliminary clarifications, makes flight arrangements for the return trip and provides follow-up reintegration services to AuG returnees. The ten persons who have left Switzerland so far to return to their countries of origin under the pilot project are mainly victims of human trafficking. Most of the cases were referred to the cantonal return counseling offices by the FIZ (Women's Information Centre) in Zurich. The persons concerned come from many different countries of origin: thus far two persons have returned to Ukraine, two

to Romania, three to Brazil, one to Paraguay and one to the Czech Republic. All those concerned were women.

Before the end of the pilot project, IOM plans to monitor the reintegration of each returnee as closely as possible. The knowledge gained will be fed into the assessment of the pilot project.

The ILR has strengthened its commitment to sponsor structural aid projects to combat human trafficking. It has authorized three structural aid projects within the framework of the pilot project. These are victim support projects in Romania and Bulgaria. Since these two countries joined the EU, many donors have withdrawn and EU funds are currently unavailable. Within the framework of Switzerland's contribution to EU enlargement, projects cannot be implemented in these two countries to deal with human trafficking until autumn 2010 at the earliest. These three structural aid projects can fill major victim support gaps in the two countries. The projects will be implemented by IOM Romania, IOM Bulgaria as well as the Bulgarian NGO *Animus Association* with support from the Swiss Embassies in Romania and Bulgaria and the SDC.

4.2 The topic of Human Trafficking in the ILR

Tamara Mona-Münger | FDFA's Political Affairs Division IV

Preventing and combating human trafficking and protecting victims require experienced and well-funded cooperation between law enforcement agencies, justice agencies, victim protection services and migration offices. All play an important role when it comes to identifying and protecting victims, locating human traffickers and curtailing their activities.

The fight against human trafficking is a major challenge. In order to be effective, there is a need for expertise, specialized know-how and skills. Switzerland has begun to provide key players with basic and advanced training facilities.

Following entry into force of the revised Foreign Nationals Act (AuG), the ILR has also taken up the cause of human trafficking. The ILR plans to mainstream human trafficking issues and possible forms of cooperation in its numerous contacts with foreign authorities. Within the framework of return assistance programs, the ILR also intends to sponsor structural aid projects to combat human trafficking. The issue of human trafficking is currently being discussed in various ILR country and region-specific project teams. The questions being asked include the following: How is a specific country or region affected by human trafficking? What counter-measures have been taken by the authorities and civil society organizations? Are international organizations dealing with the problem in the partner country? What is the legal situation in these regions or countries and what are the available resources? The project teams are also conducting assessments to determine what action is needed as well as to identify whether migration partnerships can be established with various countries and used as a framework for counter-measures.

¹⁷ Persons who, in connection with their jobs are exposed to the danger of exploitation (solely cabaret dancers) as well as victims and witnesses of human trafficking.

5 Prevention of Irregular Migration

Fact sheets have been drafted for seventeen different countries¹⁸. These fact sheets are used by the various project teams as tools in their work in relation to human trafficking. The fact sheets are constantly updated and each year new country fact sheets are added.

The ILR and its project teams take part in regular exchanges with local authorities in the countries of origin which are familiar with the fight against human trafficking. From 2009 onwards, for example, there are plans to conduct a round-table discussion between Swiss and foreign authorities and specialized agencies on the issue of human trafficking in order to directly exchange knowledge and experience as well as to ascertain mutual interests.

As intended, the detailed focus on human trafficking within the ILR has had an impact. An increasing number of projects to combat human trafficking are being run in parallel with structural aid projects. This is done after suitable project applications have been submitted to the project teams for approval¹⁹.

With structural aid projects and direct support services for victims of human trafficking within the scope of the Foreign Nationals Act pilot project (see above), the ILR has developed an unprecedented range of programs within a European context.

5.1 Prevention of Irregular Migration (PiM)

Saskia Schenker | FOM's Return Assistance Section

The problems of irregular migration are rooted in causes such as difficult living conditions, poor economic situations and a lack of future prospects, often linked to the opportunity to organize and fund irregular journeys. The term prevention of irregular migration (PiM) refers to activities undertaken by the countries of destination to prevent unregulated and irregular migration.

Already in 2002, the ILR had begun to examine this issue in close cooperation with specialists from the FOM, the SDC, the FDFA's political affairs divisions and IOM. In November 2003, it approved a preliminary report on the issue which was supplemented by a study of the Swiss Forum for Migration and Population Studies (SFM).

Due to the FOM's and the SDC's considerable experience implementing structural aid projects, the ILR was given a mandate to implement projects to prevent irregular migration. With enactment of the Asylum Act (AsylA) on 1 January 2008, the ILR authorized the FOM's Return Assistance Section to set the PiM project team to work.

Under Article 93 para 2 AsylA, "Reintegration programs in the partner country may also pursue the goal of contributing to the prevention of irregular migration (PiM). PiM programs are those that contribute in the short term to limiting the risk of primary or secondary migration to Switzerland." Article 71 para 4 Ordinance 2 on Financial Affairs states "Reintegration programs are also understood as measures that

contribute to the prevention of irregular migration in countries of origin or transit countries to Switzerland, for example, the implementation of information and education campaigns for persons subject to the provisions of AsylA and Foreign National Act (AuG)."

In accordance with the above-mentioned article of the AsylA, the ILR mandate includes implementation of PiM projects in the countries of origin and along migration routes. These mainly consist of providing information to potential migrants in the countries of origin on the dangers of irregular migration and the opportunities associated with legal migration. Projects are implemented along the migration route with the aim of supporting the return of migrants who have become stranded in transit countries on their way to Europe.

PiM projects are intentionally part of comprehensive strategies to prevent irregular migration. They are implemented alongside other migration and foreign policy initiatives such as SDC humanitarian aid and development cooperation activities. These operational measures are coordinated with ILR activities in the context of structural aid projects and the activities of the Interdepartmental Working Group on Migration (IAM) which is responsible for policy-making. It has been proven that migration partnerships, training to build migration management capacities in countries of origin, the SDC's humanitarian aid and development projects, and the FOM's Return Assistance programs all converge to reduce the number of irregular migrants. Switzerland is, therefore, able to prevent irregular migration by combining migration, foreign policy and development initiatives.

5.2 PiM in the Horn of Africa (Somaliland, Puntland, Ethiopia): Information Project

The ILR is contributing to the second phase of the IOM information project "Improving Protection of Migrants and other Vulnerable Groups traveling through Somaliland and Puntland to Gulf States." The first phase of the project was funded by the Netherlands. The second phase was launched for a period of one year in January 2009 and will be implemented locally by the *Mixed Migration Task Force* (MMTF). The motives for migration from Central and Southern Somalia as well as Ethiopia using the transit route via Northern Somalia can no longer be clearly distinguished. The reason for this is that conflicts, natural disasters and economic hardship all contribute to migration flows; accordingly, the term "mixed migration flows" is applied. Presided over by UNHCR and IOM, the MMTF seeks to coordinate the activities of the various actors. The SDC's humanitarian aid activities carried out through UNHCR serve to complement MMTF efforts which ensures an integrated approach in Switzerland's commitment to reduce migration problems in the region.



¹⁸ The countries in question are Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Burkina Faso, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Guinea, Cameroon, Kosovo, Libya, Mali, Morocco, Montenegro, Nigeria, Serbia, Sierra Leone and Tunisia. ¹⁹ Since 2004 cooperation in the fight against human trafficking has also featured in the dialogue on readmission agreements between Switzerland and partner countries. The readmission agreement with Georgia explicitly mentions cooperation in the area of human trafficking; this agreement was followed shortly afterwards by a readmission agreement with Nigeria, in which human trafficking is also mentioned. More recent agreements offer the possibility, under paragraphs referring to cooperation in the fight against human trafficking, specifically implementation of preventive measures against human trafficking and exploitation.

These projects seek to build capacities of local authorities and communities so that they can afford greater protection to migrants and asylum seekers. The project also seeks to help authorities tackle migration problems and respect the rights of migrants. Conversely, attempts are underway to improve the access of the persons concerned to services and information, to identify particularly vulnerable persons, and to facilitate their access to aid structures. Migrants are informed in their local region and/or on their transit route about the realities and potential dangers as well as their rights and options. Through coordination within the MMTF, the project also helps to strengthen monitoring mechanisms, gather data and maintain dialogue within the MMTF.

5.3 PiM in Mali: Theatre Project

The ILR sponsored the production of a play dealing with the prevention of irregular migration in Mali. The play, entitled “Switzerland – the country where money originates,” was also performed at a theatre festival on migration issues in Bamako in December 2008. The project is the result of the joint efforts of a cultural anthropologist from Switzerland, a German director and author, and a Mali director who is also the artistic director of the theatre festival. The play was based on a collection of stories about Mali nationals who wanted to emigrate, were already in Switzerland or had returned to their home country. By using humor, the play sought to dispel popular myths about the countries of destination of potential migrants. The audience was made aware of the risks of the journey to Western Europe and the high expectations of the relatives at home. The play was translated into the local language Bambara so that it could also be performed in the provinces. Performances were scheduled in eight Mali towns. Each performance was supplemented by roundtable discussions and films on the issue of migration. In



addition to the FOM and the SDC, Caritas, Helvetas and private donors made financial contributions to the project.

At the same time, the FOM commissioned a film production company to make a documentary record of the theatre project. The resulting film could then be used to further disseminate information about

irregular migration. Under the working title “Where Milk and Honey flow,” the film covers the preparations that went into the play, from the rehearsals all the way up to the opening performance in Bamako. It also takes a closer look at various questions that arose during production and includes various interviews with persons who have had direct experience with the themes portrayed.

5.4 PiM in the Western Balkans: Information Centers

Within the scope of the ILR contribution to the migration partnership between Switzerland and the Western Balkans, the ILR is also involved in the regional project entitled, “Capacity Development, Information and Awareness for the Promotion of Regular Migration to and from the Western Balkans.” The project is funded by the FOM, the Principality of Liechtenstein, the European Commission (drawing from the EU’s AENEAS budget line)²⁰, Germany and Italy. The project is being implemented by IOM in association with the SDC and the International Labor Office (ILO).

One of the most important goals of this project is to prevent irregular migration by providing migrants with information at 22 information centers in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, the former Republic of Yugoslavia, Macedonia, the Republic of Montenegro and the Republic of Serbia. In these centers, potential migrants are provided with information and advice on the risks of irregular migration, the chances and possibilities of legal migration, and employment prospects in Europe and the Balkans. The addresses of the centers, the fact sheets on the countries of destination and the newsletter are posted on a website which is written both in English and the local languages²¹.

A further goal of the project is to transfer skills and exchange information at the national and regional levels by means of specific training sessions on the effective management of migration. In February 2009, a regional conference was held on this topic in Tirana. The governments of the participating countries and the FOM were present. Subsequently, there were national training sessions with Swiss participation in Sarajevo, Pristina und Belgrade.

²⁰ Aeneas refers to the EU budget line (2004 – 2008), which set aside EUR 250 million for financial and technical support in the area of migration and asylum. ²¹ More information can be found at the following Web site: <http://www.migrantservicecentres.org>.

6 Cooperation with the EU

6.1 Working Group on EU Cooperation: Mandate and current projects with Swiss participation

Claire Potaux | IOM Bern

The ILR's working group on EU cooperation gathers and exchanges information regarding EU projects relating to migration, particularly return assistance and the prevention of irregular migration. Emphasis is placed on the advantages that Switzerland can gain from taking part in EU initiatives, either by being able to tap into EU funding or by creating synergies with other EU countries. The working group keeps track of all EU projects that the ILR is involved in which helps maintain an overall view.

There are different forms of cooperation. Direct bilateral or multilateral cooperation with EU countries in the local implementation of projects is one option. The return assistance project to help stranded migrants in Morocco return and reintegrate in their

country of origin is a good example. The first phase was funded by Switzerland. Starting from the second phase, Norway, Italy, Belgium and the Netherlands became co-funders²².

Cooperation may also take the form of Swiss financial contributions or active involvement in migration projects funded by the European Commission. The regional project "Capacity Development, Information and Awareness for the Promotion of Regular Migration to and from the Western Balkans" is one example²³. The ILR provides funding to this project within the framework of its contribution to migration partnership between Switzerland and the Western Balkans. This project enabled the migration attaché in Kosovo to attend the second meeting of the project steering committee. At the same time, the ILR's project team for the Balkans was able to attend the regional conference on 9 and 10 February 2009.

The working group on EU cooperation meets four times a year. Working with the FOM and the SDC's Humanitarian Aid and SHA Domain, it held four information meetings in 2007 and 2008 concerning the Maghreb states and South Caucasus as well as a special meeting with Ambassador Dr. Reiterer, the European Commission's Delegation Head for Switzerland and the Principality of Liechtenstein.

In 2009, thematic workshops with representatives of European countries took place, whereby issues such as the "Return Fund" were discussed. These meetings aim to find possible contextual and financial synergies between Switzerland and the EU when implementing projects locally. An assessment report in 2009 the working group's activities. The report provides an outline of the ongoing projects analyses the various forms of cooperation and provides a systematic base for the development of the future strategy.



²² Cf. chapter 3.4 Priority region: Maghreb. ²³ Funded by the European Commission within the framework of the AENEAS 2006 programme, co-funded by the Principality of Liechtenstein, Germany and Italy. Cf. chapter 3.1 Priority region: Western Balkans and chapter 5 Prevention of irregular Migration

7 Diaspora

7.1 The Diaspora as a Partner of the Swiss Migration Authorities in ILR Activities

Lorenza Rossi | SDC's Global Program Migration Division

In recent years, discussion of the connections between migration and development has become increasingly important. Countries of destination have begun to recognize that they can play a responsible role in development by using the potential of the Diaspora²⁴. Countries of origin have begun to draw similar conclusions. Both countries of destination and countries of origin increasingly regard migrants as important players in the migration cycle. On the one hand, they make a valuable contribution to the prosperity of their host countries; on the other, their money transfers (i.e. remittances) help reduce poverty in the country of origin. At the same time, remittances can support the process of development in the countries of origin if the governments in these countries create an appropriate environment for economic growth. Some migrants as well as Diaspora organizations also invest in their country of origin which helps to strengthen the economy, impart innovative ideas, and contribute to increased understanding between the country of destination and country of origin. Finally, migrants returning to their home country bring new skills, experience and contacts – important elements which can spur local development and lead to successful reintegration²⁵.

Several initiatives have been undertaken in recent years, in particular regarding the use of remittances to further policy objectives. However, only a few concrete examples of projects between the authorities and Diaspora organizations take such part-

nerships further. The existing examples within the EU are nevertheless quite promising and provide a glimpse of the potential of such initiatives (e.g., creation of small enterprises, the transfer of know-how)²⁶. If this potential is to be optimally used to the advantage of all concerned, both countries of destination and the countries of origin need to encourage the involvement of Diaspora through capacity-building measures, technical support and financial incentives.

Of course, Diaspora organizations also exist and function inside Switzerland. In one way or another, they already contribute today by means of personal initiatives to help their fellow countrymen integrate in the country of destination and investments to foster growth in their country of origin. Commercial investment and know-how networks are created²⁷, money is collected among members for the dispatching of technical equipment or medical supplies to the countries of origin, to finance the construction of roads or to set up a low-priced remittance system. However, knowledge about this sector is still rudimentary and its potential must still be investigated further.

In 2007, the ILR took initiative by asking the SDC to devise a plan to encourage partnerships between the Diaspora and migration authorities. Under SDC management, the Working Group on Diaspora was created²⁸; at first, the WG Diaspora limited its focus to Sub-Saharan Africa. This is one of the poorest regions in the world and has been marked by numerous past and present conflicts. The precarious political and socio-economic situation in several of these countries results in a rising level of emigration to Europe. Although the African Diaspora is

²⁴ In this text the term *Diaspora* refers to members of an ethnic or national group who maintain contacts with their home country, in accordance with the IOM definition in: *Engaging Diasporas as Development Partners for Home and Destination Countries: Challenges for Policymakers*, 2006, p. 13.

²⁵ Richard Black et al. *Migration, Return and Small Enterprise Development in Ghana: A Route out of Poverty?*, Sussex Migration Working Paper No. 9, Brighton, University of Sussex, 2003; Talip Kilic et al., *Investing Back Home: Return Migration and Business Ownership in Albania*, Policy Research Working Paper Nr. 4366, Washington D.C., World Bank, 2007. ²⁶ The World Bank D-MADE Programme places funding possibilities for the creation of enterprises in the country of origin at the disposal of the African Diaspora in Europe: UNDP TOKTEN (*Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals*) stimulates the transfer of skills between members of the Diaspora and countries of origin.; the IOM MIDA Programme (*Migration for Development in Africa*) focuses on the skills, expertise and experience of the African Diaspora for the development of their own countries. ²⁷ E.g. Réseau de Formation et de Recherche sur les Migrations Africaines (REFORMAF) in Geneva: www.reformaf.org/index.php. ²⁸ The Working Group on Diaspora consists of staff from the SDC, FOM, IOM, PAIV and Seco.

heavily and diversely represented in Switzerland, it is able to form homogenous groups representing the entire region. Although Sub-Saharan Africans are a minority among Switzerland's foreign population, they are an important target group of the Federal Office for Migration (asylum, integration and return assistance).

In a first step, the WG Diaspora commissioned a mapping study of the Sub-Saharan Africa Diaspora. The Swiss Forum for Migration and Population Studies (SFM) is preparing the quantitative part of the study which intends to draw up a statistical in-

ventory with a socio-demographic profile of migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa living in Switzerland. The Swiss Red Cross (SRC) is also in the process of identifying potential partners – organizations or individuals – for joint migration and development projects²⁹ (qualitative part).

The results of this study will form the basis for the operation and implementation of ILR projects to develop partnerships between the Sub-Saharan African Diaspora and the Swiss authorities. Should this pilot project prove successful, further Swiss Diaspora contexts will be examined.

Concluding Remarks

Urs Betschart | Toni Frisch

Individual return assistance and country-specific return programs offer returnees a possibility of sustained social and professional reintegration into their home country. Combined with structural aid and projects aimed to prevent irregular migration, these measures contribute to fostering closer cooperation between Switzerland and migrants' native countries. In a context of global migration management, individual return assistance and country-specific return programs are, among other things, means of cooperation—cooperation that is instrumental in bridging the gap between conflicting areas such as migration and development.

Migration from Africa is an example of how important cooperation in asylum matters is. In regions from where regular and irregular migrants hail, such as West Africa and the Horn of Africa, structural aid and projects aimed to prevent irregular migration help tackle the roots of irregular migration by offering alternatives right on location. Return assistance takes effect in major transit countries already, particularly the Maghreb countries, by providing return assistance to migrants stranded en route to a European destination. Voluntary return and reintegration into a migrant's native country are thus fostered and supported most effectively.

Return assistance granted to people in Switzerland is an advantageous option to forced repatriation. Asylum seekers who by law must leave Switzerland, and refugees willing to return on their own accord, as well as certain persons (such as victims of human trafficking) who are neither asylum seekers nor refugees but subject to the provisions of the Foreign Nationals Act, are thus presented a worthwhile alternative to forced repatriation and enables a new beginning in the home country. Returnees benefit from the close coordination of activities between

the Federal Office for Migration and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, ensuring a comprehensive Swiss effort to assist people on location abroad.

Never before has the need to address migration issues and to develop a dialog with migrants' native countries and transit countries been more pressing than today. These topics should not be dealt with separately but as a whole. Any real dialog can be achieved only if the parties involved – receiving states, migrants' native countries, and transit countries – are on an equal footing. Moreover, migration partnerships between receiving states and transit countries need to be further developed. Fortunately, many good efforts are underway. Therefore, the migration partnerships with the migrants' native countries and transit countries should continue to be supported through a whole-of-government approach to migration management. The ILR supports these efforts.



²⁹ E.g., the development of small enterprises in the country of origin, the support of development projects carried out by the Diaspora in the country of origin, return assistance and reintegration projects, the facilitation of transfer costs of remittances, etc.

Annex

Table 1

Number of return assistance recipients by country, average of more than one return per year (excl. EU or EFTA member states or third countries such as the United States, Canada or Australia).

Source: FOM's Return Assistance Section, 2009.

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Total
Afghanistan	24	19	11	9	9	72
Algeria	6	10	37	20	25	98
Albania	1	6	6	3	3	19
Angola	5	23	26	13	15	82
Armenia	25	26	53	5	8	117
Azerbaijan	2	5	11	4	0	22
Bangladesh	6	6	5	6	8	31
Belarus	29	24	15	6	15	89
Benin	4	4	2	4	2	16
Bolivia	4	0	5		0	9
Bosnia-Herzegovina	158	153	163	52	37	563
Burkina Faso	2	3	0	1	0	6
Burundi	1	4	3	3	2	13
Cameroon	9	10	11	19	6	55
Chile	1	0	0	4	0	5
China	3	6	3	3	0	15
Colombia	13	9	8	10	0	40
Croatia	3	9	10	10	2	34
Democratic Republic of Congo	3	9	0	1	3	16
Ecuador	0	0	5	0	0	5
Egypt	0	0	2	4	5	11
Eritrea	4	0	0	3	0	7
Ethiopia	6	12	10	6	7	41
Gambia	1	1	4	3	5	14
Georgia	28	73	97	56	91	345
Guinea	4	10	15	20	10	59
India	10	2	7	5	12	36
Iran	25	13	15	21	23	97
Iraq	139	159	131	50	66	545
Ivory Coast	1	0	3	5	5	14

Jordan	0	0	2	2	5	9
Kazakhstan	3	3	5	0	0	11
Kirghizia	1	4	0	1	0	6
Lebanon	4	11	12	5	6	38
Libya	9	5	22	7	8	51
Macedonia	69	61	31	37	12	210
Marocco	0	1	5	1	2	9
Moldavia	2	0	23	5	10	40
Mongolia	47	4	32	43	25	151
Nepal	3	0	2	21	9	35
Niger	0	1	0	4	1	6
Nigeria	24	21	22	33	49	149
Pakistan	9	10	10	4	6	39
Russia	65	61	43	41	26	236
Senegal	0	1	0	3	3	7
Serbia/ Kosovo, Republics	277	285	229	227	144	1162
Sierra Leone	2	1	1	1	1	6
Somalia	10	20	9	3	8	50
South Africa	3	3	9	4	13	32
Sri Lanka	33	39	23	17	11	123
Sudan	0	3	6	2	2	13
Syria	6	14	4	5	0	29
Togo	12	9	2	4	2	29
Tunesia	1	0	1	6	5	13
Turkey	126	131	84	71	28	440
Uganda	0	1	2	4	3	10
Ukraine	31	47	20	4	18	120
Uzbekistan	3	1	4	0	1	9
Vietnam	7	1	2	2	0	12
Yemen	11	11	6	3	3	34

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