

Common Support Initiative on Voluntary Return and Reintegration CSI

BACKGROUND

Return Policy is an ever more important aspect of the European migration policy. In the development of an integrated Return Policy, voluntary return is a priority as defined in the European Return Directive. National governments considerably invest in the development of voluntary return schemes and reintegration assistance. New initiatives improve voluntary return practices (e.g. reintegration assistance), but complicate the management. All individual countries often face the same challenges like tendering procedures in countries of origin, control and audit procedures for reintegration expenses, identification of potential Service Providers, financial management, etc.

To address these needs, Fedasil established in September 2013 an informal platform of governmental administrations responsible for the implementation of voluntary return and reintegration. This platform mainly aims to facilitate informal consultation and operational co-operation in the field of voluntary return and reintegration assistance, to accelerate the learning procedures between government institutions to lead to better practices and to develop new common projects to maximize the economies of scale. Within the implementation of its activities, CSI strives to build and enhance synergies and to set up collaborative frameworks with other voluntary return initiatives at European level, including European cooperation networks such as EMN REG¹, IGC² etc., Agencies as EASO³ and FRONTEX⁴, projects such as ERIN⁵, ERIN Specific Actions⁶, EURLO⁷, etc.

¹ The Return and Reintegration experts' group, created in 2014 under the auspices of the European Migration Network - EMN

² Intergovernmental Consultations on Migration, Asylum and Refugees, which is an informal, non-decision making forum for intergovernmental information exchange and policy debate on issues of relevance to the management of international migratory flows. IGC brings together 17 participating States, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Organization for Migration and the European Commission.

³ The European Asylum Support Office. An Agency of the European Union set up by Regulation (EU) 439/2010 of the European Parliament and the Council

⁴ The European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union, established in 2004 by Council Regulation (EC) 2007/2004.

⁵ The European Reintegration Network: a government – to – government cooperation project between European Partner Institutions aiming at the organization of sustainable return and reintegration of third country nationals to their country of origin. The project is the result of the European Reintegration Instrument ERI and co-funded by the European Commission under the Community Actions. It started on 1st June 2014 with a duration of 24 months.

⁶ A government – to – government cooperation project between European Partner Institutions aiming at the organization of sustainable return and reintegration of third country nationals to their country of origin, based on the previous ERI and ERIN projects and co-funded by the AMIF under the Specific Actions. The project will run from 1st June 2016 until 2021.

⁷ The European Return Liaison Officers network, a joint return action set up by governmental institutions competent for the implementation of operational return strategies for irregular residing migrants in Europe. The projects started on 1st April 2015 and will deploy actions up to 31st of December 2022 with co-funding of AMIF, Special Actions.



OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTED RESULTS OF THE PLATFORM

The general objective of this informal platform is to support participating governmental administrations with the necessary expertise in the development of their voluntary return and reintegration policy and to foster the development and preparation of new common projects to maximize the economies of scale.

The platform concentrates on three fields of activity:

- Thematic meetings on an operational management level with other governmental national administrations responsible for voluntary return and reintegration. This proceeds for instance by the organization of regular informal consultation meetings on operational experts level on issues related to the operational management of voluntary return and reintegration.
- Capacity building and functional support in the implementation of activities of European Cooperation Projects such as ERIN, EURLO, EPRA⁸ etc, Agencies (EASO, FRONTEX), networks as EMN REG, IGC, etc. to support other national administrations in the continuously improvement of their national voluntary return and reintegration activities.
- Expertise development in the field of voluntary return and reintegration via the participation to/ organization of intergovernmental meetings with other national institutions and the participation to international meetings organized by European networks (e.g. EMN REG, IGC etc.), Agencies (EASO, Frontex), projects set up in the framework of European Mobility Partnerships and Migration & Development initiatives, etc.

MAIN ACTIVITIES OF THE PLATFORM

The main activities of the Platform are:

- Consultation Management
 - preparation of informal thematic meetings on request with other institutions focussing on operational management aspects linked with voluntary return and reintegration, e.g. preparation content, scope and agenda, identification of/ and contacting of the speakers, provision of support to the chairing organization of the meeting, reporting, etc.
- Capacity building and functional support

⁸ ⁸A governmental – to – to governmental European exchange network created by Fedasil in 2011 for national administrations responsible for reception with the focus on strategic aspects. The countries currently involved in the platform are: Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Latvia, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Spain, Sweden, UK and Malta (observer). More information about EPRA on <http://fedasil.be/en/EPRA>



- the provision of technical support in capacity building meetings/ trainings/ workshops with a particular thematic focus in the field of voluntary return and reintegration
 - the development of common instruments and methodologies for the implementation of activities foreseen within other European cooperation projects, Networks, Agencies etc. in the field of voluntary return and reintegration, e.g. preparation of Terms of References, etc.
 - the development of common project concept notes
- Expertise development
 - the organization of inter-governmental meetings with other national institutions
 - the participation to international experts meetings in the field of voluntary return and reintegration

PARTNER INSTITUTIONS

CSI participating institutions include:

- Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum seekers – Fedasil **(BE)**
- State Secretariat for Migration - SEM **(CH)**
- Office Français de l'Immigration et de l'Intégration – OFII **(FR)**
- Direction de l'Immigration - DIRIMM **(LU)**
- Repatriation and Departure Service - Ministry of Security and Justice – R&DS **(NL)**
- Norwegian Directorate of Immigration – UDI **(NO)**
- Home Office **(UK)**
- Finnish Immigration Service – MIGRI **(FI)**

The objective is to progressively extend the platform to other interested governmental institutions facing similar challenges.

CSI PROGRAMME

The main Common Support Initiative meetings organized since the outset of the project are the following:

- 1st Steering Committee – Stockholm, Sweden (November 2013)
- 1st Working Group on “Voluntary Return & Reintegration in a Legal Framework” and “Voluntary Return, Reintegration and Financial Management” – Helsinki, Finland (March 2014)
- 2nd Steering Committee – Ghent, Belgium (May 2014)
- 2nd Thematic meeting on “The construction of eligibility criteria and voluntary return/ reintegration packages” – London, UK (September 2014)
- 3rd Thematic meeting on the ‘IOM organizational and financial structure’ and “Communication activities in the field of AVR” – Geneva (March 2015).



- 4th Thematic discussion meeting on ‘current developments in the field of voluntary return and reintegration’, and a discussion about the ‘basic services to be contracted within ERIN developments and the development of a Joint Reintegration Strategy’ – Madrid (October 2015)
- 5th Thematic meeting on ‘current developments in the field of voluntary return and reintegration on a national and European level’, and the ‘organization of voluntary return counselling activities to discuss with migrants about voluntary return as an alternative’ – Luxembourg (April 2016)
- 6th Thematic discussion meeting on ‘Current ‘EU developments in the field of voluntary return and reintegration’ – Ostend, Belgium (June 2016)

The themes for the thematic meetings are defined by the participating countries prior to each meeting according to the current common priorities and opportunities.

CSI COORDINATION AND BUDGET

The Common Support Initiative is coordinated and hosted by FEDASIL, and supported by national reference points in each partner institution in order to guarantee a proper level of investment, information sharing and expertise. Staff costs and project related costs of the project coordination team are funded through the European Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund. The participating States dedicate 0,1 FTE expert staff to ensure national input. Travel costs linked to the thematic meetings are directly funded by the participating institutions themselves.

LONG TERM PERSPECTIVE

The Common Support Initiative is conceived as a long term initiative and will actively pursue good and operational relations with other countries. One of the objectives is to broaden the geographical scope during the project implementation with countries facing similar problems and substantial challenges in the development of an up-to-standard return programme.

CONTACT DETAILS

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