

EMN National Conference - Belgium
4th December 2015



Findings of the EMN Report "Dissemination of Information on Voluntary Return: how to reach irregular migrants not in contact with the authorities"

Focus on vulnerable migrants

Salvatore Sofia

EMN Service Provider - ICFI

EMN Study “Dissemination of Information on Voluntary Return - how to reach irregular migrants not in contact with the authorities”

Study launched on 23rd March 2015 - EMN NCPs national reports received from 11th June 2015

Published on 21st October 2015

The Synthesis Report is based on the contributions from 25 EMN National Contact Points (NCPs)

The EMN Study on Dissemination of Information on Voluntary Return includes:

- An analysis of (Member) States approaches (policies and practices) to the dissemination of information on voluntary return.
- Description of campaigns and methods, and the effectiveness of these in reaching out to and informing third-country nationals not in contact with the authorities

EMN Study “Dissemination of Information on Voluntary Return”- *Scale of the phenomenon*

- **No exact estimate** of irregular migrants in the EU, due to the clandestine nature of the phenomenon
- Some indication of the scale of irregular migration: **illegal border crossings** (Frontex: 283,532 in 2014); **TCNs illegally staying** in the EU (Eurostat: 620,170 in 2014)
- 2010-2014: FR, DE, EL, ES, SE and UK **apprehended highest number of illegally-staying migrants**
- BE, DE, FI, IE, NL, PL, SE and NO have developed **national estimates of the scale of irregular migration**: FI 1,000, PL 25,000, DE 520,000
- AT, LT, LV, MT, SE, SK provided **estimates of the scale of clandestine entries or ‘absconding’ irregular migrants**. E.g., absconders: MT 900, AT 4,557, SE 8,159.

EMN Study “Dissemination of Information on Voluntary Return” – *Challenges*

- Difficulty in knowing **how and where to target irregular migrants** when they are not in contact with the authorities
- **Language** barriers
- Certain irregular migrants are **unwilling to leave**
- **Mistrust** towards both authorities and other actors and institutions promoting voluntary return
- **Reliance on informal and possibly inaccurate sources of information**, such as friends, peers and families
- **Lack of strategies, policies and methodologies** for identifying irregular migrants and informing them of voluntary return options

EMN Study “Dissemination of Information on Voluntary Return” – *National rules and practices*

- All (Member) States define some rules on the dissemination of information on voluntary return to irregular migrants: **legislation, soft law** or **guidelines for practitioners**
- Policy or legislation recently amended / about to be amended in AT, BE, DE, FI, FR, HU, PL, UK, NO -> suggests an **increasing interest in strengthening rules and practice to promote voluntary return**
- National provisions indicate: **content of the information** to be disseminated, **timing** of the information provision, **language, channels, confidentiality** rules
- The national rules/practices are **not comprehensive across all MS**: mainly concern irregular migrants *in contact* with the authorities
- Specific rules/guidance in place for **vulnerable irregular migrants** in ES, IE, SI, SE, UK, NO

EMN Study “Dissemination of Information on Voluntary Return” - *Provisions for vulnerable persons*

- **Ireland:** suspected victims of trafficking are provided with information on accessing AVRR, as one of the options available under the ‘National Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking’
- **Sweden:** special rules on how information has to be provided to unaccompanied minors
- **United Kingdom:** case workers must provide as soon as possible information on voluntary return in cases of vulnerable persons (families and potential victims of trafficking)
- **Norway:** offers specialised counselling on return options to vulnerable third-country nationals (TCNs) in reception centres

EMN Study “Dissemination of Information on Voluntary Return- *Role of state actors*”

- In half of all MS (AT, CY, EE, ES, FI, HU, IE, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, SI, SK) **state actors maintain a limited role** in the dissemination of information on voluntary return to irregular migrants: task **mainly outsourced to IOs or civil society organisations** (IOM, Caritas, national NGOs)
- In other MS (BE, CZ, DE, EL, FR, MT, UK & NO), state authorities have a more active role: **training** staff and partners, **producing communications**, providing **return counselling**, establishing **information hubs**, engaging in **outreach work**
- Various State authorities are involved in the dissemination of information on VR, depending on stage in the asylum/migration cycle and context:
 - **asylum/migration authorities** and staff at reception facilities (during the asylum procedure);
 - **asylum / migration authority** or the **police / law enforcement** authorities (return decision);
 - **staff of reception centres, accommodation facilities** and **detention/immigration reporting centres** (pending removal);
 - **diplomatic representation / embassies;**

EMN Study “Dissemination of Information on Voluntary Return”- *Role of non state actors*

- A broad range of **non-state actors** play a role in the dissemination of information on voluntary return, either **contracted/funded by the government**, or **engaged on an informal basis** by the State or **mandated independently**
- Most common actors are:
 - the **IOM** (AVR(R) service provider in most (Member) States;
 - national **NGOs** (e.g. Caritas, Refugee Action, Jesuit Refugee Service, national refugee councils);
 - **diaspora groups** and **community groups** (faith-based groups / migrant-led groups)
 - **social, health, and education services**
 - **legal advisors** (in a few Member States)

EMN Study “Dissemination of Information on Voluntary Return” – *Dissemination Tools*

Most common used **tools of dissemination** of information on VR:

- **leaflets/brochures** - handed over or distributed to migrants in the context of campaigns
- **posters** with short texts and explicative pictures,
- **websites** with audio-visual information -> offer anonymity and easy access
- **helplines** (free of costs in most countries) and **drop-in clinics**

Other tools used to a lesser extent: **social media pages** and **online discussion forums** which allow for the exchange of information and discussion among peers, **media campaigns** and **outreach community visits** to migrant communities.

Importance of **outreach work with diaspora communities** + combination of a range of channels corresponding to **different times & conditions**

Accessibility of information: dissemination in key places, free of charge, various languages.

EMN Study “Dissemination of Information on Voluntary Return” - *Information campaigns 1/2*

17 Member States implemented **information campaigns aiming at disseminating info on VR** during the period 2010-2014:

- 1/3 of these campaigns specifically targeted irregular migrants not in contact with the authorities – All used methods and approaches to target this group as part of a wider target group of migrants
- **Strategies:**
 - Increasing the ubiquity of information (transport hubs, mainstream media);
 - Strengthening relations with diaspora communities (DE with Armenians, Vietnamese and Ghanaians);
 - Using targeted channels of dissemination and social media;
 - Highlighting benefits of return (and reintegration);
 - Using cultural mediators

EMN Study “Dissemination of Information on Voluntary Return” - *Information campaigns 2/2*

IOM Netherlands’ strategy: “Outreach to irregular migrants”

- Implemented by the **IOM**;
- Objective: to reach **rejected asylum seekers** and **irregular migrants who are difficult to contact** via the common channels of information
- Targeted **vulnerable groups of migrants**: persons with health issues, victims of trafficking, victims of sexual exploitation, minors, **TCNs of certain nationalities**.
- **Tools for dissemination**: distribution of leaflets, website, helpline, outreach visits to places frequented by irregular migrants, engagement with formal and informal networks of migrants.
- **Collaboration** between social workers, migrant organisations, churches and mosques, small migrant businesses, doctors, lawyers, the Aliens Police and Repatriation and Departure Service (DT&V).

EMN Study “Dissemination of Information on Voluntary Return” - *Evidence of effectiveness 1/2*

There is **little robust evidence of the effectiveness** of approaches used to disseminate information on voluntary return to irregular migrants not in contact with the authorities -> **limitation of the source used** (surveys/information received by participants in AVR(R) programmes)

Some lessons and potential good practices :

- Providing information as early as possible to potential beneficiaries of AVR(R);
- Involving NGOs, IOs and civil society organisations in information dissemination;
- Involving diaspora groups /migrant representatives -> trusted channels;
- Providing time to the migrant to reflect on the decision about return;
- Making use of online media;

EMN Study “Dissemination of Information on Voluntary Return” - *Evidence of effectiveness 2/2*

- Involving different actors in information dissemination with adequate coordination
- Providing information in a language the migrant understands, to increase its accessibility
- Ensuring that the individual is aware of the risks of not returning voluntarily as well as the benefits of voluntary return
- Tailoring information and communication to the specific needs and situation of the migrant
- Providing information in a factual manner, avoiding confusing and ‘emotive’ communication



Thank you for your attention!