Editorial

A watershed moment has occurred in the history of our 65 year-old organization: Member States of the United Nations (UN) through the General Assembly on 25 July 2016 unanimously adopted a resolution approving the agreement to make IOM a “Related Organization” of the UN. This paves the way for the agreement to be signed by the UN Secretary-General Ban-Ki Moon and IOM Director General William Lacy Swing at the UN Summit for Refugees and Migrants on 19 September 2016 at the UN in New York.

“The General Assembly’s decision to approve this agreement shows the growing strength of the relationship between IOM and the UN,” said Ambassador Swing. “IOM has worked closely with the UN since our foundation at both operational and policy levels. IOM Member States recognize IOM as the global lead agency on migration. And now, becoming a part of the UN family will give IOM a vital voice at the UN table to advocate for migrants and their rights worldwide.”

IOM, which assisted an estimated 20 million migrants in 2015, is an organization with over 9,500 staff and 450 offices worldwide. Founded in the wake of the Second World War to resettle refugees from Europe, IOM celebrates its 65th anniversary in December of this year.

At the end of June, the People’s Republic of China joined IOM, becoming its 165th member state. Tuvalu and Solomon Islands also joined the Organization. “We welcome China, Tuvalu and Solomon Islands membership of IOM at this crucial time,” said Director General Swing.

The IOM Country Office for Austria also saw some changes: Katerina Kratzmann, our former Head of Office, left IOM on 30 June 2016 after having worked for IOM for more than six years. She took over the Head of Office position in October 2011 and was also represented in several expert groups in Austria such as the Expert Council for Integration and the Advisory Committee for Population Statistics. Katerina enriched the office not only through her outstanding expertise in migration but also through her supportive character. Leopold Kraus has been appointed as interim Officer in Charge until a new Head of Office has been selected.

Follow us on Twitter!

The IOM Country Office for Austria now has its own Twitter account! We will provide you with news and information on migration-related topics with a focus on Austria, including integration of migrants and refugees, research, assisted voluntary return and reintegration and much more. Tweets will give you an insight into our day-to-day work.

twitter.com/IOM_Austria
Turpal Y.’s story of return - Caucasian summer, tires and thirst for knowledge

Beneficiaries of the project RESTART - Reintegration Assistance for Voluntary Returnees to Afghanistan, Pakistan and the Russian Federation / the Chechen Republic, which is co-funded by the Austrian Ministry of the Interior and the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund of the European Union, receive a EUR 500 cash grant and in-kind assistance of up to EUR 2,800 for income-generating activities after their return. In the framework of the project, IOM conducts regular monitoring to find out what the beneficiaries think about the project, and recently contacted Turpal Y. who returned to the Chechen Republic in 2015.

When answering the call, Turpal Y. could barely be heard due to the loud machine noises in the background. Y. had to go out of his tire shop and could be heard saying: "It is very hot these days in the Northern Caucasus, 41 degrees in the shade. But how I love the Caucasian summers!"

In the following telephone conversation, Y. happily told IOM staff his story of return. He decided to invest his reintegration assistance in purchasing necessary tools for a tire fitting shop because, as he said, "I had the necessary work experience. From the very start, this business provided me with a steady source of income. Thanks to the reintegration grant, I can, on average, earn around EUR 350 per month."

Y. was also very keen on acquiring further education. He visited a business training organized by IOM and received financial support to attend a book-keeping course: "This enhanced my knowledge and made me feel more confident". But Y.’s thirst for knowledge was not quenched yet – he used a part of the EUR 500 cash grant to travel to Pyatigorsk* in order to enroll at the university for a distance learning course in Information Systems and Technologies.

Y. had no doubts that his decision to return to the Chechen Republic was the right one. “The project offered a good basis for my return. I am able to work and study.” Upon being questioned about his future plans, Y. answered: “I would like to marry and become totally independent from my parents.” At this point, Y. had to cut the conversation short as his next client was already waiting for him in the heat of the Caucasian summer.

*Capital city of the North Caucasus region Stavropol which neighbors the Chechen Republic

This project is co-financed by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) of the European Union and the Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior.

Reintegration assistance available for trafficked Hungarian nationals

With the support of the Government of Switzerland, IOM is now offering direct assistance to Hungarian nationals who have been trafficked abroad and choose to return to their home country. Hungarian citizens who return from Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland and the United Kingdom as well as other European countries are eligible for this support until the end of 2016. Beyond funding the return travel, the project offers individualized assistance via case workers together with partner organizations in Hungary.

Beneficiaries can receive shelter, counselling, therapy, medical assistance and professional training as well as an in-kind grant of at least CHF 1500. IOM and its partners can furthermore provide assistance in finding long-term housing and suitable employment. The overall aim is to provide a stable foundation for each beneficiary so that they can re-start their lives and avoid being exploited in the future.

For more information about this project or to register a beneficiary, please contact Katie Klaffenböck (kklassenboeck@iom.int or 01/585 3322-46).
Integration: A comprehensive approach

Integration is the key for effective migration management. Comprehensive approaches to integration help migrants to fully engage in the host society: socio-economically and politically as well as culturally. IOM aims to involve all stakeholders in the integration process: migrants, receiving communities and policy-makers.

In order to integrate successfully, migrants need to be equipped with basic information about the country of destination and receive support in identifying the skills and attitudes necessary to succeed in their new environment. Within the Humanitarian Admission Programme for Syrian Refugees, which has been extended by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Interior for 2016-17, pre-departure cultural orientation trainings are being held with Syrian refugees in the transit countries Turkey and Jordan before being resettled to Austria. Similarly, within the project CulTrain, post-arrival cultural orientation trainings are being held with young refugees already residing in Austria. These trainings enhance their chances of being an active participant in Austrian society.

Addressing the needs of the receiving communities is also paramount for successful integration. The project Integration in the Communities aims to increase the capacity of local Austrian administration and service providers, in particular front-line staff, to develop effective strategies for the economic and social integration of disadvantaged migrants. To this end, IOM is training local authorities as well as governmental and non-governmental service providers to understand the situation and needs of migrants and to learn to make use of all available resources through partnerships among public, private and non-profit stakeholders.

On the decision and policy-making level, stakeholders are kept abreast of developments in the area of integration through research and stock-taking of available integration services and through showing best practices in facilitating integration (see IOM’s presentation at a book launch). IOM is also contributing to the national policy-making.

These projects are being financed by various donors. For more information see project descriptions on our website www.IOM-vienna.at.

IOM Austria contributes to Forum on Human Trafficking and Migration in Bulgaria

From 27-28 June 2016, IOM Austria participated in an international discussion forum in Sofia, Bulgaria on the topic of “Trafficking in human beings and the new migration challenges: Strengthening the multidisciplinary cooperation on identification and assistance of migrant victims of trafficking”. The event was hosted by the Bulgarian National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

Katie Klaffenböck presented IOM’s recent research in the area of trafficking and crisis situations and highlighted the most recent results of IOM’s ongoing survey along the Balkan route, which indicate that at least 6.5% of the migrant and refugee population is at risk of being trafficked or exploited along their journey.

The conference also addressed challenges in the identification of trafficked persons, ways to better assist identified individuals, and ideas for assisting the most vulnerable groups, including unaccompanied minors.

Migrants and refugees travelling along the Balkan route.

CulTrain participants with a puzzle of Europe.

Young refugees and Austrian youngsters after a treasure hunt in Vienna.
National EMN Conference “The Establishment of Identity in the Migration Process”

On 2 May 2016, the IOM Country Office for Austria in its role as National Contact Point in the European Migration Network (EMN) organized its annual conference on the topic of “The Establishment of Identity in the Migration Process”. The conference brought together researchers, government officials, representatives of the European Commission, non-governmental organizations and the general public.

Hilbert Karl from the Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior welcomed over 140 participants to the conference. In the following opening contribution, Dario Vasschetto (European Commission) noted the high number of migrants and refugees that arrived in the European Union (EU) in 2015 and outlined how the EU responded to this challenge by establishing “hotspots” in Greece and Italy. The first panel of the conference focused on “Practice and International Cooperation”. Vegard Pettersen (Norwegian ID-Centre), Robert Klamer (Royal Marechaussee Schiphol Airport) and Nino Hartl (Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum) shared their practical experience in establishing migrants’ identity, detecting forged documents and applying systematic approaches. In the second panel, a specific focus was on “Age Assessment” as one element of establishing identity. Eivind Hoffmann (Norwegian Directorate of Immigration), Ernst Rudolf (medical expert), Mayra Mayr-Eduardoff (Institute of Legal Medicine, Innsbruck Medical University) and Thomas N. Dunning (TUSLA Child and Family Agency, Ireland) presented a variety of age assessment methods based on medical procedures, molecular biology and psycho-social work.

The agenda, PowerPoint presentations and further information about the conference are available at the EMN website www.emn.at. The forthcoming conference report will also be made available there.

EMN Study

The IOM Country Office for Austria recently published its National Report “Changes of Immigration Status and Purpose of Residence in Austria” as a contribution to an EMN-wide study. The report presents the possibilities provided within the Austrian migration system for individuals to change their immigration status and purpose of residence. Respective admission criteria, possibilities of changing an existing residence permit and, with respect thereto, possible advantages or disadvantages are discussed. In particular, the report addresses the policy objectives underlying the provisions of changing purpose of residence.

The study shows that the possibilities for changing one’s immigration status in Austria are relatively liberal and that it is possible to change between all residence titles specified in the Settlement and Residence Act. However, the possibilities for changing to and from a humanitarian residence title are limited.

One of the challenges the study has identified is the transition of university graduates to a Red-White-Red Card, which by some actors is regarded as too difficult.

All National Reports, Synthesis Reports and EMN Informs are available for download at www.emn.at.

The National Contact Point Austria in the EMN is financially supported by the European Commission and the Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior.