

# Newsletter

## of the IOM International Organization for Migration in the Slovak Republic

Zero Issue

Dear colleagues and friends,

The Office of the IOM International Organization of Migration in the Slovak Republic is pleased to share with you the zero issue of its newsletter.

Since the founding of the IOM office in Slovakia in 1996, the importance of migration on political as well as on practical level has risen significantly. In parallel, the spectrum of IOM activities has been growing to encompass, among others, activities in the fields of assisted voluntary returns, integration of migrants, counter trafficking and co-ordination of the European Migration Network in Slovakia.

In all of these fields, assistance to migrants is the core component of IOM activities: during 15 years of its presence in Slovakia IOM has assisted more than 1,500 migrants to return to their home countries, around 3,000 clients have turned to the IOM Migration Information Centre for information and counselling regarding their stay and integration in Slovakia, and almost 100 victims of trafficking in human beings have been helped to return and reintegrate back to their lives. Information and expertise gained within migrant assistance feeds into other IOM activities, such as capacity building for key stakeholders, awareness raising and research.

Behind projects and statistics there is a wealth of information and practical experience, which we would like to regularly share in the form of a newsletter with our colleagues and the public who are interested in migration. The newsletter will be published quarterly and will contain an overview of planned activities, summary of outputs for the previous period, annotations of publications and information on major legislative and political developments.

The zero issue contains general information on IOM in Slovakia.



### IOM 60th ANNIVERSARY: 1951 – 2011

On 5 December 2011 IOM will reach a special milestone in its history: 60 years during which the organization assisted more than 14 million migrants. From its roots as an operational agency, IOM has broadened its scope to become the leading international agency. Today, in addition to assistance to migrants, IOM promotes dialogue and cooperation on migration, advances migration research, and supports governments in understanding the complexities of modern migration. IOM's research programme and its flagship publication, the World Migration Report, its International Migration Law Programme, and the International Dialogue on Migration are some of the ways through which the Organization strives to be at the cutting-edge of migration issues in the twenty-first century.

The anniversary year that is devoted to the central motto "Migration for the Benefit of All." Information on the history of the organization and special events linked to the anniversary year can be found on a special website [60years.iom.int](http://60years.iom.int).

### 15 years of IOM in Slovakia: Highlights

**1996**

The Government of the Slovak Republic and IOM International Organization for Migration sign an agreement based on which the office of IOM in Bratislava is established.

**1998**

Based on the *Agreement on Co-operation between the International Organization for Migration and the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic on the Assistance to the Rejected Asylum Seekers and Illegal Migrants with the Return to the Country of Origin* IOM starts to implement the Programme of Assisted Voluntary Returns.

**2003**

IOM implements the first nationwide campaign aimed at prevention of trafficking in human beings from Slovakia and capacity building of key actors in these area.

Based on the decision of the German foundation *Remembrance, Responsibility and Future* and of the US District Court for the Eastern District of New York (Swiss Bank Settlement) IOM delivers material and social assistance to survivors of the Nazi persecution on the grounds that they were or were believed to be Roma, Jehovah's Witness, physically or mentally disabled or homosexual. In Slovakia the target group were disadvantaged, elderly Roma and Sinti born prior to 1945. IOM delivered assistance to 9,000 people from this target group. The project was completed in 2005.

**2004**

IOM implements a regional information campaign to explain the changed realities of immigration to the United Kingdom after Slovakia's accession to the EU including the conditions of travelling, studying, working and living in Great Britain.

**2006**

IOM Migration Information Centre is established to provide information, legal and social counselling and practical assistance to migrants in order to help them integrate in the labour market and society.

IOM launches its Programme of Assistance and Reintegration for Trafficked Persons providing comprehensive assistance in line with relevant international standards in this area. In 2008 the programme becomes a part of the National Programme of Support and Protection of Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings run by the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic.

**2008**

The Assisted Voluntary Return Programme in Slovakia is expanded to include a component of reintegration in the country of

origin. Returnees can receive reintegration allowance to obtain employment, start a business, attend a training course or cover other social and humanitarian needs after the return.

IOM takes over the function of the national co-ordinator of European Migration Network based on a Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Interior and the International Organization of Migration on the Co-ordination of the European Migration Network activities of December 2008 and the Agreement of 20 July 2009.

**2009**

IOM assists in the resettlement of Palestinian refugees to USA through a temporary refuge in Slovakia based on the agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR) and IOM. Activities in this field were resumed in 2011.

### IOM Activities in Slovakia

#### Counter trafficking

IOM's current counter trafficking activities include assistance to victims of trafficking in human beings, capacity building of relevant actors and prevention.

Assistance to human trafficking victims is part of the national Programme of Support and Protection of Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings funded by the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic. Within this programme, IOM ensures comprehensive assistance to victims of human trafficking in line with international standards in this domain. Every year IOM assists about 15 to 20 Slovak citizens trafficked for sexual exploitation or forced labour. Migrants who were trafficked to Slovakia are also eligible.

In addition, the programme includes regular educational activities aimed at capacity building of relevant organizations and institutions in order to enhance identification mechanisms and ensure wide accessibility and good quality of reintegration services to trafficked persons in Slovakia. IOM also operates the National Hotline for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings – 0800 800 818 – providing crisis intervention and prevention information.

Prevention activities are carried out according to the needs of particular target groups and the available funding and include prevention discussions (e.g. with secondary school students or young people in re-education centres), training of professionals who work with relevant target groups (social workers at re-education centres, community social workers, etc.) and publishing of information/prevention materials like posters, brochures and video films.

### Assisted Voluntary Returns (AVR)

The Assisted Voluntary Return Programme is aimed at rejected asylum seekers and irregular migrants and provides return and reintegration services to those who wish to return to their home country.

Since the launch of the programme in Slovakia in 1998, IOM has continuously been building the system of its realization and enhancing its administrative and logistic procedures in order to make the programme accessible to all interested migrants and ensure smooth and fast implementation of returns while adequately supporting beneficiaries during the return process.

At present, the project rests on three pillars:

- Provision of information and counselling regarding assisted voluntary returns and reintegration assistance;
- Practical implementation of assisted voluntary returns;
- Improving the situation of returnees in the countries of origin through reintegration assistance.

About 100 migrants benefit from the AVR services every year. Despite the decreasing numbers of asylum seekers and irregular migrants in 2010 and 2011, the interest in the AVR programme remains stable. For more information, please visit the web page of the programme at [avr.iom.sk](http://avr.iom.sk).



Recipients of reintegration support from Azerbaijan, Georgia and Kosovo. Returnees can use the reintegration allowance for various purposes, including business set-up, vocational training, accommodation etc.

### Migrant Integration

Since 2006, activities of IOM in the field of migrant integration are implemented through the IOM Migration Integration Centre (MIC). MIC offers migrants seeking to live or already living in Slovakia legal and social counselling and support towards their integration in the labour market through assistance in finding a job, allowance for a vocational or a Slovak language course.

MIC also actively supports migrant communities, mainly through its cooperation with a network of cultural mediators who organize information meetings and events aimed at presenting their culture to the public, support the social life and deliver useful information to the community.

MIC experience with counselling serves as the basis for capacity building of relevant stakeholders and professionals (courses on interculturalism) and for influencing Slovak integration policies in a positive way. For more information, please visit MIC web page [mic.iom.sk](http://mic.iom.sk).



Counselling at the MIC



Low-threshold Slovak course



Gastrofestival of migrant communities

## European Migration Network

European Migration Network (EMN) was created by the European Council Decision (2008/381/EC) with the objective to improve information exchange about migration and asylum among the EU Member States and between Member States (MS) and the European Commission. EMN activities are carried out through National Contact Points consisting of national institutions working in the field of migration.

EMN supports information exchange in various ways. For example, the National Contact Point (NCP) may send out an ad-hoc query to other NCPs through which it can obtain comparable information from other MS in a fast and easy way. Annual reports are another instrument, through which NCPs provide an overview of relevant political and legislative developments as well as statistical data with the added value of coherence and comparability among the EU MS. Furthermore, every year EMN publishes several studies focusing on various aspects of migration and asylum policies which are published as national reports and as a summary report documenting the most important findings.

Another task of each NCP is to build and maintain the national migration network of relevant policy makers and practitioners. In this context, IOM as the National Coordinator of EMN activities in Slovakia initiates various activities to enhance the dialogue about migration and asylum in Slovakia, such as lectures for university students, discussions with selected target groups like journalists or researchers or working meetings. In 2011, EMN took part in organizing the Summer School of Ethnic and Migration Studies organized by the Centre for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture (CVEK).

For the outputs of EMN in Slovakia, please consult [www.emn.sk](http://www.emn.sk). General information on EMN can be found on [www.emn.europa.eu](http://www.emn.europa.eu).

## Other Activities

### Humanitarian Transfer of Refugees and Persons of Concern Recognized by the UNHCR through the Territory of Slovakia

On the basis of trilateral treaty signed on the 22 December 2010 by the Government of the Slovak Republic, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration, the Slovak Republic gave a temporary refuge to 46 Afghan refugees – women and children from Iran. The refugees came to Slovakia on the 23 May 2011 and are accommodated at the asylum facility of the Ministry of Interior in Humenné. They will remain in the centre as long as they complete necessary medical check-ups and courses of cultural orientation. After that, they will be resettled to a third country. IOM is responsible for the transportation of refugees to the Slovak Republic and from Slovak Republic to the country of resettlement. Moreover, IOM provides medical services along with cultural training courses and/or language trainings to facilitate the resettlement.

## Acknowledgment

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[www.iom.sk](http://www.iom.sk), [www.iom.int](http://www.iom.int)