

Migrants helped to return from Greece, reintegrate, start businesses back home – UN agency

25 October 2017 – Over the past 15 months, more than 2,000 migrants who have voluntarily returned home from Greece have successfully reintegrated back into their countries of origin, according to the United Nations migration agency.

“Building on the collaboration between Greece and the countries of origin, this [reintegration support enhances opportunities](#) for social and economic sustainability, both for returnees and local communities,” said Gianluca Rocco, the International Organization for Migration ([IOM](#)) Chief of Mission in Greece, in a press statement on Thursday.

Between June 2016 and September 2017, IOM supported 2,084 returnees, assisting their reintegration through a grant of 1,500 euros in in-kind support, provided exclusively or in combination to set up small businesses or receive medical assistance, education, temporary accommodation, vocational assistance, material assistance, and job placement.

Mr. Rocco explained the importance of reintegration support as an essential component of IOM’s Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration ([AVRR projects](#)), saying that it further strengthens a cooperative, humanitarian approach for people who have decided to return home from Greece.

For migrants who need to return home but lack the means to do so, assisted voluntary return and reintegration is often the only approach to address their immediate plight. AVRR allows the migrants concerned to prepare for their return, encouraging them to identify potential opportunities for socioeconomic reinsertion into communities of origin, thereby facilitating the sustainability of their return.

The vast majority of approved personalized reintegration plans – 1,953 – were for setting up small businesses, while IOM’s social workers and psychologists worked with cultural mediators to conduct 3,671 individual counselling sessions with voluntary returnees, 2,084 of whom were eligible for reintegration assistance.

According to IOM, the main considerations for selecting candidates to be approved for reintegration support are a person’s vulnerability, work experience and skills that can guarantee the sustainability of the reintegration plan.

Breaking down the origins of voluntarily returning migrants, Pakistan had 1,184 – the most by far. Some 342 returned to Georgia and 173 to Iraq while about 1,750 beneficiaries were male and 334 female.

IOM's global presence makes reintegration assistance available worldwide, and the assistance is based on collaboration between the countries where the plans are being implemented.

The UN migration agency in Greece currently works closely with over 25 IOM offices and third countries to enhance tailored reintegration assistance, link it with the needs of the local labour market, and ensure long-term, sustainable reintegration assistance.

IOM's reintegration assistance is provided under the framework of the European Union (EU) and Greek government-supported programme, Implementation of Assisted Voluntary Returns, which includes AVRR and is funded by the EU's Asylum Migration and Integration Fund as well as the Greek Ministry of Interior.