



## CONCEPT NOTE

# Panel Meeting on Return, Readmission and Reintegration

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Yerevan, Armenia  
21-22 June 2017

The processes of return, readmission and reintegration previously came into focus of the Eastern Partnership Panel on Migration and Asylum (Panel) during the Panel meeting which took place in Tbilisi, Georgia in March 2013<sup>1</sup>.

For the past four years, significant developments in these spheres took place in both the European Union (EU) and the Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries, among them: the EU concluded four new readmission agreements including two with the EaP countries; the EU is developing a new web-based platform for integrating all the EU return activities (IRMA); the European migration crisis evolved in 2015.

These developments which have to be communicated to all the participants of the EaP and discussed at the regional level brought the issues of return, readmission and reintegration into the Panel agenda again in 2017.

The context of the current migration crisis shows that an effective and humane return policy is a necessary part of a comprehensive migration policy and does not contradict a more open migration policy. Ensuring the return of irregular migrants is in fact absolutely essential in order to enhance the credibility of policies in the field of international protection and legal migration. One of the reasons for the low rate of effective returns among migrants who have been ordered to leave the destination country is the lack of cooperation from third countries in identifying and readmitting their nationals. This is the reason why it is important to co-operate very actively with the countries of origin of irregular migrants, in particular through

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<sup>1</sup> <http://eapmigrationpanel.org/en/meetings/panel-meeting-readmission-return-and-reintegration>



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readmission agreements. Effective reintegration contributes to sustainability of returns.

Enhanced mobility of citizens with the EU remains one of the key priorities for the EaP countries. Particularly important preconditions, raised by the EU, for enhancing mobility are creation and maintenance of secure environment for travels and the stable and sound implementation of the bilateral readmission agreements.<sup>2</sup>

The EU has concluded readmission agreements with 17 countries, of those five are EaP countries. Negotiations on similar agreement with Belarus are ongoing. The EaP countries also concluded a number of readmission agreements between themselves as well as with third countries.

Return process requires strong cooperation between the sending and receiving countries at all stages – starting from identification of citizenship (nationality) and concluding with reintegration activities. Certain challenges closely linked to irregular migration such as document forgery, readmission and return of third country nationals may hinder the process. The specifics and differences in the countries' legislation and procedures in a number of areas such as asylum, data protection etc. can make the process even more complicated. For the sake of effective implementation, all the readmission agreements signed between the EU and the EaP countries contain special provisions on implementing protocols which are govern regulated, orderly readmission procedures.

The Panel meeting may examine the legal bases in the EU (EU Return Directive) and individual MS, as well as EaP countries, with the view to identify possible discrepancies between them. The cooperation between the EU agencies and national authorities of the EU MS should also be discussed. The introduction of the EURODAC system and its implications for readmission process as well as various aspects and interlinkages of voluntary and forced return can also be explored during the meeting.

Given the current unprecedented scale of migration flows and huge workload of relevant national agencies, a number of human rights issues for migrants (especially those in vulnerable situations) may also be pressing. The EU MS share their experience in identification and fight against such shortcomings and violations.

Modalities of implementation of readmission agreements in EaP countries on may vary. Some countries, such as Georgia, have, for the purpose of an effective co-operation on readmission, introduced an electronic Readmission

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<sup>2</sup> [http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/eastern/docs/riga-declaration-220515-final\\_en.pdf](http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/eastern/docs/riga-declaration-220515-final_en.pdf)

Case Management System, although not all EU MS are connected to it. Armenia at the moment is exploring the possibilities for introduction of a similar system.

Evidence shows that a number of migrants will make another attempt to enter the EU if they are not reintegrated sufficiently after returning to their countries of origin. The EU and EU MS have launched a number of initiatives dedicated to reintegration of returning migrants in their respective home countries (European Return Fund etc). In recent years the idea of systematic assistance to Governments to establish their own legal and policy framework for reintegration of their returning nationals is high on the agenda.

The Panel meeting may discuss the policies and strategies developed in close cooperation with the EU as well as the pace of implementation of reforms in these areas. Though returning migrants may and do face numerous hardships and challenges such as accommodation, insufficient or lost language skills, healthcare problems, education issues for children, lack of legal knowledge and so on, the main challenge remains sustainable economic reintegration – decent job which will make the remaining stages of social reintegration much easier. Therefore, economic reintegration of returning migrants should be linked to overall development strategy and particularities of the given country (vocational and professional education and training, maximizing the development impact of return and utilizing the skills obtained abroad). Demographic situation in most of the EaP countries demonstrates that return/readmission and effective reintegration could be beneficial and should be encouraged. The EU, its MS and certain EaP countries on their side also promote (assisted) voluntary return schemes. In many cases migrants living in EU MS have access to verified information about return possibilities, assistance programs and opportunities in their home countries. From that respect awareness campaigns with maximum involvement of the diplomatic representations, diaspora and community organizations is essential. During the Panel EU and MS reintegration assistance programs with key results and findings should also be presented.

This Panel meeting aims to provide not only an overview of the international aspects and recent trends in return, readmission and reintegration issues but also offers an opportunity to share national practices, experiences and lessons learnt by both the EU MS and the EaP countries.

The meeting will be divided into thematic sessions:

### **Current EU policy with regard to return, readmission and reintegration**

The main focus during this session will be on EU policy and implementation of different instruments, such as European Return Fund and the EU Return



Directive for promoting the harmonization of European return policies and supporting Member States to implement an 'integrated return management' and especially in light of the current migration crisis. Practical aspects related to identification of migrants, cooperation among the EU countries and with the non-EU countries – both the EaP and other countries and other relevant issues will be subject of discussion. Academic point of view as well as the EU Commission perspective will be discussed during this session.

### **Return**

During this session policies, practice, challenges and lessons learnt in the area of return will be presented by the EU MS and EaP countries.

### **Readmission**

This session will be aimed at the implementation of the readmission agreements. The main challenges and best practices of the EU MS and EaP countries will be discussed.

### **Reintegration**

This session will provide an opportunity to share experience regarding various (assisted) voluntary return (and reintegration) programs implemented in the framework of return and reintegration. Relevant governmental and non-governmental actors as well as international organizations will present their activities aimed at ensuring effective reintegration in countries of origin, challenges of the successful implementation of the assistance programs. Examples of best practices of bilateral and multilateral cooperation will be discussed.

### **Practical exercise**

A practical session based on actual interaction between the attending experts will be devoted to one or several most topical/problematic aspects of return, readmission and reintegration. The topic(s) will be identified in the process of the meeting preparation jointly with the participating countries.

This meeting will bring together experts dealing with return, readmission and reintegration issues from both EU Member States and Eastern Partnership countries, as well as representatives from European institutions, international organizations, academia and non-governmental sector.