Supporting The Development of Return Counselling Capacities in Türkiye – PHASE II (RECONNECT II)

Executive Summary

Irregular migration remains a key policy and operational area in Türkiye, with increasing numbers since Covid-19 pandemic (122.302 and 162.996 irregular migrants were apprehended in 2020 and in 2021 respectively). The number of apprehensions of irregular migrants reached 285.027 in 2022, representing the highest number of apprehensions since 2014 and a 74.9% increase in comparison to the apprehensions in 2021. As of 22 June 2023, the number of apprehensions has already exceeded 71.700 and the observations indicate that, despite all the devastating impacts of the earthquakes in February 2023 , Türkiye would remain relatively attractive for irregular migrants during the post-earthquake period as well.

Enhancing the voluntary return system is amongst the strategical priorities of Türkiye in addressing irregular migration, as identified in the second internal Strategy Document and National Action Plan for Irregular Migration (2021-2025). The Presidency of Migration Management (PMM) has made efforts to establish and further strengthen the implementation of the National Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (NAVRR) mechanism, together with the promotion of an increased number of assisted voluntary returns as it continues to be a high priority for Türkiye. Moreover, return counselling is identified as one of the alternative measures to administrative detention (ATD) as per the amended Law on Foreigners and International Protection in 2019, which was followed by entry into force of the Regulation on Alternative Measures to Detention in September 2022.

Through the establishment of the NAVRR mechanism and identification of return counselling as an ATD, the PMM facilitates the voluntary return processes and procedures through Provincial Directorates of Migration Management (PDMM) in 81 provinces and ensures that the return processes and return counselling are conducted in compliance with the national legislation and international human rights standards through provision of coordinated services, efficient case management, and targeted outreach initiatives.

Current Context

ICMPD Türkiye has been cooperating with PMM since 2016 for the establishment and strengthening of the NAVRR mechanism through operational and technical support. Since the operationalisation of the NAVRR Mechanism on 27 April 2022, the voluntary returns of 609 migrants were assisted within the NAVRR mechanism in 2022, while 259 migrants have been assisted as of July 2023. As a result of the RECONNECT Phase I, 86 provincial migration experts from 68 provinces were certified as return counsellors. The return processes of 868 migrants in total were supported by the return counsellors certified within the scope of RECONNECT Phase I Project.

PMM has already made efforts to strengthen its technical and institutional capacity in the field of voluntary return following the establishment of the NAVRR mechanism, yet there remains a need for further development and enhancement of the counselling capacity across Türkiye to ensure the growing need to address irregular migration effectively and to provide the necessary support to the migrants under consideration. Through the basic and advanced level trainings as classical training modalities and the development of e-learning modules, which will ensure integration of the trainings into PMM’s internal training mechanism and enable sustainable access to the training modules and relevant information by a wider audience, RECONNECT II Project aims to ensure that PDMM staff possess the necessary expertise to deliver high-quality and informed counselling services while complementing and supporting the objectives of the ATD Regulation, ensuring a seamless integration of the project's activities with the wider migration management initiatives in Türkiye. This synergy will serve PMM to facilitate processes and procedures foreseen in the ATD Regulation and enhance the overall effectiveness of the PMM's operations which contribute to the achievement of strategic objectives.

On another point, many migrants still may not be aware of the voluntary return procedures available to them or may have limited knowledge of the NAVRR mechanism in Türkiye. By conducting outreach and raising awareness, the project seeks to ensure that these migrants are informed about their options. To achieve this, the project will gather and develop best practices and notable return stories observed during field visits as visibility materials.

Objectives

The overall objective of the project is to strengthen the capacity of the PMM on return counselling to conduct harmonized, high quality and effective voluntary return procedures in compliance with the national legislation and international human rights standards while ensuring well-informed decisions of migrants and overall contributing to the effective and rights-based management of migration in Türkiye. This outcome will be achieved through the following outputs:

1. The technical capacity of the PMM and PDMMs for providing effective, standardized, harmonized and human rights-based return counselling services to migrants is strengthened.
2. Migrants are well aware of the voluntary return processes, their rights and obligations in this respect and post-return conditions in their countries of origin.

Beneficiaries

Republic of Türkiye, Ministry of Interior Presidency of Migration Management

Project Duration

01 September 2023 – 28 February 2025

Contact

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