

Fall Exchange 2008

September 26 - October 4, 2008

Theme "Empowerment"

Participant Data

Name(s)	Marc Berendt social worker Marc.Berendt@hero.no	
Organisation	Hero Norge AS	Løren reception center, Oslo
Country	Norway	
Host country	Czech Republic	
Contactperson Host country & e-mail	Zdenek Miklik, State Administration Officer, zmiklik@mvcz.cz Refugee Facilities Administration Lhotecká 7 143 01 Prague 4 Czech republic +420 974 827 118	

Itinerary (List of places and people visited)

Refugee Facilities Administration (RFA) (September 27.- 29. and October 2. – 4.)

State Administration Officer Zdenek Miklik
Head of Repatriation and Integration Office, social worker Radim Prah
Representative of IOM Petre Karbam
Social worker Marcela Jirobcova
Head of accountancy Hanka Gazdova

Vyšní Lhoty reception centre (September 29. – 30.)

Manager of Reception Centre Milan Pelech
social worker Gahira Mammadova

Zastávka u Brna residential and integration centre (September 30. – 1. October)

Head of Social Service, social worker Jana Capalova

Kostelec nad Orlicí residential centre (October 1. – 2.)

social worker Romana Temo

Praha-Ruzyně reception centre (October 3.)

social workers Jiri Hlavicka and Lucie Vojtkova

INTERVIEW GUIDE

on 'Empowerment'

Empower: 'to promote self-actualisation or influence'

Describe one example of 'empowerment' practice (training, methodology or strategy) of your host organisation. Before describing the practice research the following aspects and use the headings as lay-out for your report.

1. Title of the empowerment practice

Voluntary Return Programme/Voluntary Repatriation

2. Give a short description (one paragraph) of the practice you selected

Repatriation offers a dignified method of return to the country of origin or to the place of last residence. It also represents the prevention of potential problems derived from a potential illegal stay in the territory of the Czech Republic in the case of persons whose application for the International Protection grant has been denied.

When realizing repatriations, the RFA cooperates with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), which provides clients with replacement travel documents, provides an escort, or helps with reintegration in the country of origin if needed.

In 2007, 107 repatriations took place from the Czech Republic. The option of voluntary return to the country of origin was utilized mostly by citizens of Slovakia, Egypt, Turkey, and Russia. Ground transportation (59%) prevailed over air transportation (41%).

3. Policy

The practice is a formal policy as instructed by the RFA. It is common for all reception and residential centers in the Czech Republic.

4. Development

The practice was developed by the administration of the RFA together with the social workers of the RFA and the IOM. The reason for the development of this practice was to establish a orderly, humane and cost-effective return and repatriation of migrants who are unable or unwilling to remain in the Czech Republic. It avoids the situation when the migrants are getting an illegal status and will be expatriated from the Czech Republic.

5. Target group

Foreigners within the official period who has expressed their will to apply for International Protection but did not do so yet and persons who have applied for

International Protection in the Czech Republic and a) whose application has been denied or
b) who have decided to withdraw their application.
Further there are no specific target groups defined.

6. Timing

The practice is related to the reception, but mostly the residential phase of the application process. That means everybody applying for International Protection will be informed in the initial interview hold by the social workers in the reception centers about the possibility of voluntary return. Most of the people who decide to apply for the voluntary return do so in the residential phase after they have received a denial of their application for International Protection. After the application the return process is initialized.

7. Methodology

The practice is mostly an individual counselling hold by the social workers in the camp. The social workers did not use any guidelines or manuals for the counselling, but it was obligatory for every resident in the centers. The practice could also be described as a self help program, as the applicants sometimes also can get further financial help in their country of origin.

5. Implementation

In the reception and residential centers the social workers of the RFA are responsible for the implementation of the program. They inform every person applying for International Protection in the initial interview about the program. After an application the process is continued by the administration of the RFA and the IOM together with the social workers and the residents in the centers.

8. Accessibility

The initial interview hold by the social workers where the information about the return programme is given is compulsory. There where also flyer about the programme in 10 different languages (Czech, English, French, Russian, Arabic, Kurdish, Mongolian, Chinese, Turkish and Vietnamese) at the bill-boards and in the offices of the social service in every center. The people living in the center can contact the social workers every weekday during the office hours (8 a.m.-3.30 p.m.) if they want to have further information about the voluntary return program, need consultancy or if they need help with filling out the application form. In the interviews the social workers stated that they have never experienced in practice that an application for voluntary return is being denied.

The applicants are provided with:

1. free purchase of air-ticket or other ticket to the state of origin/safe third country
2. direct assistance at departures (for example check in)
3. Consultancy
4. assistance in ensuring travel documents in case of their absence to leave
5. transport to the place of departure from the Czech Republic

6. assistance at possible transit in a foreign country
7. contribution to cover transport in the target country
8. ensurance of basic equipment (this concerns specific groups of applicants with special needs, for example: pregnant woman without resources)

People who want to apply for the voluntary return programme can also go directly to the IOM-office in Praha and do so.

7. Participation

We did not hear that the participants were involved in the implementation of the voluntary return programme.

8. Holistic approach

The practice refers to the general counselling and information given to the residents by the social service in the centers.

9. Cultural sensitivity

There are cultural differences in the help with reintegration in the countries of origin of the applicants, but we did not get any further information about them or the effects.

10. Evaluation

There are evaluations of the success of the reintegration process of participants of the programme in their country of origin, but we did not get any further informations about it. The social workers stated that they sometimes find it hard to advice somebody to return voluntary to their country of origin.

Conclusion:

What do you think of the practice you described? Do you have recommendations, remarks? Would you recommend it for your own organisation. How, or why not?

It seems that the Voluntary Return Programme is a common and well implemented practice in all refugee facilities throughout the Czech Republic. It can be a humane and effective possibility to return and repatriate migrants who are unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin.

It appears to be at least a much better alternative than an expatriation which most of the participants otherwise would have to face.

As it was stated by the the Head of the Repatriation Office and the representative of the IOM it seems to be difficult to offer many participants financial ressources to help them to reintegrate in their home countries. As this might affect the success of the repatriations it could be useful to raise the budget of the programme to offer a financial starthelp to more of the participants.

Those conclusions has to be considered as suppositions as the shortness of our stay and the schedule with visits to many different facilites did not give us the opportunity to see how the programme is working in practice nor to take a closer look to the evaluation of the programme.

In my organisation we do have a practice and policy about the Voluntary Return Programme in cooperation with the IOM which is quiet similar to the one described above in the Czech Republic.

We had a very interesting and varied programme during our stay in the Czech Republic: Because we have been visiting four different reception, residential and integration centers througout the whole Czech Republic i think we did get got a broad impression about the asylum process, refugee facilities and administration and social services in the Czech Republic. Our Hosts where very hospitable and our stay was pefectly organized. The staff and administration of the visited centers where very helpful and they took themselves plenty of time to show us the facilities, answer our questions and provide us with needed information.