



Sustainable reintegration after an assisted return

Recently, Caritas Belgium has started a project on sustainable reintegration in Armenia, Bulgaria, Georgia, Serbia and Montenegro and Ukraine for people who want to return voluntarily. The Belgian Ministry of Social Integration (throughout Fedasil) supports this project. For several years, the social service of Caritas Belgium has been assisting people in their return home. With this project, Caritas Belgium aims to support migrants *after* their return, and to assist them thoroughly in their process of reintegration.

In 2004, Caritas Belgium carried out a ERF-funded pilot project, which now has been extended. During this project, Caritas Belgium carried out a survey among voluntary returnees and tried to keep contact with people after their return home. About 50 people were assisted by Caritas Bulgaria and Caritas Ukraine in 2004. One of the outcomes of this survey, was that there should be enough flexibility (budget, target group,...) in order to help people individually and to offer them 'tailor made solutions'. The experiences of other Western European organisations like Cordaid and Caritas Austria also contributed to get a better understanding of the needs of those who return.

People who decide to return from Belgium to Armenia, Georgia, Ukraine, Bulgaria and Serbia-Montenegro are offered social assistance by the local Caritasnetwork. This assistance can consist, among others (and depending on the needs of the returnees), of lodging after arrival, legal counseling, equipment, vocational training, medical assistance, assistance in small-scale businesses etc. The cooperation between Caritas Belgium and Caritas-Ukraine, Armenian Caritas, Caritas Georgia, Caritas Serbia-Montenegro, ICMC Belgrade and Caritas-Bulgaria gives a unique opportunity to improve the situation of those who return through IOM's REAB programme of voluntary return.

Furthermore, Caritas Belgium is looking forward to share its experience and to learn from the Caritasnetwork, also inside the EU. Through exchange programmes and joint initiatives which will lead to a better collaboration in the future, we hope to contribute to a more sustainable reintegration for those who return home after a difficult stay in Western Europe.

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