



As the Swiss representation of the International Organization for Migration, IOM Bern is the focal point and liaison office for national and international migration issues in Switzerland. The IOM Bern Office has been operating since 1994, based on an initial framework agreement with the Federal Department of Justice and Police (FDJP) in the field of return assistance.

The responsibility of the IOM Bern coordination office is to support the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) and the cantonal partner institutions in the planning, implementation and further development of voluntary return, reintegration and specific migration projects in individual countries of origin. IOM is also active in countries that are particularly relevant for Switzerland in terms of migration.

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## RETURN ASSISTANCE

IOM Bern has many years of global experience in the field of voluntary return and offers reliable support in counselling, transport and reintegration. This includes, in particular, special support for persons in vulnerable situations.

### RETURN COUNSELLING IN THE FEDERAL ASYLUM CENTRES (RAZ)

Since April 2007, IOM Bern has been implementing the "Return Assistance from Federal Asylum Centers" project in Switzerland. IOM return counsellors cover the Federal Asylum Centers (BAZ) with procedural function in Altstätten, Basel, Bern, Chiasso, and Perreux; as well as some centers without procedural function, such as Giffers, Glaubenberg, or Kreuzlingen; and are also present at the Zurich and Geneva airports.

IOM Bern's activities in the BAZ focus on:

- Providing information to asylum seekers about the possibility of voluntary return.
- Offering comprehensive, individual and confidential counselling to persons interested in voluntary return.
- Organizing voluntary return travel in safe, orderly and dignified conditions.
- Requesting financial assistance (in-kind medical and/or project assistance) from the SEM depending on the person's situation and needs, including the planning for reintegration.

Within the framework of RAZ, returnees may receive additional medical or reintegration assistance, on a case-by-case basis.

### PREPARATION & ORGANIZATION OF RETURN



IOM Bern supports return counsellors in preparing migrants for their return to their home country.

Through its extensive network of IOM offices around the world, IOM Bern can provide reliable pre-return information on specific reintegration issues to its partners.

In cooperation with the Swiss authorities and partners, IOM Bern organizes and books the return flights for people who need support on their return journey (medical clarifications, medical escorting, support in transit and on arrival, domestic travel arrangements etc.).



## REINTEGRATION IN THE COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

IOM Bern also offers reintegration assistance to support beneficiaries in their countries of origin and supports the implementation of individual reintegration projects, in cooperation with the IOM offices in the respective country (business start-up, housing support, vocational training, medical assistance etc.). Within this framework, courses on business development and management can also be offered in some countries to facilitate a sustainable reintegration.

If necessary, IOM Bern implements more comprehensive return assistance programmes in select countries. In addition, the return assistance programme for victims of trafficking has been managed since 2008. This combines the three components of pre-departure preparation, travel organization and post-arrival support, in order to facilitate the reintegration process.

## SUPPORT/TRAINING OF THE RKB

IOM Bern supports SEM in organizing and conducting additional training sessions for return counsellors (RKB) in the cantons as well as the reception and procedure centers.

In addition, IOM Bern organizes regular exchanges between the RKB and IOM missions in countries of origin, to facilitate open discussions on current situations, IOM's working methods and the challenges related to the reintegration of beneficiaries.

## COMMUNICATION ON RETURN ASSISTANCE (RÜKO)

In cooperation with the SEM, IOM Bern produces and coordinates communication materials relating to return assistance, such as the "Going Home" newsletter.



As part of the Swiss Return Information Fund (RIF) project, IOM Bern also produces country-specific materials with up-to-date information. These are essential to enable migrants to make a clear decision about their return to their country of origin. These include:

- The preparation of country-specific information sheets .
- The preparation of a "Business Ideas" handbook which also supports the preparation of a reintegration project.

In Addition, IOM Bern is available to answer case-related, individual questions.

Reintegration projects:

[www.youproject.ch](http://www.youproject.ch)



## OTHER MAIN AREAS OF WORK

### LIAISON

IOM Bern regularly participates in the dialogue on migration and engages in knowledge transfer on relevant migratory policy issues. This includes supporting exchanges between other IOM missions and Swiss partners, thus promoting cooperation between IOM and Switzerland.

### COMBATTING HUMAN TRAFFICKING

IOM is active worldwide in preventing and combatting human trafficking. The projects and measures to combat human trafficking in Switzerland target the following three areas:

- Prevention and awareness raising - for more information visit: [www.18oktober.ch](http://www.18oktober.ch)
- Direct assistance for victims (return assistance programme for victims of human trafficking and other victims under the "Victims according to the Victim Support Act within the prostitution sector")
- Capacity building and information exchange

### FAMILY REUNIFICATION

IOM supports migrants in Switzerland by organizing the entry of their family members: IOM coordinates the departure, supports with obtaining visas in cooperation with the Swiss embassy in the country of departure, the procurement of any necessary "exit permit" and other requirements, depending on the needs throughout the journey (accompaniment for minors, medical support etc.). IOM organizes the entry into Switzerland and coordinates the arrival with the family members in Switzerland.

### RESETTLEMENT

In September 2013, the Swiss government decided to implement a "resettlement pilot project" to take in refugees who fled the war in Syria. Since then, Switzerland has taken in a certain contingent of refugees each year who are particularly in need of protection.

IOM Bern coordinates the entry for this group of refugees on behalf of the SEM: the refugees are interviewed on site, IOM supports them in obtaining the travel documents, visa and possibly the so-called "exit permit". The refugees are also medically screened to guarantee safe entry into Switzerland. IOM Bern then books the flights to Switzerland and coordinates the arrival assistance directly with the SEM.

IOM is also mandated by the SEM to conduct a three-day integration course (so-called "Pre-departure Orientation Trainings") for all refugee groups. This allows IOM to provide them with information about Switzerland and gives the refugees time to familiarize themselves with their new host country.

