

EMN FOCUSED STUDY 2015

Dissemination of information on voluntary return: how to reach irregular migrants not in contact with the authorities

Top-line "Factsheet" (National Contribution)

National contribution (one page only)

Overview of the National Contribution – introducing the study and drawing out key facts and figures from across all sections of the Focused Study, with a particular emphasis on elements that will be of relevance to (national) policymakers.

This study of the European Migration Network pursues the aim of collecting information on the manner in which the Member States provide third-country nationals illegally staying on their territory with information on the option of (voluntary) return.

Scale of irregular migration. Lithuania does not possess reliable data on the scale of irregular (clandestine) migration. Each year, officers identify on average 1 700 persons who have violated the conditions of lawful entry or legal stay in Lithuania. However, the vast majority of these aliens (over 90%) do not pursue the aim of illegally staying in Lithuania or another EU country. They usually exceed the length of stay permitted by a visa and apply themselves to competent authorities when willing to leave. Another group of aliens are persons who attempt to unlawfully (at places other than border crossing points) enter Lithuania. Approximately 350-400 of such third-country nationals are detained per year. A trend observed in 2014 is the increased scale of organised irregular migration, when migrants (mostly Vietnamese citizens) crossed the Lithuanian border in groups with guides. The third group of aliens comprises asylum applicants who move from a body which provides accommodation and do not return. The number of such persons has decreased in recent years due to changes in law and amounted to nearly 150 persons in 2014. However, experts claim that there could be just a few illegally staying third-country nationals who are not known to authorities, because Lithuania is not their country of destination. In the context of irregular migration, Lithuania is a transit country. The aliens who nevertheless manage to gain access to irregular migration channels and enter the Lithuanian territory attempt to leave as soon as possible to other Western European or Scandinavian countries.

Voluntary return, expulsion and voluntary return assistance. Each year, on average 1 700 decisions are taken regarding aliens' return or the obligation to leave, and approximately 300 aliens are returned by force. The ratio between voluntary return and expulsion remains similar: approximately 80-90% of aliens return voluntarily, while approximately 10-20% of aliens are expelled. As little as nearly 3-4% of aliens in respect of whom a return decision has been taken take advantage of assisted voluntary return (on average approximately 60 persons per year). Only the aliens who have lawfully entered the country, but have lost the right to stay in Lithuania and have no means to return as well as the illegally staying aliens who have unlawfully entered the country, provided that they are vulnerable persons or asylum applicants, are eligible for the voluntary return programme.

Authorities. Lithuania has two main authorities responsible for the control of aliens: the State Border Guard Service (SBGS) is responsible for the entry control, whereas the Police Department (PD) together with migration services subordinate to it – for the legal stay of aliens in Lithuania. Both authorities are also authorised to take decisions regarding the obligation to leave, aliens' return and expulsion and to enforce them. A decision regarding return or expulsion may also be taken by the Migration Department, however its

enforcement is transferred to the SBGS or the PD. The assisted voluntary return programme is implemented by IOM Vilnius using funds of the European Return Fund and the Ministry of the Interior.

Provision of information to aliens. Lithuania does not conduct any information campaigns intended to disseminate information on return. However, legal acts provide that officers of the authority which has taken a decision regarding the obligation to leave, return or expulsion must familiarise an alien with the decision. The alien acknowledges by signature that he has been familiarised with the decision. In Lithuania, the officers are not under the obligation to provide aliens with information on assisted voluntary return. Nevertheless, the officers, taking account of the situation of the alien and his/her individual needs, usually inform the alien of the possibility of taking advantage of assisted voluntary return. On 29 May 2015, IOM Vilnius signed a memorandum of understanding with the SBGS on cooperation in providing voluntary return assistance. The agreement provides that the structural divisions of the Services undertake to disseminate information on the AVR programme among the third-country nationals eligible for such assistance. Information on the voluntary return programme is provided by IOM Vilnius. For this purpose, a website has been created, various visual material is made available at centres as well as consultations are provided over the phone and in person at the bodies where aliens are accommodated.

Evaluation of provision of information. In implementing voluntary return programmes in Lithuania, the most effective tools of reaching illegally staying migrants are a website and anonymous consultations over the phone, that is, the tools which provide information with no or minimum contacts with authorities. A less successful programme promotion strategy is dissemination of information via diplomatic missions. This tool is less effective, since illegally staying migrants avoid any contact with the authorities, often due to a lack of trust and due to the fact that they do not expect to receive assistance from them.

Challenges. The vast majority of aliens who move from bodies providing accommodation or unlawfully travel through the Lithuanian territory seek to leave to other EU countries within a very short period of time, hence the provision to them of information on voluntary return options is rather limited. On the other hand, although information on voluntary return assistance is provided and is available to all aliens, only a part of them are eligible for such assistance. The persons who have unlawfully entered Lithuania and are illegally staying in it are eligible for such assistance only in exceptional cases (vulnerable groups). Therefore, it is important to clearly stipulate the type of assistance available to specific migrant groups. Another major challenge is ensuring of continuity and close cooperation with authorities and organisations for those concerned to be able to receive uniform, fair and non-contradictory information.

[Executive Summary \(Synthesis Report\)](#)

Synthesis Report (up to three pages)

Executive Summary of Synthesis Report: this will form the basis of an EMN Inform, which will have EU and National policymakers as its main target audience.

[Section 1: Overview of EU legal and policy context \[Maximum 1 page\]](#)

This section of the Synthesis Report will briefly outline the EU legal framework and EU policy on voluntary return, including voluntary departure. This will involve a discussion of the main provisions within the EU's asylum acquis and the Return Directive (Directive 2008/52/EC), as well as describing the EU's perspective on the dissemination

of information on (voluntary) return, as defined in policy documents, EU communications and research commissioned by the EU institutions.

This section will be developed by the EMN Service Provider and no input from the EMN NCPs is required.

Section 2: Overview of the national situation [Maximum 2 pages, excluding Annex 1]

2.1 SCALE OF IRREGULAR MIGRATION AND OF RETURN IN THE MEMBER STATE

Q1. If available, please provide any estimates of the scale of irregular migrants in your Member State 2010 – 2014.

The purpose of providing such information is to give an idea of the scale of third-country nationals residing irregularly in the Member State, in order to provide a context to the information on national approaches to the dissemination of information on (voluntary) return.

If available, please provide the estimates for each year, as well as a brief footnote describing the population covered, the method used to reach the estimates any caveats as to their likely accuracy. It should be noted, given the differences in methods used to make the estimates, it will not be possible to synthesise this information to produce a 'total EU estimate' for the Study.

Please do not here include Eurostat information on third-country nationals found to be illegally present, as this information is available publically and can be therefore analysed centrally for the Synthesis Report.

Lithuania does not possess reliable data on the scale of irregular (clandestine) migration, however, according to authorities responsible for migration control, there could be just a few third-country nationals illegally staying in Lithuania not known to the authorities, because Lithuania is not their country of destination. In the context of irregular migration, Lithuania is most often mentioned as a transit country. The aliens who nevertheless manage to gain access to irregular migration channels and enter the territory of Lithuania attempt to leave as soon as possible to other Western European or Scandinavian countries.

Lithuania collects statistics on the following groups of irregular migrants:

- Aliens who are detained within the country on grounds of illegal stay or unlawful entry. Each year, Lithuania detains on average approximately 2 000 third-country nationals who enter Lithuania unlawfully or are illegally staying in it (in 2014 – 2 171, in 2013 – 1 639, in 2012 – 2 048, in 2011 – 1 809, in 2010 – 1 297), of whom the majority (in 2014 – 81.5%, in 2013 – 92%) are aliens who no longer are in possession of a valid visa or a residence permit or have exceeded the permitted length of stay in the country. It most often occurs for personal reasons. These aliens do not seek a long-term stay in Lithuania or another EU country. When willing to leave, migrants from this group themselves arrive at a border inspection post or search for information on voluntary return. The rest are third-country nationals illegally crossing the border. The majority of unlawfully entering third-country nationals are detained at the Belarusian-Lithuanian border. In 2014, 345 persons were detained at the border with Belarus, which accounts for 92% of all third-country nationals illegally crossing the state border. The border is most often illegally crossed by citizens of Russia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and Georgia. Over the past year, the number of citizens of Vietnam attempting to unlawfully enter the country has grown (in 2014, 112 persons were detained, in 2013 – 66 persons), however if viewed from a few years' perspective it is Georgian citizens who account for the majority of persons illegally crossing the border. Another trend observed in 2014 is the increased scale of organised irregular migration. While in previous years there were isolated cases of migrants crossing the Lithuanian border in groups with guides, in 2014 the number of such groups increased twofold. This trend is linked to the increased levels of irregular migration of Vietnamese citizens, because it is they who most often use the services of people smugglers.

- Aliens who are refused admission into the territory of the Republic of Lithuania. In 2014, 3 324 third-country nationals were refused admission, which is almost 16% more than in 2013 (in 2013 – 2 865, in 2012 – 2 215, in 2011 – 2 215, in 2010 – 1 967). Just as in previous years, the main group of aliens refused admission comprises citizens of Russia and Belarus. In 2010-2014, the most common ground for refusal according to the Schengen Borders Code was a failure to comply with the requirement for aliens to be in possession of a visa or a residence permit. Over 40% of aliens were refused admission on this ground, yet on average another 20% of aliens were refused admission as they were not in possession of relevant documents justifying the purpose of their stay in the country and the conditions of stay. It has also been observed that in 2014, nearly 19% of aliens were refused admission into the territory of the Republic of Lithuania on grounds of representing a threat to public policy, internal security, public health or international relations of one or more EU Member States, whereas in 2010-2013 the aliens refused admission on this ground accounted for as little as 5-10%.

Along with the increase of the number of entries, the number of return decisions and expulsions has grown too. Compared to the period of 2012-2013, in 2014 the number of return decisions taken and enforced expulsions increased by more than a fifth. In 2014, 1 886 return decisions were taken, mainly in respect of citizens of Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan. By comparison, in 2013 1 472 return decisions were taken, in 2012 – 1 459 return decisions. The study does not present statistics for 2010 and 2011¹. It is worth noting that in 2010-2014, the breakdown of aliens by citizenship did not change. The majority of return decisions were taken in respect of citizens of Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan.

In recent years, a tendency of increase in the number of cases of forced return (expulsion) has also been observed, though the breakdown of expelled migrants by citizenship has remained unchanged. According to the number of third-country nationals expelled in 2011-2013, the majority were citizens of Georgia, while in 2014 expulsion was mostly applied to citizens of Vietnam (185 persons), which accounted for nearly 50% of all expulsions, whereas the number of citizens of Georgia decreased as much as twofold (in 2013, 172 expulsions were enforced, in 2014 – as few as 95). Other major groups comprise citizens of Russia, Belarus and India. The total number of forced returns in 2014 was 362 (compared with 279 cases in 2013, 236 cases – in 2012, 125 cases – in 2011, and 137 cases – in 2010). The majority of expulsions were enforced by the SBGS.

Voluntary return programme

Third-country nationals subject to a return decision can benefit from an assisted voluntary return (AVR) programme, which has been implemented since 2010 by the International Organization for Migration (hereinafter: 'IOM') Vilnius Office using funds of the European Return Fund and the Ministry of the Interior. Since 2010, the popularity of the AVR programme has increased. Although information on the programme is available to all aliens, due to the legislation of the Republic of Lithuania currently in force only a small portion of these illegally staying migrants can avail themselves of the opportunity to return voluntarily. This possibility is limited to vulnerable persons or asylum-seekers, while all other migrants are usually returned by force.

Each year, IOM assisted approximately 3-4% of aliens in respect of whom return decisions had been taken (in 2014 – 66 persons, in 2013 – 43 persons, in 2012 – 65 persons, in 2011 – 47 persons, in 2010 – 55 persons). According to IOM Vilnius, assistance is provided to aliens who are clearly in need of it and who in the absence of the AVR programme would face difficulties in returning to their country of origin. The breakdown by citizenship in this category was similar to 2010-2013, assistance was most often provided to citizens of Russia, Georgia, Belarus and Kyrgyzstan, and the year of 2014 was distinguished by the fact that assistance was most often provided to citizens of Azerbaijan.

Competent authorities

The control of migration processes in Lithuania falls within the remit of institutions subordinate to the Ministry of the Interior (hereinafter: the 'Ministry of the Interior'): the State Border Guard Service (hereinafter: the 'SBGS'), the Migration Department (hereinafter: the 'MD'), and the Police Department (hereinafter: the 'PD'). According to data of the SBGS under the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania, a tendency could be observed in 2013 and 2014 that upon the introduction of a modern SBGS border surveillance and control system the number of attempts to violate the border of the Republic of Lithuania was decreasing; the number of attempts to illegally cross the Lithuanian-Russian border also significantly decreased.

¹ The study does not present the number of return decisions taken in 2010 and 2011, because during that period decisions regarding the obligation to leave the Republic of Lithuania were taken, which also covers third-country nationals obliged to leave to other European Union countries, and return decisions have been taken only since 1 February 2012.

Q2. Provide any estimates and/or actuals for the period 2010-2014 on:

- a. Number of irregularly-staying third-country nationals returning by physical transportation out of the Member State, on the basis of a return decision² (forced return);
- b. Number of irregularly-staying third-country nationals returning voluntarily within the time-limit fixed for that purpose in the return decision (voluntary departure³)
- c. Number of irregularly-staying third-country nationals returning via AVR packages (assisted voluntary return)
- d. Number of irregularly-staying third-country nationals returning via AVRR packages (assisted voluntary return and reintegration – where different from (c))

The purpose of presenting such information would be to provide a picture of the proportion of third-country nationals who return voluntarily as compared to those returned by force in each Member State, in order to provide a context to the findings on national approaches to the dissemination of information on (voluntary) return.

It is acknowledged that there may be some double-counting between (b) and (c) and (b) and (d). If such information is available, please complete table A.1.a in Annex 1.

Lithuania gives priority to return, and only a small portion of unlawfully entering or illegally staying aliens is expelled. This fact is confirmed also by statistics. Although in the past year, compared with the period of 2010-2013, the number of return and expulsion decisions increased by more than 20%, the proportion of those who return voluntarily as compared to those who are expelled remains similar, that is, approximately 80-90% of aliens are given the opportunity to return voluntarily, and 10-20% of aliens are returned by force. Another 3-4% of those in respect of whom a return decision is taken participate in the AVR programme and return home with the help of IOM Vilnius. Every fifth migrant who returns home with the help of IOM Vilnius is provided reintegration assistance in the country of origin.

Statistical data are presented in the table in the Annex.

² I.e. an administrative or judicial decision or act, stating or declaring the stay of a third-country national to be illegal and imposing or stating an obligation to return.

³ The UK definition of 'voluntary departure' is broader. See footnote n. 28 above.

2.2 SCALE AND NATURE OF IRREGULAR MIGRANTS WHO ARE NOT IN CONTACT WITH THE AUTHORITIES

Q3. As defined in section 2 of the Background section to this Common Template, this study focusses on irregular migrants whose whereabouts / place of residence are no longer or were never known to the authorities and who, therefore, are not in contact with the authorities.

Please define this group by listing in bullet points the main scenarios in which the authorities would not have contact with irregular migrants, e.g.

- ★ migrants who have given false addresses / moved from their address,
- ★ persons who have entered the Member State irregularly and who are staying there without the authorities' knowledge,
- ★ etc.

Such information is likely to be available in reports (e.g. annual reports) published by the authorities responsible for ensuring the return of irregular migrants (i.e. migration and asylum authorities) and/or may be obtained by consulting these authorities directly.

The number of illegally staying third-country nationals whose whereabouts are not known to authorities in Lithuania is thought to be very small. In the context of irregular migration, Lithuania is most often mentioned as a transit country through which entering third-country nationals attempt to reach other European Union countries. This could be the third-country nationals who:

- have been accommodated at the Foreigners' Registration Centre by a decision of the court or the Migration Department, but have moved from it (asylum applicants);
- have been provided an alternative to detention by a decision of the court, but have violated the conditions of provision of alternatives to detention and have moved from the specified place of accommodation without giving a notice to relevant authorities;
- have unlawfully entered the country and are illegally staying in it;
- are subject to a return decision, however there are no data about an alien's departure within the specified time limit.

Q4. If available, please provide any estimates of the scale of the two groups irregular migrants covered in this study for the period 2010-2014:

- a. Irregular migrants who were previously known to the authorities, but whose place of residence is no longer known to the authorities (absconding).
- b. Irregular migrants whose residence on the territory has never been known to the authorities (clandestine entry).

Estimates for (a) could be derived from administrative data and may therefore be calculated by public authorities. Estimates for (b) may have been developed as part of a study. All estimates should be accompanied by a brief footnote describing the method used to reach the estimates, as well as any caveats as to their likely accuracy.

If such information is available, please complete table A.1.b in Annex 1.

There are no reliable data on irregular (clandestine) migration, however according to authorities responsible for migration control, in Lithuania there could be just a few illegally staying third-country nationals not known to the authorities, because Lithuania is not their country of destination and they attempt to leave as quickly as possible to other EU countries.

The only accurate data on illegally staying third-country nationals who have absconded have been submitted by the Foreigners' Registration Centre, which provides accommodation to third-country nationals (asylum applicants). At the Centre, some asylum applicants are not subject to restriction of the freedom of movement, hence a large part abscond from the Centre and do not return (in 2014, 37.8% (152 persons) absconded from the Centre, in 2013 - 40.1% (110 persons), in 2012 - 74.6% (397 persons)). In response to the large number of absconding

aliens, in 2013 amendments to the Law on the Legal Status of Aliens were adopted allowing for the detention of asylum applicants if there is a suspicion that they may abuse the system and hamper the examination of an application for asylum.

Q5. Provide a short overview of the challenges faced in the Member State by actors involved in promoting voluntary return in reaching out to the two above-mentioned groups of irregular migrants (i.e. those who are not in contact with the authorities).

The purpose of this question is to investigate the rationale behind the strategies discussed in section 3.

Sources of information may include studies / research, policy documents, government communications, media, parliamentary debates and/or may be obtained by consulting relevant stakeholders.

The biggest challenge faced in disseminating information on return is the fact that migrants who are no longer known to the authorities or who have illegally crossed the Lithuanian border leave to other EU countries within a very short period of time, hence the authorities do not manage to inform them.

Moreover, the authorities responsible for voluntary return are facing a legal challenge. Under the current legislation, the third-country nationals who have lawfully entered the country, but have lost the right to stay in Lithuania may be granted a possibility/period for voluntary return and only vulnerable persons and asylum applicants who have illegally crossed the border and are illegally staying in the territory of the Republic of Lithuania are eligible for voluntary return. In providing information, it is important to reach this target group and to clearly present the possibilities available for each group so that migrants are not misled.

Q6. Are there any other specific groups of (irregular) migrant group which actors involved in promoting voluntary return find hard to reach? If so, please describe them here.

Sources of information may include studies / research, policy documents, government communications, media, parliamentary debates and/or may be obtained by consulting relevant stakeholders.

For authorities and international organisations responsible for (voluntary) return, it is difficult to reach unaccompanied minors (especially citizens of Vietnam) who are accommodated in a social institution and, in the absence of any restrictions of the freedom of movement, abscond from it **within a very short period of time**. Theoretically, there is every opportunity to inform the unaccompanied minors, however due to the specific nature of the group and their intention to leave Lithuania as soon as possible the target group itself creates obstacles to communication of information. The competent authorities have no possibility of directly informing the unaccompanied minors about return and the only means of dissemination of information is leaflets and posters at frontier stations of the SBGS or at the RRC, where they are accommodated during the first days of their stay in Lithuania. (In Lithuania, unaccompanied minors are provided an alternative to detention: accommodation at the Refugee Reception Centre (hereinafter: the 'RRC') without restricting the freedom of movement.)

Section 3: National legislation and policy on the dissemination of information on (voluntary) return [Maximum 2 pages]

Q7. Has your Member State set out provisions or rules regarding the dissemination / provision of information on (voluntary) return in legislation or in soft law (e.g. guidelines, policy papers, etc.)? E.g. it may have outlined obligations for certain state authorities to provide such information in asylum interviews, on issuing a return decision, or may have introduced obligations to make information available online or in public places, etc.) (Yes / No)

If so, please state the name(s) of the legislation / policy(s) and describe what it says about:

- a. The actors involved / responsible,

- b. The content of the information (i.e. whether it covers AVR(R), other voluntary return options, legal obligations including information about return decisions, etc.)
- c. The timing of the information provision (e.g. on applying for international protection / for a visa) or only on becoming irregular,
- d. Any particular provisions for vulnerable groups (e.g. victims of trafficking, unaccompanied minors, elderly people) and other specific groups (e.g. specific nationalities),
- e. The tools of dissemination (in person (written), in person (oral), via post, via email, in a telephone call, in public spaces, etc.),
- f. The language(s) in which the information must be given and any accessibility / quality criteria (visual presentation, style of language to be used, etc.),
- g. Confidentiality considerations (i.e. whether the anonymity of the irregular migrant is maintained if they consult an information service).

The purpose of this question is to set out the legal / policy framework on which the national practices to be described in section 4, are based.

The provision of aliens with information on entry and departure options is certainly an issue of importance and should be given adequate attention and resources. Point 22.3.6 of the Lithuanian strategic document (the Lithuanian Migration Policy Guidelines) indicates that with a view to ensuring an effective mechanism of implementation of irregular migration prevention and control measures it is necessary *to disseminate, as widely as possible, the information on aliens' regular migration opportunities and the procedure for entering Lithuania, staying in it, passing it in transit and leaving it.* In Lithuania, the underlying legal act containing the provisions governing the legal status of aliens and the rights and duties of the authorities examining applications of aliens and taking decisions on the applications is the *Law on the Legal Status of Aliens* (hereinafter: the 'Law'). However, the mentioned Law does not provide for a separate definition of the provision to aliens of information on return.

Minister of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania *Order on the Approval of the Rules for Taking and Enforcing Decisions Regarding an Alien's Obligation to Leave, Expulsion, Return and Passing in Transit through the Territory of the Republic of Lithuania* (hereinafter: the 'Order'). Point 27.3 of Part II of the Order "Taking and enforcement of a decision regarding an alien's obligation to leave", point 45.1 of Part III "Taking and enforcement of a decision regarding an alien's expulsion" and point 68.1 of Part IV "Taking and enforcement of a decision regarding an alien's return" stipulate who and in what manner informs an alien about a decision taken. The Order establishes that officers of the authority enforcing the decision (an officer of the police or the SBGS or a civil servant of a migration service) must immediately familiarise the alien in a language which s/he understands with the decision taken in his/her respect regarding the obligation to leave, expulsion or return (respectively). The decision must be signed in two copies by the alien, a civil servant who familiarises the alien with the decision and an interpreter, if such is involved. One copy of the decision is served on the alien. The Order also provides that when informing an unaccompanied minor alien about a return decision, the temporary guardian of the minor alien must participate and also sign the decision. The Order does not distinguish other vulnerable groups of aliens.

In Lithuania, public authorities are not under the obligation to provide information on the AVR programme, however on 29 May 2015 IOM Vilnius signed a memorandum of understanding with the State Border Guard Service under the Ministry of the Interior on cooperation in providing voluntary return assistance to third-country nationals, under which the SBGS and structural divisions of the Service undertake to provide the third-country nationals eligible for voluntary return assistance provided by IOM with information on the AVR programme and the possibility of returning voluntarily.

It is also worth noting that the Foreigners' Registration Centre (FRC), which provides accommodation to illegally staying third-country nationals and asylum applicants, has its own internal regulations (*Head of the Foreigners' Registration Centre Order No 3K-241 of 27-11-2011 on the Management of Aliens' Personal Files and Carrying out of Investigation Actions*) stipulating a procedure for informing aliens about (voluntary or forced) return actions

initiated in their respect. On arrival at the FRC, an alien is familiarised with the internal regulations of the FRC in a language which he understands (the internal regulations have been drawn up in 13 languages, such as Lithuanian, English, Russian, French, Georgian, Arabic, Dari, Farsi, Urdu, Hindi, Pashtun, Spanish, Chechen). The internal regulations provide that on the arrival at the FRC, an alien is informed of progress of his/her case and the actions to be taken in his/her respect (the actions planned in his/her respect, whether the return procedure has already been commenced, etc.) as well as about any changes, if such occur. The entire information is given before taking a decision. Upon becoming familiar with the internal regulations, an alien must sign.

Q8. Specifically, what information does the national authority provide to the migrant when it issues a return decision, and how does it provide this information? Please specify:

- a. The content of the information (e.g. AVR,, obligations),
- b. The different language(s) in which the information is made available and whether it is available in the applicant's stated mother tongue,
- c. How the information is presented visually, style of language used, etc.,
- d. The tools of dissemination used (in person (written), in person (oral), via post, via email, in a telephone call, etc.).

If information on the above is already included in the response to Q7, please just cross-refer here.

An officer directly familiarises an alien, in accordance with the procedure laid down by the Law, with the decision taken (regarding return, the obligation to leave or expulsion) in a language which s/he understands (in person or through an interpreter). The decision is drawn up in the format specified by the Order, and the language used is formal and legal. The decision sets out the grounds for taking the decision in respect of the person, the legal acts in compliance with which the decision has been taken, also specifies the time limit within which the person must comply with the return decision, the length of the entry ban, if any has been imposed, and warns that the alien will be expelled if s/he fails to leave within the specified period. Moreover, the decision indicates that the alien may appeal against the decision within 14 days. Upon becoming familiar with the decision, the alien must sign. If he refuses to sign, this fact must be acknowledged against signature by at least two civil servants participating in the familiarisation procedure. In this case, the decision will also indicate reasons for the refusal to sign.

Q9. Did the above-described legislation and policy change at all as a result of the adoption and transposition of the Return Directive⁴?

Yes, the transposition of the Return Directive into national law has resulted in changes to provisions of the Law on the Legal Status of Aliens regarding return and expulsion. The transposition of the Directive into national law has been accomplished in several stages and is continuously improved in compliance with observations made by the European Commission. The main changes to the Law are related to the prioritisation, by law, of return over expulsion, introduction of a period for voluntary departure and replacement of decisions regarding the obligation to leave with return decisions.

Q10. Are any changes to legislation / policy having an impact on the dissemination of information on (voluntary) return planned for the future? If yes, please describe here.

No, amendments to legislation do not affect the dissemination of information on return.

⁴ Ireland and the United Kingdom do not participate in the Return Directive and are therefore not bound by its provisions. Norway implements the Directive as it is bound by the provisions of the Schengen *acquis*.

Section 4: Overall national approach to disseminating information on (voluntary) return [Max. 12 pages]

4.1 ACTORS INVOLVED IN DISSEMINATING INFORMATION ON (VOLUNTARY) RETURN

Q11. Which **national authorities** responsible for the return of irregular migrants⁵ play a role in disseminating information on (voluntary) return, either as part of the processes outlined in section 3 or otherwise?

Please complete the text box below this question.

Please consider the role that migration and asylum authorities, law enforcement authorities, local / municipal authorities play in disseminating information on return.

For each authority playing a role in disseminating information in your Member State, please briefly describe the role and the circumstances under which they provide the information.

Please cover the period in the last five years (from 2010 – 2014), as well as future/planned activities in this area if relevant/available.

The **State Border Guard Service (SBGS)** under the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania is the main institution that is responsible for the control of migration processes. Officers of the SBGS are authorised to take decisions regarding the obligation to leave and aliens' return to their country of origin, are respectively responsible for informing the aliens of these decisions, are also responsible for informing aliens of an expulsion decision and its enforcement. The Law regulates only the officers' duty to familiarise aliens with decisions, but does not place them under the obligation to provide information on the possibility of participating in the voluntary return (hereinafter: 'AVR') programme when enforcing a return decision. In practice, if needed, the officers of the SBGS provide information on AVR. Officers of the SBGS assess the individual situation of each alien (by filling out a questionnaire during an interview) and, if needed and after taking a return decision in respect of the person, refer the alien for assistance to IOM Vilnius, which is responsible for the implementation of AVR. In 'Dublin cases', Vilnius Airport frontier station (a structural division of the SBGS) cooperates closely with IOM Vilnius and, in the cases when an alien does not lodge an application for asylum in Lithuania, officers inform of the possibility of availing of assistance provided by IOM. Officers of the Foreigners' Registration Centre (a structural division of the SBGS which provides accommodation to asylum applicants and irregular migrants) provide information on voluntary return assistance provided by IOM in the cases when an alien himself expresses a wish to return home. The SBGS provides aliens with a possibility to consult IOM representatives on voluntary return assistance directly on arrival of IOM representatives to a division of the SBGS and over the phone. At the premises of structural divisions of the SBGS (the Foreigners' Registration Centre, frontier stations), migrants can access visual information communication tools (posters, leaflets, video clips can be broadcast) about the AVR programme. A link to the programme's website with a logo is also available on the website of the SBGS.

The **Migration Department (MD)** is responsible for taking return and expulsion decisions, but is not itself responsible for aliens' familiarisation with decisions. This function has been transferred to the SBGS and the PD. The staff of the MD do not provide information on voluntary return. However, at the premises of the MD migrants can access visual information tools on the AVR programme implemented by IOM Vilnius (a video clip about the programme can be broadcast). The website of the MD hosts an information panel/banner of the website of the programme.

The **Police Department (PD)** (territorial migration services and police units) is responsible for the taking of return decisions and decisions regarding the obligation to leave, familiarisation of aliens with the decisions, also for the enforcement of expulsion decisions. By filling out an alien's interview form, the bodies subsidiary to the

⁵ See Section 2.1 of the Background to this Common Template for a definition of these authorities.

PD evaluate the person's individual needs and provide information about the possibilities of return and, if necessary, after the taking of a return decision refer the alien for consultation to IOM. At migration units, migrants can access visual information on voluntary return assistance (video clips about assistance are broadcast (at Vilnius Migration Board), posters and leaflets are available).

The **Refugee Reception Centre** is responsible for the accommodation and integration of aliens who have been granted international protection and unaccompanied minors and provides information on return only in the cases when an alien is interested in availing of the possibility of returning to his country of origin. If the alien expresses the wish to obtain additional information on return, the staff of the RRC inform the relevant authorities and arrange for consultations in person or over the phone. At the premises of the Centre, migrants can also access visual information tools (posters and leaflets) about the AVR programme implemented by IOM. In implementing cooperation with non-governmental and international organisations and whenever necessary, the Centre organises meetings with aliens during which the AVR programme is presented.

Public authorities do not plan in the future to carry out any information campaigns intended for disseminating information on and promoting voluntary return.

Q12. Which **other actors** disseminate information on (voluntary) return; what roles do these actors have and what is the rationale for their involvement in disseminating information on (voluntary) return?

Please complete Table 1 below.

In column 3, describe the role briefly using bullet points making sure to only include information on their role in disseminating information – i.e. "publishing information on a dedicated website, making leaflets available, hosting drop-in information clinics, acting as a community contact point for information on (voluntary) return, etc." rather than "implements AVR programmes", or "holds meetings with community members".

Under 'nature of / rationale for involvement', please describe any contracts that the actor has with the national authorities – e.g. if they have been subcontracted to provide information and advice services to irregular migrants - and any partnerships between national authorities and (e.g.) specific community, diaspora or faith-based groups to promote voluntary return. You may be able to find information on the rationale for involvement on the websites of the national authorities, on the websites of the actors (where these exist), in annual reports of the organisations (again, where these exist), or by consulting the actors directly.

Please cover the period in the last five years (from 2010 – 2014), as well as future/planned activities in this area if relevant/available

Table 1. Other actors disseminating information on (voluntary) return, their role and the rationale for their involvement

Actor	Y/N	Role that the actor plays in disseminating information voluntary return	Nature of / rationale for involvement
NGOs / IOs dealing with return counselling and/or implementing AVR schemes	Y	<p>IOM Vilnius:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prints and distributes information about the AVR programme (posters, leaflets); • Creates and distributes information video clips about the AVR programme; • Administers and updates information on the website of the AVR programme, develops and promotes banners of the website; • Provides consultations to aliens about the AVR programme in person, over the phone and by e-mail; • Holds meetings with representatives of the MD, migration services, the SBGS and the RRC on AVR counselling, regularly provides them with updated information on the programme, with the help of authorities organises meetings for aliens during which the aliens are informed about return; • Organises meetings with diplomatic missions, ethnic/religious communities, NGOs and disseminates among them information on the AVR programme; • Prepares articles about the AVR programme and publishes them. <p>NGOs working with third-country nationals (the Lithuanian Red Cross Society, Caritas, Centre PLUS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host the information panel of the AVR programme on their websites; • Disseminate information on the AVR programme among the aliens willing to return home and refer them to IOM; • Distribute leaflets about the AVR programme among aliens at day centres for migrants. 	<p>IOM Vilnius implements the AVR programme and disseminates information on the programme using funds of the European Return Fund and the Ministry of the Interior. In the event of winning a tender, the organisation concludes a project financing agreement.</p> <p>Other NGOs have no agreements concluded with public authorities on dissemination of information on return among third-country nationals. NGOs implement various projects financed by the European Refugee Fund or the European Fund for the integration of third-country nationals and intended for the provision of social, psychological and legal services to third-country nationals. Whenever necessary, in providing these services IOM Vilnius provides to aliens information on the return procedure and refers the aliens interested in it to IOM Vilnius for additional information, provided that its customers wish to receive such information.</p>
Other NGOs / civil society organisations (e.g. migrant	N	N/A	

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rights groups, migrant-led organisations and other advocacy groups)			
Diaspora groups		Provide information on the AVR programme to compatriots willing to return home and refer them to IOM	
Faith-based groups	N	N/A	N/A
Migrant-led groups	N	N/A	N/A
Other community groups	N	N/A	N/A
Libraries	N	N/A	N/A
Social / health / education services	N	N/A	N/A
Case workers	N	N/A	N/A
Legal advisors	N	N/A	N/A
Ombudsman / citizens advice bureaus	N	N/A	N/A
(Advisory services of) trade unions / employer associations	N	N/A	N/A
Embassies (third-country and EU)	Y	Diplomatic missions of third countries inform their citizens about the AVR programme and refer them to IOM only if a person finds himself in a complicated situation and is interested in return.	N/A
Shopkeepers / Internet café workers / etc.	N	N/A	N/A
Other actors (specify)	N	N/A	N/A

4.2 TOOLS USED TO DISSEMINATE INFORMATION ON (VOLUNTARY) RETURN TO IRREGULAR MIGRANTS NOT IN CONTACT WITH THE AUTHORITIES

Q13. Provide information on the tools through which information on (voluntary) return is made available in your Member State.

Please complete Table 2 below.

Please cover the period in the last five years (from 2010 – 2014), as well as future/planned activities in this area if relevant/available.

For each tool listed, please state Yes / No, then – if the tool is used in your Member State – briefly describe what the information source is (e.g. website on AVR(R), leaflet on voluntary return, Facebook page on AVR(R) programmes, discussion forum for members of the Nigerian diaspora to discuss return, etc.) then list the actor(s) responsible for (a) funding / developing the tool (e.g. this may be the national migration authority, NGOs, etc.), (b) managing / delivering the information and a link to further information.

Table 2. Tools used in the Member State for disseminating information on (voluntary) return

	Y/N	Description (please be brief, using bullet points) including whether this is a current, past or future tool	Actor(s) designing / funding	Actor(s) managing / delivering	Link to further information
Leaflets / brochures	Y	Leaflets on the programme implemented by IOM are available at migration units, information and accommodation centres for migrants and at the premises of border authorities.	European Return Fund and Ministry of the Interior	IOM Vilnius	
Poster campaigns	Y	Posters on the programme implemented by IOM are displayed at migration units, information and accommodation centres for migrants and at the premises of border authorities.	European Return Fund and Ministry of the Interior	IOM Vilnius	
Media campaigns	N				
Websites	Y	IOM has developed a website for the AVR programme, which in 3 languages (English, Lithuanian, Russian) provides information on the programme and gives access to the IOM staff. Links to the website are available on websites of NGOs and public authorities (the Lithuanian Red Cross Society, Caritas, the MD and the SBGS). Information on return is also available on the website of IOM Vilnius.	European Return Fund and Ministry of the Interior	IOM Vilnius	Website of the AVR programme: http://www.returnhome.lt/en www.iom.lt Information panels of the programme on websites of non-governmental organisations: http://www.vilnius.caritas.lt/caritas-padaliniai/uzsienieciu-integracijos-programa/projektai.html http://redcross.lt/en/ and on websites of public authorities: http://www.migracija.lt/ http://www.pasienis.lt/
Dedicated social media pages (e.g. Facebook page for returnees or for diaspora groups)	N				

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Online discussion forums	N				
Helplines / info lines	Y	During working hours, IOM operates a toll-free counselling line 8 800 12342 for more information on return options. Consultations may be provided anonymously.	European Return Fund and Ministry of the Interior	IOM Vilnius	
Drop-in clinic (face-to-face)	Y	During working hours, the IOM staff provide direct consultations to aliens wishing to return home if they arrive at the IOM office or agree in advance with the IOM staff on a visit elsewhere. If necessary, a consultation may take place through an interpreter.	European Return Fund and Ministry of the Interior	IOM Vilnius	
Community visits and	N				
Other tools	N				

4.3 SPECIFIC CAMPAIGNS AND STRATEGIES

Q14. Did any of the tools listed in Q13 above form part of a specific strategy or campaign implemented in your Member State to better disseminate information on (voluntary) return? If yes, please state:

- a. The actor(s) behind the campaign – specifically whether it was led by a state authority or a non-state authority,
- b. The name of the strategy / campaign,
- c. The date it was launched and its duration,
- d. The rationale for its launch,
- e. The specific objectives / aims,
- f. Any target groups,
- g. Its components (e.g. website, poster campaign and hotline),
- h. The actors involved,
- i. Any specific results (e.g. in terms of users accessing the information, number of irregular migrants returned, etc.)

Please note that further evaluative information on campaigns and strategies can be included in section 5 and 6.

No, no other information campaigns intended for the dissemination of information on return have been organised, however the information on return opportunities is regularly provided in the course of the implementation of voluntary return and reintegration projects (as an additional component of a project).

4.4 ACCESSIBILITY OF THE INFORMATION

Q15. Please consider the accessibility of all information on (voluntary) return disseminated to irregular migrants in the Member State. Please provide information on:

- a. The language(s) in which the information is provided,
- b. Visual presentation of the information
- c. For posters / leaflets, the location of the information: where were these placed – in transport hubs, in libraries, in health centres, in areas known to be frequented by irregular migrants – e.g. malls, supermarkets, etc.
- d. For websites / helplines: extent to which the URL is easy to find through online search engines⁶ and whether there is signposting to the website through other tools.
- e. For helplines and drop-in clinics:
 - i. The location of the services (if a drop-in clinic),
 - ii. The opening hours / hours of access,
 - iii. Awareness about the service, including where the telephone number / address is advertised,
 - iv. Cost of the service / calling the hotline (or whether free)
- f. Confidentiality considerations, i.e. whether the anonymity of the irregular migrant is maintained if they consult an information service (please also specify whether target recipients of the information are made aware of the confidentiality considerations or whether this is simply the internal policy).
- g. Other factors that might enhance / reduce accessibility.

⁶ Member States may wish to draw conclusions about this third bullet point by using a 'mystery shopper' method and searching for the information using different search terms.

Information on the AVR program may be divided into several categories: first, this is visual information (such as posters, leaflets, information video clips); secondly, this is direct information provided during a consultation (in person, in writing or over the phone).

First category – visual information tools:

Posters and leaflets which aliens can find in the premises of migration services, migrant information and counselling centres, border services, the Refugee Reception Centre, the Foreigners' Registration Centre, some diplomatic missions. Information is available in several languages: posters – in 5 languages (Russian, Lithuanian, English, Chinese, Georgian), leaflets – in 12 different languages (Russian, Lithuanian, English, Chinese, Georgian, Arabic, French, Spanish, Dari, Pashto, Urdu, Vietnamese). A video clip of the AVR programme can be broadcast at the Foreigners' Registration Centre, the Migration Department and Vilnius Migration Board using screens specially installed for this purpose and is available in 12 languages.

The information presented in posters and leaflets is limited to a brief description of the services provided and clearly indicated contacts for help. The leaflets and posters do not list specific criteria which an alien must meet in order to be eligible for AVR, hence in order to obtain more information the alien must contact directly.

This visual information is available only in the cases when third-country nationals are in these specific areas. The areas where the visual information is disseminated are selected very carefully, because these are gathering places of third-country nationals, though this information is not available for illegally staying migrants who avoid contact with the authorities. Nevertheless, this tool is effective, as it reaches a wider range of people, not only directly illegally staying third-country nationals, but also people from their environment.

The only visual information tool that is available to all aliens without any exception is the programme's website www.returnhome.lt, which is easily found on the search engine when searching with the help of the keywords related to migration. The websites of the Migration Department, the SBGS and NGOs working with third-country nationals contain links to the site (banners). The programme's website presents very detailed information about the programme in three languages: English, Russian, Lithuanian, clearly indicates contacts, the website provides for a possibility of filling in a help form directly (online). The site is visually appealing and informative; migrants are able to form their own opinion on the programme, as the website presents the stories of returnees and interviews with them. This information tool is available to a wide range of people and is also easily found on the search engine and through the key institutions at which migrants are likely to look for information. The website is visually appealing and user friendly. Taking into account the fact that in Lithuania internet connection is widely available, and the main target group is made up by migrants from the CIS countries of a relatively young age (up to 45 years), the website is a highly effective means of dissemination of the information.

Second category – the information is provided directly to third-country nationals (individually tailored consultations).

According to the established practice, only the IOM Vilnius staff may provide AVR counselling, and other institutions and organisations refer aliens to IOM. Consultations can be provided in 3 languages: English, Russian and Lithuanian, and if necessary an interpreter may be invited, however the participation of an interpreter should be arranged in advance, which slightly reduces the availability of the tool. Consultations are provided directly to aliens on working days and during working hours in person (on arrival to the premises of IOM Vilnius or upon agreeing in advance on another place of provision of consultations), over the phone and e-mail. Initial consultation may be anonymous in order to find out more about the criteria of the AVR programme. Consultations over the phone take place by calling a toll-free information line. The number of the counselling line is announced on the website of the programme, in leaflets, posters, video clips, has been widely publicised since the commencement of the implementation of the programme (2010) and is very easy to memorise. In evaluating the availability of individually tailored consultations, it should be noted that the most frequently used tool is free consultations over the phone, as it can be anonymous, almost all information is made available during the conversation, and this tool helps to establish contact with migrants and enhance their trust in authorities.

4.5 CONTENT OF THE INFORMATION

Q16. What is the content of the information made available in Member States. Specifically, where can irregular migrants go to find information on different aspects of voluntary return?

Please complete Table 3 below.

Mark whether the actors listed horizontally provide the information listed vertically. Where they do, please specify through which of the tools listed in Q13 this information is made available – i.e. state "website of the migration authority", "leaflet on AVR(R) published by IOM", etc.

Where this information is not disseminated through any national sources, please state N/A.

Table 3. Content of the information disseminated to irregular migrants by Member States

	National authorities responsible for return	Organisations with an official role in implementing and/or promoting AVR(R) programmes	Diaspora groups, faith-based groups, migrant-led groups, other community groups	Case workers	Legal advisors	Other (please specify)
The legal obligations of the returnee (i.e. their status, their obligation to return and how they can ensure compliance with return decisions)	Officers of the SBGS/migration services/PD familiarise migrants with a decision taken (regarding return or expulsion) in person, orally.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Information on AVR(R) programmes available in the Member State	At divisions of the SBGS/migration services, posters of IOM Vilnius are displayed and leaflets about the AVR programme are distributed. The premises of the Foreigners' Registration Centre and migration services/Migration Department (reception) are equipped with wall-mounted TV sets, which can broadcast video clips about the programme.	IOM Vilnius prints posters and leaflets about the AVR programme and distributes them at divisions of the SBGS/migration services. IOM Vilnius has created video clips about the AVR programme, which can be broadcast using special wall-mounted TV sets in the premises of the Foreigners' Registration Centre and the Migration Department and on the website of the programme.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Information on eligibility conditions for AVR(R) programmes	N/A	IOM Vilnius provides counselling on eligibility the AVR programme during an individually	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

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		tailored consultation (in the office or over the phone), also in writing (by e-mail). More information on eligibility conditions for the programme is also available on the website of the programme (created by IOM Vilnius).				
Where the irregular migrant should go for more information (signposting)	Websites of the SBGS and the Migration Department provide links to the programme's website (in the form of banners).	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Other voluntary return options (i.e. options for voluntary return without assistance)	When familiarising migrants with a decision taken (in person, orally), officers of the SBGS/migration services/PD inform of the procedure for enforcing the decision.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
What the irregular migrant can expect at the airport on returning	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
What the irregular migrant can expect in the country of return (e.g. registration with third-country authorities labour market access, housing, etc.)	N/A	IOM Vilnius provides individually tailored consultations on the availability of reintegration assistance upon return to the country of origin, while concurrently providing information on the situation in the country of origin and economic opportunities and social services, if such are	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

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		available, also indicates contacts of IOM offices in the country of origin.				
Individually tailored information ⁷	N/A	While providing individually tailored consultations to returnees as regards return and reintegration assistance, IOM Vilnius discusses the needs of the migrants and offers assistance best meeting their needs. If there are additional individual-related questions, information is collected via IOM offices in the country of origin and presented during the next consultation.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Other information (specify)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

⁷ Note that tailored is most likely to be available through helplines and drop-in clinics, although it may be possible to tailor information to some extent through online services.

4.6 TARGETING OF THE INFORMATION

Q17. Please specify which (if any) of the approaches described in Q13 – Q16 above have been used specifically to target irregular migrants not in contact with the authorities. What was the rationale for using this approach to target this particular group?

No, no approaches have been used specifically to target illegally staying third-country nationals not known to authorities, though some of the approaches (the website of the programme, toll-free counselling line) are accessible to them.

Q18. Do any of the approaches described in Q13 - Q16 above target any other groups (e.g. specific types of irregular migrant, e.g. vulnerable groups, failed asylum applicants, particular nationalities, etc.?) If so, please describe below through what methods / approaches they target these groups, and also discuss the rationale for targeting these particular groups.

All listed approaches target all third-country nationals who wish to return to their country of origin and fulfil criteria of the AVR programme. In disseminating information, no specific migrant groups are targeted.

Section 5 – Case studies on information provision to irregular migrants with whom the authorities do not have contact [Max. 4 pages]

The purpose of this section is to look at TWO or more selected practices, projects or approaches employed in the Member State to disseminate information on (voluntary) return in order to identify promising practices in dissemination of information to irregular migrants not in contact with the authorities and to learn lessons about what has and has not worked. Member States are requested to identify at least one "successful" approach and one "less successful" approach, stating the criteria they apply to define "successful".

Q19. Cross-referring to the approaches outlined in section 4, please describe in further detail at least TWO practices, projects or approaches employed in your Member State since 2010 to disseminate information on (voluntary) return:

- ★ one practice / project / approach that has proven particularly effective in reaching out to irregular migrants not in contact with the authorities; and
- ★ one practice / project / approach that has not been (very) effective in reaching out to irregular migrants not in contact with the authorities.

Please provide your rationale for describing these as successful / less successful. In doing so, please provide any indications / evidence– or counter-evidence - of:

- a. The effectiveness of the practice / approach at increasing awareness amongst irregular migrants who are not in contact with the authorities about their options regarding voluntary return and/or at providing such migrants with a comprehensive understanding of their options so as to be able to make a balanced, well-informed decision about voluntary return.
- b. Specific challenges associated with the approach to disseminating information implemented by the national authorities directly in raising awareness of irregular migrants not in contact with the authorities?
- c. Factors that made the approach a successful / not-so-successful tool for disseminating information on (voluntary) return to irregular migrants not in contact with the authorities.

Please consider the following possible factors that may contribute to the success / challenges of the approach: the actors providing the information (and the level of trust that the actor engenders in the applicant / migrant), the 'tone' of the information being provided (i.e. whether it is threatening / supportive / factual / etc.), the extent to

which the approach allows the recipient to remain anonymous, accessibility to the information, location of the information, the timing, etc.)

Possible sources of evidence for questions 19a – 19c include:

- i. Statistics on use of the information tools (e.g. users of hotline number, webpage visits, Facebook page hits / 'likes', leaflets distributed, number of leaflets downloaded / requested, etc.),*
- ii. Evaluations / research,*
- iii. Personal testimonies from returnees / irregular migrants who made use of the services (where identified in secondary sources e.g. studies, social media sites, on websites, etc.),*
- iv. Opinions / perspectives of stakeholders on the effectiveness of their resources - you may gather this information through primary research (i.e. interviews with the authorities, with NGOs supporting irregular migrants accessing the services, etc.).*

Please also describe any evidence of particular groups (e.g. diaspora, NGOs, individuals) accessing the information.

At the governmental level, there has not been carried out any information campaign designed to disseminate information on return. At the non-governmental level, IOM Vilnius, in implementing the projects financed by the European Return Fund, is responsible for disseminating information on assisted voluntary return (AVR). IOM Vilnius does not organise information campaigns intended to disseminate information on AVR among illegally staying third-country nationals not known to authorities, because they are not the main target group of the programme. However, some of the tools used by IOM Vilnius to disseminate information about AVR are available also to those migrants who are not known to the authorities, so that these migrants could find out whether they fall within the target group. It is believed that the most effective way to reach irregular migrants is to provide more information with no or minimum contacts with the authorities, i.e. on the website of the programme. The website www.returnhome.lt provides clearly and in detail complete information in the English, Russian and Lithuanian languages on the AVR programme, the return procedure, contacts, stories of returnees and video clips with interviews of the returnees. It is likely that true stories of the returnees ("Stories of Return") ensure greater confidence and interest among migrants and encourage them to refer for more information to IOM, because they see that other migrants finding themselves in a similar situation have received assistance. The website also offers a possibility to fill out the programme's form online, to learn more about the conditions of the programme and to evaluate whether a person falls into a target group. The information website allows to find out more about the programme without contacting the competent authorities. In order to further increase the visibility of the website, the staff of IOM Vilnius has posted a link to the websites of the SBGS and the MD and websites of NGOs and has requested Google Ads, thus the website of the programme is shown among top searches on the search engine when looking for the information related to migration. The website is not applied any geographical restrictions, so the information can be accessed also by the migrants who are abroad. Statistics show that dissemination of information on the website has led to more visits to the website.

The introduction of a toll-free counselling line, with its number announced on the website and in posters and leaflets, can be considered as an equally successful information dissemination strategy. The information line has long been the only source of information (the website was created as late as in 2014) for learning more about the programme. The toll-free counselling line has been in use since the beginning of the implementation of the programme (2010). Since then, the visibility of the number and the number of calls has significantly increased. It is highly important that the line is toll-free and can be used to provide anonymous consultations. The line is most often used to establish initial contact and to find out the conditions of the programme, and individually tailored consultations are provided only at a later stage. Phone consultations are provided only during working hours, and only persons staying in the territory of Lithuania can call the toll-free line.

Both websites and a toll-free counselling line are an effective means of dissemination of information, because they are accessible to a wider audience, thus in some cases information directly reaches first people from migrants'

environment, who disseminate the information further. Via both of these tools, the information is made available to all individuals concerned, hence persons may contact anonymously, without the fear of being identified. Both information dissemination tools are co-ordinated by the same organisation from the very beginning, therefore the information provided is consistent, up-to-date and non-contradictory.

It could be argued that a less successful information promotion strategy is dissemination of information on the programme via diplomatic missions. This tool is less effective, since illegally staying third-country nationals avoid any contact with authorities, often due to a lack of trust and due to the fact that the third-country nationals do not expect to receive assistance from them. Nevertheless, in its practice IOM Vilnius has come across several cases of illegally staying third-country nationals applying to missions of their countries to obtain a travel document and being referred from there to IOM. Dissemination of information via diplomatic missions is not always justified, as the third-country nationals who do not trust their diplomatic missions might distrust and view IOM Vilnius as a biased organisation.

Section 6 – Effectiveness of different approaches to disseminating information on (voluntary) return [Max. 4 pages]

6.1 INDICATIONS / EVIDENCE FROM THE TESTIMONIES OF IRREGULAR MIGRANTS AND RETURNEES

Q20. Does your Member State collect any (monitoring and/or evaluation) information from those returning voluntarily (e.g. at airports, when participating in AVR programmes, after they have returned) about the information they received prior to return and/or how useful they found this information (yes / no)? If yes, please describe:

- a. Who collects/ed this data,
- b. Who the data is/was collected from (e.g. those participating in AVR, those returning to specific countries),
- c. The situation in which the data is/was collected (e.g. on return, on considering return, at the airport), and
- d. The method used (e.g. survey, interviews, etc.), as well as
- e. The date / frequency of the data collection (e.g. is this done monthly, annually, or was it part of a one-off project) and
- f. Any caveats as to the quality of the data⁸.

In order to evaluate the assisted voluntary return services provided, IOM Vilnius conducts surveys of voluntarily returning migrants at the airport prior to their departure. The migrants are asked to fill out an evaluation form which contains questions about the reasons for entry and departure and to evaluate the provision of information. The staff of IOM Vilnius seek to survey every person who has been provided voluntary return assistance, but due to the language barrier or limited capacity not all departing migrants are able to fill out the questionnaire on their own. Since the survey is conducted prior to departure, it is likely that the returnees may feel pressure and provide a more favourable evaluation of the services provided by IOM. In order to gain greater confidence, an attempt is made to ensure the anonymity of the survey and clearly specify the purpose for using the information (solely for the overall evaluation of a programme). IOM Vilnius performs a re-evaluation of the programme in cases where a returnee is provided reintegration assistance (6-7 months following the provision of reintegration assistance). The IOM office in the country of origin is responsible for performance of monitoring. In the course of the evaluation,

⁸ For example, for migrants returning through AVR programmes, where surveys are conducted before the AVR programme is complete (e.g. at airports), it may affect the responses received as – for example – returnees might feel pressured into providing a positive response even where they have a negative perception of the information provided.

the person is requested to answer the questions also about the provision of information prior to departure. This evaluation is most frequently the last contact of the IOM office with the returnee, hence it is unlikely that the migrant may feel pressured and give a more favourable evaluation of the provided services. During the last monitoring, the evaluation is conducted in the mother tongue of the returnee, hence it is likely to be easier for him to express his opinion. The aim is to conduct the evaluation in writing during an individual consultation by filling out and discussing the questions of a ready-made questionnaire, but in the absence of appropriate conditions the evaluation is carried out orally, during a telephone conversation.

Q21. If the above-mentioned information is available, please present the results, in particular any information on:

- a. The most common tool through which the returnee accessed information (e.g. through friends, via the Internet, via a leaflet),
- b. The extent to which they understood the information (e.g. was it presented in a user-friendly format, was it in their own language),
- c. The extent to which the information was comprehensive. Did they have to seek further information elsewhere and if so, why,
- d. The extent to which they trusted the information and whether there was anything about the way in which the information was provided that acted as an obstacle to their trusting it,
- e. The timing of the information provision and whether it would have been of any use if the information had been provided at an earlier stage,
- f. Whether the information influenced their decision to return home or not.

The surveys of migrants conducted by the staff of IOM Vilnius during 2010-2014 show that the majority of third-country nationals receive information on the AVR programme at the Foreigners' Registration Centre (are directly referred by the staff or see posters and leaflets), also a significant proportion (especially those who have returned under the Dublin Regulation) has been referred by border authorities. During a survey, the returnees were not asked about the kind of information which they lacked, but almost all stated that they were satisfied with the quality of services, hence it can be assumed that they received the sufficient amount of comprehensive information. In listing the reasons for deciding to return home, the majority of the third-country nationals indicated personal reasons (family circumstances) or the reasons beyond their control (could no longer stay in the country), thus the attractiveness or availability of information is of little significance in promoting return.

6.2 OTHER INDICATIONS / EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS

The purpose of Q22 to Q24 is to allow Member States to include any additional information on the effectiveness of the approaches described under section 4 that are not covered in section 5. This sub-section should not repeat information already included in section 5. Please only include new information here.

Q22. Are there any other indications / evidence available of the effectiveness of the different practices / approaches described in section 4 at increasing awareness amongst irregular migrants who are not in contact with the authorities about their options regarding voluntary return and/or at providing such migrants with a comprehensive understanding of their options so as to be able to make a balanced, well-informed decision about voluntary return.

Possible sources of evidence include:

- i. Statistics on use of the information tools (e.g. users of hotline number, webpage visits, Facebook page hits / 'likes', leaflets distributed, number of leaflets downloaded / requested, etc.),
- ii. Evaluations / research,
- iii. Personal testimonies from returnees / irregular migrants who made use of the services (where identified in secondary sources e.g. studies, social media pages, websites, etc.),
- iv. Opinions / perspectives of stakeholders on the effectiveness of their resources - you may gather this information through primary research (i.e. interviews with the authorities, with NGOs supporting irregular migrants accessing the services, etc.).

N/A

Q23. Please also describe any factors that make these approaches successful / not-so-successful tools for disseminating information on (voluntary) return to irregular migrants not in contact with the authorities.

Possible sources of evidence include evaluations / research, personal testimonies from returnees / irregular migrants who made use of the services (where identified in secondary sources), opinions / perspectives of stakeholders (you may use primary research for this).

N/A

Q24. Please describe any specific challenges associated with the approach to disseminating information implemented by the national authorities directly in raising awareness of irregular migrants not in contact with the authorities?

Possible sources of evidence include evaluations / research, media reports, reports of government, policy papers, opinions / perspectives of stakeholders (you may use primary research for this).

N/A

6.3 LESSONS LEARNT

Q25. Are there any lessons to be extracted (by Member States completing this Common Template) from the findings presented above that could be taken on board by other Member States?

Please consider both lessons about what went well and what went less well, as well as lessons about how the practice / project / approach could be improved in the future.

In providing information to illegally staying third-country nationals, the elements of utmost importance are information continuity and consistency for those concerned to receive uniform and non-contradictory information. In order to ensure that, it would be useful to have in place an information dissemination strategy with which all the authorities involved would be familiarised or dissemination of information should be coordinated centrally (i.e. by a single authority). Moreover, the dissemination of information must be continuous and be kept up to date by using a variety of means, as illegally staying third-country nationals make up a specific and highly mobile group. In order to ensure the availability of information, it should be available to a much wider range of people than a single target group, because it is most effective when passed by 'word of mouth'.

Over five years of the implementation of the AVR programme (2010-2014), the most important task for Lithuania has been to create a communication strategy in respect of information reaching the 'customer' from different institutions. The biggest challenge has been ensuring information continuity, as information dissemination has been only one of a large number of voluntary return and reintegration project activities, hence it has been characterised by fragmentation.

Annex 1 National statistics on return and number of irregular third-country nationals

Table A.1.a: National Statistics on the number of third-country nationals returning, by year and by type of migrant

	Year					source	Method used to reach the estimates, as well as any caveats as to their likely accuracy
	2010 (total)	2011 (total)	2012 (total)	2013 (total)	2014 (total)		
a. Third-country nationals returning by physical transportation out of the Member State, on the basis of a return decision (forced return)⁹	137	125	236	279	362	Migration Yearbook 2014	Official data of the Register of Aliens
b. Number of third-country nationals returning voluntarily within the time-limit fixed for that purpose in the return decision¹⁰ (voluntary departure)*	21*	29*	1459*	1472	1886	Migration Yearbook 2014	Official data of the Register of Aliens
Third-country nationals under the obligation to leave *	1 188	1 618	252	76	9	Migration Yearbook 2014	Official data of the Register of Aliens
c. Number of irregularly-staying third-country nationals returning via AVR packages (assisted voluntary return)	55	47	65	43	66	Migration Yearbook 2014	Official data of the Register of Aliens
d. Number of irregularly-staying third-country nationals returning via AVRR packages (assisted voluntary return and reintegration) – where different from (c)	4	6	14	8	21	Migration Yearbook 2014	Official data of the Register of Aliens

- Until 1 February 2012, the grounds specified in Article 125 of the Law of the Republic of Lithuania on the Legal Status of Aliens served as a basis for decisions obliging an alien to leave the Republic of Lithuania and after 1 February 2012, upon the entry into force of amendments to the said Law – for decisions regarding the return to a foreign state or, if the alien is in possession of a valid document issued in another EU Member State or an EFTA State granting the right to stay or reside in it, regarding the obligation to leave the Republic of Lithuania to this state.

Table A.1.b: National Statistics on the number of third-country nationals not in contact with the national authorities, by year and by type of migrant

	Year					source	Method used to reach the estimates, as well as any caveats as to their likely accuracy
	2010 (total)	2011 (total)	2012 (total)	2013 (total)	2014 (total)		
a. Number of irregular migrants who were previously known to the authorities, but whose place of residence is no longer known to the authorities (absconding).	280	255	397	110	152	Data of the Foreigners' Registration Centre	Asylum applicants who, by a decision of the Court or the Migration Department, were accommodated at the FRC, but moved from it and did not return

⁹ I.e. an administrative or judicial decision or act, stating or declaring the stay of a third-country national to be illegal and imposing or stating an obligation to return

¹⁰ In accordance with the provisions of Directive 2008/52/EC (Return Directive) the time-limit shall be of 30 days. Ireland and United Kingdom do not take part in the Directive, are not bound by its rules and therefore may apply different time limits on voluntary departure.

b. Number of irregular migrants whose residence on the territory has never been known to the authorities (clandestine entry)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		
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Annex 2 Description of data-collection methods used

Table A.2: Data-collection methods used

Sources of info / method		Used? (Y/N)	List the sources: for secondary sources, cross-refer to bibliography; for primary sources list the stakeholders involved	Type of information provided (refer to question numbers / sections if useful)
Evaluations		Y	IOM Vilnius database of voluntary returnees	Q21
Studies		N		
Other reports		Y	Migration Yearbooks 2010-2014, Situation at the state border (SBGS thematic survey)	Statistical data, irregular migration trends. Q1,Q2,
Legislation		Y	Law of the Republic of Lithuania on the Legal Status of Aliens No IX-2206 Minister of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania Order No 1V-429 on the Approval of the Rules for Taking and Enforcing Decisions Regarding an Alien's Obligation to Leave, Expulsion, Return and Passing in Transit through the Territory of the Republic of Lithuania	Q7-Q8
Policy documents		Y	Lithuanian Migration Policy Guidelines (Government of the Republic of Lithuania Resolution No 29 of 22 January 2014)	Q7
'Mystery shopper'		Y	www.returnhome.lt , www.migracija.lt , www.pasienis.lt	Q11,Q13,Q15-Q19
Interviews with stakeholders (list the stakeholders)		Y	State Border Guard Service, Vilnius Caritas, Lithuanian Red Cross Society, Centre PLUS	Q5,Q12
Consultation with national stakeholder (list them)		Y	Ministry of the Interior, State Border Guard Service, migration services, International Organization for Migration Vilnius Office	Q1-Q6, Q9,Q10,Q12,Q14,Q16, Q19-Q21
Consultation with national network		Y	European Migration Network	
Other (specify)		N		