



Federal Office
for Migration
and Refugees



Prospects: Voluntary Return

Counselling services, support with return
and reintegration

ENGLISCH

Voluntary Return

Persons whose application for asylum has been rejected in Germany may decide to return voluntarily within their departure period. In this case, voluntary return is an alternative to forced repatriation.

Voluntary return also opens up new opportunities and prospects in the country of origin for asylum seekers whose asylum procedures have not yet been completed and for those who have already been granted residence.

Persons who decide to return voluntarily can leave the country on a date chosen by them without the assistance of the authorities. There is the possibility of receiving funding for the travel costs to the country of origin.

The Federal Republic of Germany supports returnees as part of its humanitarian responsibility. The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees is responsible for the conception and implementation of programmes supporting voluntary return.

Return programmes help people who leave voluntarily, e. g. by covering travel costs or by paying start-up assistance. Various return and reintegration programmes offer organisational and financial support for voluntary departure as well as for a new start in the country of origin.

The Federal Office cooperates closely with return counselling centres, immigration and social security authorities. These inform those interested in returning voluntarily about the individual federal and state programmes that support voluntary return. In addition, they help with the filing of applications, obtaining documents for departure and explain the further steps for a voluntary return.

Counselling Services

Nationwide return hotline of the Federal Office:

For general questions on return, the staff of the return hotline will help you from Monday to Friday between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. in German and English. Telephone number +49 911-943-0

Returning from Germany

- The information portal www.ReturningfromGermany.de provides information about voluntary return and reintegration in ten languages in an easily understandable and accessible form. On the website a central search function is available for finding the nearest return counselling centre, information about countries of origin as well as on return and reintegration programmes.
- The **Information Centre for Voluntary Return (ZIRF)** gathers and evaluates information. Via **ZIRF-Counselling**, authorised return counselling centres can make specific enquiries about medical care, local infrastructure and the job and housing market in countries of origin. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) researches the answers on the ground and makes them available. **Virtual Counselling** offers those interested in returning to the various countries of origin a virtual return and reintegration counselling session in the respective native language.

Return counselling centres

Return counselling centres clarify the possibilities of voluntary return in confidential sessions. They examine which federal or state programmes could be applied for, help with applications, clarify individual questions regarding the situation in the countries of origin and explain the next steps.

The nearest return counselling centre can be found on the portal www.ReturningfromGermany.de.

The return counselling centre can be visited at any time - before, during or after the asylum procedure. This has no impact on the outcome of the procedure.

Steps to Voluntary Return

Counselling and decision making: Return counselling centres inform about the possibility of voluntary return and available support measures in a confidential session. On this basis, potential returnees can make an informed decision.

Application and preparation: Once the decision for voluntary return has been made, the return counselling centre will submit the necessary applications for assistance. The costs of preparation for departure must be covered in advance by applying to the relevant social welfare office or other responsible authority.

- The return counselling centre assists in obtaining necessary documents such as a valid passport, emergency travel documents or a border crossing certificate.
- The return counselling centre provides information on the eligibility for additional assistance through a reintegration programme and assists in applying for and preparing reintegration projects.

Departure: Generally, departure takes place by scheduled flight. The flight confirmation or, if applicable, the bus or train ticket to the point of departure will be handed out at the final meeting in the return counselling centre.

New start in the country of origin: In addition to reintegration programmes, arrival support is also available in some countries. Similarly, vulnerable persons can be assisted by IOM, e. g. with medical care or provision of temporary accommodation.

There is no legal entitlement to any support for voluntary return. Assistance can only be granted once for each person. In case of re-entry to Germany or non-departure, the assistance granted may be reclaimed.

Return and Reintegration programmes

The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees coordinates and finances various return and reintegration programmes in numerous countries for the sustainable reintegration of returnees.

Return programme: The humanitarian aid programme serves the preparation and implementation of voluntary return to the country of origin or the onward migration to a host third country.

Depending on the respective nationality, different levels of support benefits for voluntary return can be granted:

- Travel costs (e. g. flight ticket)
- Money for the journey (travel assistance)
- one-time financial start-up assistance
- If required: medical support

Reintegration programmes: In certain countries of origin (depending on the country of destination), further reintegration services and on-site support are available to help with a new start in the country of origin:

- additional financial start-up assistance
- Reintegration assistance regarding housing and medical needs
- Professional qualification measures as well as help in finding a job
- support in setting up a small business

The social and economic reintegration measures are country-specific and individually tailored to the needs of the returnees. Most of the benefits are provided in kind. The long-term goal is for returnees to be able to earn their own living again and build new prospects in their country of origin.

Some federal states, municipalities and independent organisations carry out additional reintegration projects in certain countries of origin. Further information can be obtained from the relevant state authorities and return counselling centres.

Application procedure

Support for voluntary departure can be applied for via return counselling centres (welfare organisations, NGOs) that are entitled to make applications, as well as competent state or local authorities (e. g. social welfare offices or foreigners authorities).

Voluntary return can also be carried out independently of these return programmes at any time on one's own initiative.

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