
Return and Reintegration Assistance External Evaluation

Turkey

Final Report

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Contracting Authority

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Abbreviations

AVRR	Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration
EC	European Commission
FOM	Federal Office for Migration
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
SMIT	Stranded Migrant in Transit
TREP	Turkish Return Programme

*Exchange rate 3 May 2013: 1 CHF = 1.9193 TRY (Turkish Lira) resp. 1 TRY = 0.5205 CHF
(www.oanda.com)*

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The views expressed by the evaluators do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Federal Office for Migration or the International Office for Migration. The conclusions, recommendations and remaining errors are ours.

Michael Morlok and Harald Meier

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The present report is part of the evaluation of the Swiss Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) mandated by the Federal Office for Migration (FOM) in 2012. The report aims at contributing to reaching the evaluation objectives and providing answers to the three principal questions by presenting data and experiences from Turkey. At the same time, this report is a document in its own right, designed to be understood by readers without the necessity to consult additional documents, including the six other country studies (Georgia, Guinea, Iraq, Kosovo, Nigeria, Sri Lanka) and the overall evaluation report.

Evaluation Objectives

- Determine the range and extent of outcomes of selected instruments of the Swiss return assistance for different target groups and countries of origin.
- Make an overall independent assessment of the outcomes achieved against the objectives envisaged.
- Identify key lessons and propose practical recommendations for the optimisation and further development of Return Assistance, especially with regard to different target groups and different native countries.

Central Evaluation Questions

1. To what extent and how do country specific return assistance programmes and Individual Return Assistance to Turkish returnees promote voluntary return to Turkey?
2. To what extent and how do country specific return assistance programmes and individual Return Assistance to Turkish returnees contribute to the process of social and professional reintegration of returnees and thus sustainable reintegration in Turkey?
3. To what extent and how do country specific return assistance programmes and individual Return Assistance contribute to an improved cooperation of Swiss authorities and authorities of the country of origin?

1.2 Evaluation Methods

The following report is primarily based on interviews conducted in Turkey and Switzerland,¹ with

- 17 Turkish returnees who participated in Swiss AVRR;
- representatives of the Swiss Embassy;
- a representative of the German Embassy;
- representatives of IOM Turkey and IOM Switzerland;
- representatives of FOM;
- a representative of a cantonal return counselling organisation.

Furthermore, informal dialogues with local residents and workers (including for example hotel, restaurant and taxi staff) allowed gathering further background information on Turkey and its migration patterns. The information obtained through interviews is complemented by a selection of reports (see bibliography in Annex 2).

The interviews with returnees were conducted in four locations, three of which are cities in western, central and south-eastern Turkey, and one is a rural area in the South-East of the country (Gaziantep region). The number of interviews in each location was:

- Adana: 2 interview
- Ankara: 1 interview

¹ In accordance with FOM and the Swiss Embassy, no interviews were conducted with Turkish authorities.

- Gaziantep: 5 interviews
- Istanbul: 4 interviews
- Gaziantep region: 5 interviews

The actual return locations are distributed all over the country. The four locations were chosen for logistical reasons (i.e. several returnees live in these locations), and in order to cover different regions of Turkey. As far as can be judged from the low number of interviews, there does not seem to be an obvious difference between the locations (or between cities and rural areas), in terms of project content or success. Therefore, the assessments in the paragraphs below synthesise information of interview partners from all areas.

The Swiss Embassy contacted 37 returnees before the interview to obtain their approval; 12 could not be contacted, 3 did not agree to participate in the interview for various reasons, 4 were principally ready to be interviewed but momentarily not in Turkey and 1 person had meanwhile re-migrated to Switzerland. It is likely that the reintegration and / or satisfaction with the assistance of persons who could not be contacted or who did not want to meet the evaluators is lower than the one of persons who were met for an interview. This possible bias has to be taken into account in the interpretation of the results.

The authors would like to take the opportunity to thank the Swiss Embassy in Ankara not only for organising the interviews with returnees but also for providing utmost administrative support to the evaluators. We further like to thank our local consultants and interpreters in Ankara (Mr Aras Yousef), Gaziantep (Mr Erdem Hösükoğlu and Mr Mehmet Kilic) and Istanbul (Ms Gülrû Bayraktar).

2 Presentation of Swiss AVRR

2.1 Structure, Duration, on text and Logic

In four of the seven countries covered in the evaluation, Switzerland implements a specific country programme. Turkey is not among them (anymore); instead, Turkish returnees benefit from the individual return assistance provided by the Federal Office for Migration (FOM). As in other countries with individual return assistance, there are three lines of activities:

- SIM (SwissREPAT – IOM Movement): Organisation of travel arrangements;
- RAS (Reintegration Assistance Switzerland): Assistance for projects in fields such as business, accommodation or education, to support professional and social integration in the home country;
- RIF (Reintegration Information Fund): Providing answers to questions by returnees and return counsellors.

The Turkish case is insofar special as the Swiss Embassy implements the assistance in Turkey (administering paperwork and payments, telephone support). IOM is mandated to provide these services in the six other countries that are subject of the overall AVVR evaluation. This solution was chosen both for historic reasons (Turkey joining IOM

relatively late, in 2005, and the limited access and rights enjoyed by IOM in Turkey, compared with IOM offices in other countries²) and because of the nature of projects (many accommodation projects which need less attendance) in Turkey.

In March 2003 Switzerland launched a return assistance programme with Turkey, plans for which already dated back to as early as 1999. The programme was designed along the lines of three components: individual return assistance, vocational training in Turkey and structural aid to enhance the migration dialogue between the two countries. It was initially planned for a period of one year but was eventually implemented until the end of 2006. During its implementation period 263 persons participated in the programme; interest in the vocational training offer was very low. Structural aid (in the amount of 200.000 CHF to assist the Turkish authorities in organising the return of stranded migrants) was welcomed by local authorities, but implementation was not as swift as expected (BFM 2006). The structural aid rendered possible and facilitated the transit of voluntary returnees to Northern Iraq via Turkey.

The last cases under the country programme were processed in 2006. The change to the individual assistance was seamless. Apart from a small adjustment as regards the amount of return assistance (the changes were not specific to the Turkish case but to Swiss individual AVRR worldwide) and the payment modalities (first cash, later bank transfers or in-kind assistance) AVRR has not been changed since inception.

While administration is implemented through the Swiss Embassy, every project case (and change of project) is signed off by the FOM. Once in Turkey, the returnees are primarily in contact with the Swiss Embassy and mostly by phone or email, e.g. to resolve preparatory questions or to submit documents. Because of the vast size of the country and the low number of returnees, personal counselling at the Swiss Embassy in Ankara is not considered to be a feasible option. According to the Swiss Embassy, the frequency of contact varies between 3 and 15 contacts per person; some returnees require more, some less information and advice. The process of support finishes when the respective release of payment is made; therefore, very little information exists of the success of the projects (no formal monitoring or evaluation has been implemented so far).

2.2 Frame Conditions of the Relations Switzerland – Turkey

Switzerland entertains good, normal diplomatic relations with Turkey (see section “bilateral relations”). There are no special treaties or agreements on migration, nor is a country programme for AVRR being implemented. Despite the absence of a formal agreement with Turkey there are no obstacles to organising forced returns of asylum seekers who received a negative answer to their claim and do not want to leave the country.³

A readmission agreement between the European Union and Turkey was initialled on 21 June 2012 but remains to be signed by the parties. The agreement has been subject to continuous debate in the light of Turkey’s stance that a formalisation of the readmission

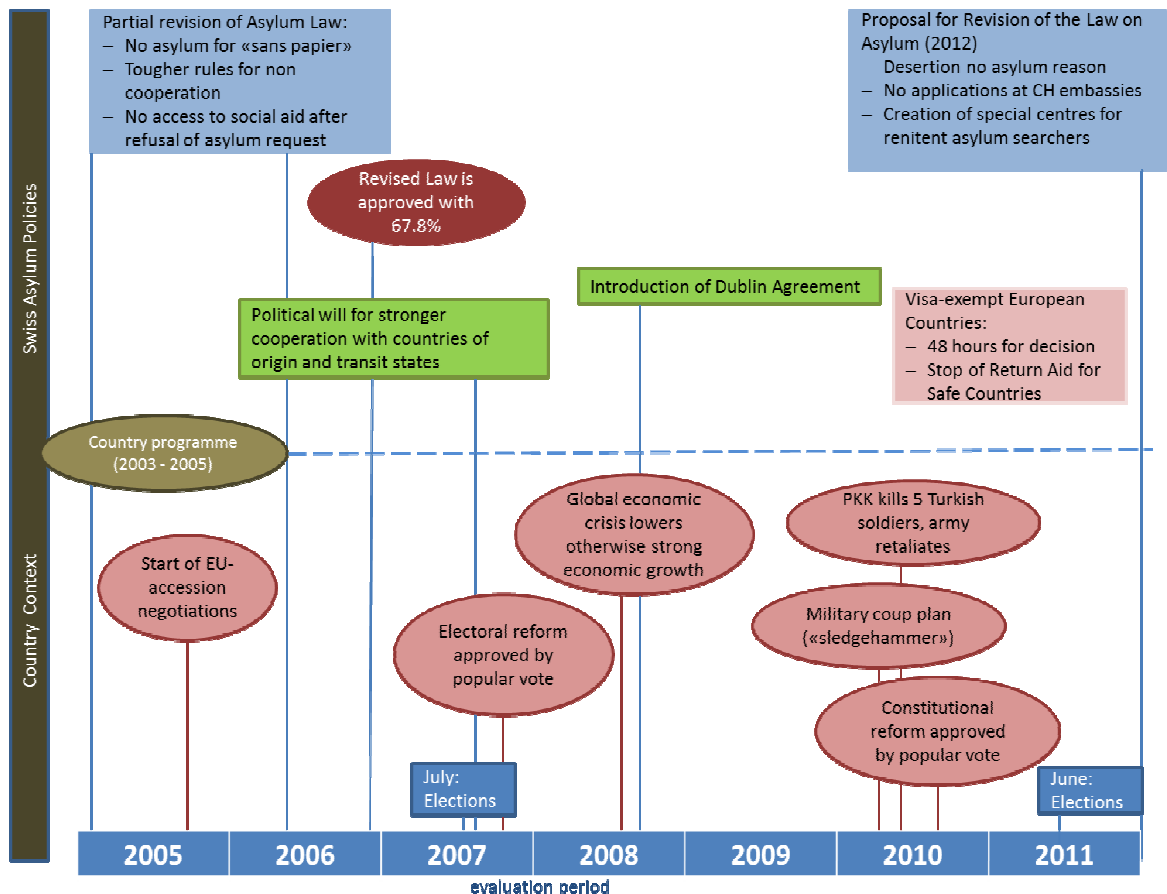
² According to IOM Turkey, such access (e.g. to airport transit) has improved recently.

³ See, for instance, statement of the Federal Council of 9 December 2011 responding to Motion 11.3831 (Geissbühler) (www.parlament.ch/d/suche/seiten/geschaefte.aspx?gesch_id=20113831) on readmission agreements.

policy would have to go hand in hand with visa liberalisation. In the light of previous comparable situations it can be assumed that Switzerland would follow suit.

The following graph summarises important changes in the Swiss AVRR assistance on one hand, and events in Turkey on the other hand. They have a direct or indirect impact on the priorities and asylum practice of FOM and are contributing factors to the willingness to return.

Figure 1: Swiss – Turkey context development



2.3 Other Return Assistance in Turkey

IOM Turkey, present both in Ankara and Istanbul, has implemented different AVR (Assisted Voluntary Return) programmes or projects in Turkey such as SMIT (Stranded Migrant in Transit), TREP (Turkish Return Programme) and the Repatriation of Kosovars and Repatriation of Bosnians as well as a project for the voluntary return of Sri Lankans.

These programmes target people who arrived in Turkey on the way to Europe. In the period November 2009 to March 2010, 317 persons participated in such programmes (the main groups being constituted of persons from Turkmenistan, Mongolia, Pakistan and Afghanistan). IOM Turkey also assists voluntary returns other than that of stranded migrants; this, however, is done on a “case by case basis” (IOM 2013).

Germany operates the return assistance and start-up programme REAG/GARP 2013⁴ that supports voluntary return. It is administered by IOM on behalf of Germanys Ministry of the Interior and the Federal States. Participants under this programme benefit from travel and transportation assistance as well as start-up cash that amount in Turkey to 400 and 200 Euro per adult and youth respectively.

3 Dynamic of Returns

3.1 Data Overview

Table 1: Data overview 2005-2011

Turkey	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Total
Persons in the asylum process								
Total number of new asylum seekers	753	706	616	519	559	530	580	4'263
Total number of persons in the asylum process in Switzerland	2'686	2'316	2'094	1'768	1'559	1'402	1'518	N/A
Number of persons with approved asylum	428	453	298	302	303	228	139	2'151
Departures								
Supervised, independent exits in % of persons in the asylum process ¹⁾	51	32	31	51	47	62	56	330
Forced Return	102	86	80	81	60	65	96	570
Dublin returns	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Third country returns	0	4	1	2	1	2	0	10
Uncontrolled departure	3	6	9	6	18	31	36	109
Entries into asylum process	0	0	1	7	28	22	26	84
Other exits ²⁾	10	0	0	3	25	28	45	111
AVRR participants								
Country programme	96	9	-	-	-	-	-	105
Total	131	84	71	28	25	45	53	437
In % of departures	79%	66%	58%	19%	14%	21%	20%	36%

¹⁾ Kontrollierte, selbständige Ausreisen; ²⁾ Until 2011 incl. so-called Dublin cases

Source: Annual asylum statistics and AVRR statistics, FOM

⁴ Reintegration and Emigration Programme for Asylum-Seekers in Germany (REAG) / Government Assisted Repatriation Programme (GARP)

3.2 Discussion of the Figures, Effectiveness over Time

According to the annual asylum statistics provided by FOM, asylum requests of a total of 4'263 newly arrived persons have been processed in the years between 2005 and 2011. Arrivals have undergone some fluctuations over the years: While relatively low in 2008 (519 persons), the number was almost 50 % higher in 2005 (753 persons). A downward trend can be observed over the first four years but then the numbers stabilised. If compared to earlier years, particularly 1988 and 1989, the numbers have been reduced greatly. In both those two years, around 10'000 people applied for asylum (Haab 2010).

One in two applicants (50 % on average during the years 2005 to 2011) received a positive answer to their asylum request. In the same period, a total of 1'214 persons (asylum seekers or accepted refugees) left Switzerland, whereas 437 (36%) of them returned to Turkey with AVRR assistance. The number of AVRR participants fluctuates greatly over time: In the last years of the country programme, 2005 and 2006, the numbers were relatively high (131 and 84, respectively), but then dropped to only 25 participants in 2009. Since then, the number of AVRR participants have risen again to 53 (2011).

Such fluctuations in the number of participants might be explained by different factors: One would expect that changes in Turkey (the economic and political situation has progressively got better) would have increased the numbers of people returning. An explanation for the decline might be the lower number of people arriving. Finally, however, it could be the processing speed of asylum requests in Switzerland (depending on the probability of a non-successful application, asylum requests from some countries are processed swifter). Interview partners (FOM and Swiss Embassy) think that latter is the driving factor behind changes in case loads.

If the numbers of voluntary returns are compared to the number of persons who are leaving Switzerland, it has to be concluded that the interest in AVRR has waned considerably since 2005. In 2010 / 2011, only one in five persons leaving does so with assistance.

The number of returnees participating in the AVRR assistance scheme is low if compared with the overall number of eligible persons (asylum seekers, provisionally admitted foreigners as well as recognised refugees). One has to bear in mind that a large number of the persons registered under the asylum law have a right to stay (at least provisionally) and have little incentive to return. The data also shows that the rate of participation has increased over the years and has stabilised at a low rate (measured as proportion of all Turkish citizens leaving Switzerland).

4 Individual Returnees

This chapter presents twelve persons and their story of migration, return and reintegration. They were selected out of the overall sample of 17 persons to illustrate the range of experiences made. In order to secure anonymity, the names have been dropped (a selection of photos of returnees is shown in Annex 3).

A.A.	
Gender, Age	Male, 34
Civil status	Married, 1 child
Education / previous experience	Education: Training as electrician
Return to Turkey	Spring 2007
Migration Trajectories A.A. refers to family problems he had before leaving Turkey in 2002; life just was not safe for him. He first went to Germany where he stayed for two years. It was difficult to obtain asylum there, however, so he eventually returned to Turkey. Shortly after, he left again: He was beaten up in his village for being politically active. On the other hand, he says, not much kept him in Turkey; he was young and single. He travelled to Germany and stayed there for another two and a half years (illegally). In April 2006, he crossed the Swiss border near Schaffhausen. He stayed a few days with a relative, and then registered at a refugee centre; after a month, he was transferred to Sarnen. Motivation for assisted Return While he refers to good memories of his time in Sarnen, he decided to return to Turkey after three or four months. This was mainly for his parent's sake, he says. When he told the Securitas personnel at the camp that he wanted to go back, a meeting was arranged in Lucerne. There he was told about AVR. Looking back, he says that he did not receive enough information. He was only told that after returning, he would be assisted, that he could open a company, and could call if he had problems. He emphasizes that he did not return to Turkey because of the assistance offered, his decision was based on the wishes of his family. He received 1,000 CHF at the airport, and a further 3,800/4,000 CHF as project assistance. Reintegration A.A. lost his baggage as he came back. With the 1,000 CHF in cash, he bought food and clothes. It was hard to come back, socially, because he had been away for a long time. In that respect, he felt like 'living in the desert'. With the money, he opened an electrical equipment store. He could not buy much equipment to sell, however; half the money went for taxes (he said that he had to pay two years up front). Also, he did not have enough customers. He tried to supplement his income with a second job, but that did not work out. He does not have the shop anymore; all there is left are a few goods which he did not manage to sell. He's now working with a construction company which does electrical work on building plots. All in all, the assistance did not really help him, he assesses. Asked about the reasons for the failures of his business project, he says it's just too hard to start a small company in Turkey. Plans His wife (whom he married since returning) and child are in Turkey; because of that, he cannot (or does not want to) leave anymore. He might return to Europe as a tourist.	

B.B.	
Gender, Age	Male, ca. 30 years
Civil status	Married, children
Education / previous experience	Education: Mandatory school, then worked as a shepherd and farmer
Return to Turkey	March 2011
Migration Trajectories B.B. left Turkey in 2007, for political reasons: He and his brother were active in the (pro-Kurdish) Peace and Democracy Party. For this reason, they got harassed (his brother had left in 2002 already and now lives in Zurich). B.B. went to Switzerland on road and arrived there in October 2007, illegally. After arrival, he went to his brother's house where he was seized by the police. He asked for political asylum and was brought to the Kreuzlingen refugee centre. After 40 days at the centre he was transferred to Solothurn and then later to Wangen bei Olten. While in Switzerland, he did not work (he did have an offer for a part-time job, but turned that down). When he got the negative response, he took a lawyer for the appeal process. He says he stayed on illegally for nine more months [possible legally during appeal; remark authors]. The appeal was not successful. Motivation for assisted Return A month before he had to leave the country, he went to an asylum centre and was told about AVRR. B.B. says that the assistance, its procedure and conditions, were clearly explained to him in Switzerland. The money did not play a part in his decision to come back, however. Reintegration He finds reintegration hard, both socially and economically. He does not like life in Turkey. With the assistance (1,000 CHF and later 3,000 CHF), he renovated the family's house (a farm house in a rural area, belonging to his mother), e.g. he laid down tiles and built a toilet. He lives there with his wife, children, and mother. He asserts that the assistance did help him and his family: the house looks better now. Overall, however, his situation is still difficult. He's helping his brother on the farm. Sometimes, the family still gets harassed by the police: They are taken to the police station for no particular reason. Plans B.B. would like to go back to Switzerland if possible. He plans to do so later in his life. He says if he had proof that the police take him regularly to the station, he would try to use that proof to get asylum in Switzerland.	

C.C.	
Gender, Age	Male, ca. 35 years
Civil status	Married, children
Education / previous experience	Education: n.a.
Return to Turkey	June 2010
Migration Trajectories C.C. has a brother who was with the PKK (now living in Germany). The army visited them repeatedly to obtain information on the brother's whereabouts. This was very stressful. Another brother left as well and now lives in Zurich. C.C. left for Switzerland in 2008. He travelled by road, and entered Switzerland illegally (he paid around 2,500 CHF for the services of an 'agent' who organised the journey). In 2009 he arrived, and went first to his brother's place, then on to the refugee centre. While in Switzerland, he lived mostly in the canton of Bern, and did not work. Motivation for assisted Return After one year in Switzerland, he received a negative response to his asylum request. When he got the negative response, he was also informed about AVRR. In his view, he was well informed, at the municipality, and obtained all the necessary information. Reintegration After arriving in Turkey, he went back to his village. With the assistance he received (1,100 CHF at the airport, 3,000 after coming back) he opened a shop to sell vegetables and fruits in a small rural town. However, the shop was no success: He just did not have enough customers. After six months, he was bankrupt and lost all the money. He does not think that the assistance had any positive impact on his reintegration. While the shop was his personal idea, he says that with the amount of assistance provided, one is very limited with what one can do with it. Currently, he has debts and is looking for a job (since losing his shop, he has done the odd job here and there). Plans He's looking for employment in Turkey.	

D.D.	
Gender, Age	Female, ca. 35 years
Civil status	Married, 2 children
Education / previous experience	Education: n. a.
Return to Turkey	2010
Migration Trajectories She left Turkey in 2003; travelling by plane to Germany, she then entered Switzerland on road. The reason for leaving Turkey was that her father had political problems. While in Switzerland, she met her husband (also a Turkish asylum seeker). Motivation for assisted Return Her husband went back to Turkey in 2005. She was keen to stay in Switzerland because she wanted her daughter (now 11 years old, from a previous marriage) to receive an education in Switzerland. In 2010, she got a negative response to her asylum request. Her reasons to leave were not just due to the negative response, however. She says she felt lonely, and there were also financial and psychological factors. The AVR assistance had no role in the decision to return. After she was asked to leave, she went to the authorities to receive information on what she has to do. She was told about the assistance by social assistance. Reintegration With the money she received (1,000 CHF in cash, and a further 3,000 CHF in-kind) she and her husband bought furniture. The process was very simple: the embassy paid the furniture shop. She says that the assistance did make it a little easier to return. However, they still find it difficult to be back in Turkey. Her daughter has troubles at school, as she does not speak Turkish well enough. D.D. does not work but looks after the children (they also have a baby now). Her husband works at a second hand car dealer. She says she finds it difficult to be so dependent on him and that she thinks there's not enough personal freedom for her in Turkey. Plans They are planning to stay in Turkey; they do not see any other choice. D.D. is thinking about sending her older daughter back to Switzerland, however. Members of her husband's family might have Swiss citizenship soon, and this would allow her daughter to live and go to school in Switzerland.	

E.E.	
Gender, Age	Male, ca. 45
Civil status	Married, three children
Education / previous experience	Education: only a few years at school, then worked at a car factory
Return to Turkey	2009
Migration Trajectories E.E. was twice in Switzerland. The first time he arrived in 1988, also as asylum seeker. The times were dangerous in Turkey (some people got shot) and many people he knew left the country. Once in Switzerland, he went to a refugee centre. He managed to get a job at a company in Bellinzona. He received a positive answer to his asylum request. However, in 1993 he decided to go back to Turkey: His mother did not feel well. Back in Turkey, he married and now has three children. Financially, it was very hard to adjust, he earned very little. This was the reason he and his family left the second time. Also, the family of his wife got interrogated by the police and they felt threatened. The second time he arrived in 2002. He and his family were sent to Lugano, then to the Wallis, and finally to Lausanne. The children found living in Switzerland hard to cope with, mainly because of language barriers. At first, E.E. worked night shifts, and after a year he opened up a kebab stand with a friend. Motivation for assisted Return Finally, his wife received a negative response to her asylum claim. She could not provide the documents showing that her brother was shot dead which were necessary for her claim. At the same time, he says that their return was voluntary, and that it was mainly because of the children's low integration in Switzerland. He says he was not informed well enough about the assistance (but does not specify what information he missed). Reintegration He found it very difficult to come back. On one hand, his children had difficulties to adjust to life back in Turkey, and to go to school here. The curriculum is very different; therefore the transfer from Switzerland was hard. On the other hand, he opened a kebab restaurant but went bankrupt. He invested about 90,000 to 100,000 TL in this endeavour (of his own and his father-in-law's money). Despite previous experience in the business (in Switzerland), carefully choosing the location (opposite a school) and all family members helping out, he went bankrupt after one year. Now he works as a janitor, and makes the minimum salary (800 TL a month) of which most is used for the apartment. Also, he has debts he has to repay. He hopes he can transfer his AVS pension from Switzerland. He's very depressed about his life and thinks he let his family down. He used the AVRR to pay for school fees of his children, and to buy some furniture. This went well and had a positive impact on their lives, at least in the short run; they had nothing to come back to. Plans He would like to go back to Switzerland. But this feels like too difficult a task now. He does not have the strength to do it all again. He's father-in-law still lives in Switzerland.	

F.F.	
Gender, Age	Female, ca. 30 years
Civil status	Single
Education / previous experience	Education: Mandatory school, worked as textile worker
Return to Turkey	Returned: March 2009
Migration Trajectories F.F. says she left Turkey because she found it difficult to live there (she comes from a Kurdish background). In 2006, she obtained a Schengen visa, flew to Germany and travelled to France where a brother of her lives. She stayed in France for almost two years. Her asylum request was denied, however, she thinks her lawyer made a mistake. Then in 2007, she arrived in Switzerland, where another brother lives with his family. In Switzerland, F.F. stayed for one and a half years. While in Switzerland, she did not work. Motivation for assisted Return She got engaged in Switzerland, but the relationship did not work out. This was the main cause of her wish to return to Turkey. As she prepared her return, she was informed about the assistance at the refugee centre. With the persons responsible for AVRR, she discussed several times what she could do with the assistance (and settled for the training as a beautician). Her aunt, who speaks German, supported her during this process. The assistance did not play a role in the decision to come back. Reintegration Four months later after her decision to return, she arrived back in Turkey. It was difficult to start all over again (even though she lives with family members and has friends from the time before she left Turkey). Coming back was both psychologically and financially a heavy burden. She says the Swiss Embassy was very helpful in this difficult period, they even suggested schools for the beautician training. As part of the training, she attended courses for almost a year, followed by an internship. She continued to work at the company where she undertook her internship for about two years, on a contractual basis. On average, she worked about 8 days a month which earned her 1,000 TL a month. She says that the salary was enough to live on (she lived with her parents, therefore had relatively low living costs). In 2012, she stopped working as a beautician, and took up studying international business. She plans to eventually work in import/export, or for the customs department. The reason for this change is that the job as beautician is too insecure (no permanent positions, risk of unemployment) at least if one has only basic training (she could not afford the next stage of training). Asked what she would have done without AVRR assistance, she says that she would have gone directly to university. But she does not think that the assistance has slowed her down, she is now a trained professional, and can go back to this profession if her studies do not work out. Privately, she still works as a beautician. Plans F.F. wants to stay in Turkey, at least at the moment.	

G.G.	
Gender, Age	Male, ca. 55 years
Civil status	Married, children
Education / previous experience	Education: n. a.
Return to Turkey	September 2012

Migration Trajectories

G.G. left Turkey illegally in summer 2011 due the court charges he faced based on different political articles he had written, the content of which was considered to be in breach with Turkish laws. He paid 8'500 Euros for the illegal transit to Switzerland, which he chose because "of its humanitarian tradition and the prospect of being treated well by the authorities". He also had friends there since he had been in Switzerland more than 20 years ago. He applied for asylum in Kreuzlingen where he stayed about two weeks. He was then transferred to Aarau where he was staying in a bunker "along with several Arabs"; he states he was scared by these people who often argued and had fights to an extent that he once had to call the police.

Motivation for assisted return

The stay in the bunker was awful and is definitely not adequate for a longer stay, he thinks. At some point he thus contacted an officer and told him that he wanted to leave Switzerland. He was advised by the officer that return assistance would be offered to him and explained the administrative procedures that were required. Within some four weeks the entire process was completed and he returned to Gaziantep.

Reintegration

The initial plan to open a vegetable shop in Gaziantep was soon abandoned because of the situation on-site (there were already shops in the neighbourhood) and for a shop closer to the city centre the 3,000 CHF would not have been sufficient. The procedures, he feels, were cumbersome; because the Embassy requested to receive documents such as a registration certificate in order to release the payment, whereas the Turkish authorities would not issue these documents unless he could prove to either have the shop and goods he wished to sell, which he was unable to pre-finance – he felt between a rock and a hard place. Eventually he informed the Embassy of his idea to set up a sheep farm that he would add to his uncle's herd. He does not like the business at all; he does not know much about sheep, the money to invest (food, veterinary service etc.) makes the business unprofitable and overall sales are low. He thinks of selling the entire flock at *bajram* and says that if he ends up break even, he will be happy. Altogether he believes that the money was not worth all the hassle and headaches. He realises that building up a business in Gaziantep with CHF 3'000 is just not realistic.

Social reintegration was not difficult because he always knew that he could return to his family in Turkey.

Plans

He is loath to look back on his experience in Switzerland. Even though he recognises and is thankful for what Switzerland wanted to do for him, in his case it was no help at all. He plans to stay in Turkey but things might change.

H.H.	
Gender, Age	Male, ca. 20 years
Education / previous experience	Currently studying
Civil status	Single, no kids
Return to Turkey	September 2012
Migration Trajectories H.H. left Turkey together with his mother and three siblings (all minors) in December 2011 in the context of a family reunion. His father has been living in Switzerland for a few years already. His father, a teacher and former political activist, faced a 36 year term of imprisonment and fled from Turkey; he had already served a five year imprisonment for his political activism. Following a few days during which he stayed in an asylum centre, he was allowed to move to his father's house. Motivation for assisted return In Switzerland he was waiting for the decision of the Swiss authorities to grant him a valid residence permit but to his surprise he received a negative decision due to his age. With the help of a lawyer he subsequently appealed against the decision but the appeal was rejected. He was then advised by his lawyer that only if he did not stay in Switzerland illegally would there be a chance that he could eventually return for visits and at some point and apply for a residence permit. Against this background H.H. opted to return to Turkey. Within two days of an interview with a representative of the FOM he was granted return and reintegration assistance. Reintegration He received a cash payment and the equivalent of CHF 3,000 project support that he wished to use to finance his studies at a University in Istanbul (student dorm, public transport, books). The Swiss Embassy in Ankara was swift to accept his proposal and was understanding that he faced difficulties in receiving receipts for the payments made (staff of the dorm were unwilling to issue a bill). The reintegration grant definitely alleviated his situation since he would have had to search for some part-time jobs. Even though the father works in Switzerland, his income is insufficient to partly finance the studies of his son, not least because he now finances all family members in Switzerland. With part-time jobs he would be able to earn some 150-250 TL per month (minimum wage is 600 TL). Plans He took out a repayable loan from the state and is thus now indebted, but he is of the opinion that studying at university is instrumental for his future. In terms of reintegration he says he misses his family and looks forward to seeing them again in the near future; he definitely wishes to travel to Switzerland and to eventually migrate to Switzerland.	

I.I.	
Gender, Age	Male, ca. 50 years
Education / previous experience	Farmer
Civil status	Divorced, 3 children (one married, one military, one at home)
Return to Turkey	June 2008
Migration Trajectories I.I. left Turkey in September 2005 having paid 6,000 Euros for the illegal transfer to Switzerland, which his brother in law arranged for him. Upon his return he applied for asylum at the asylum centre in Chiasso. For more than 2.5 years he stayed in Switzerland, where he also worked in a Turkish company, even though he was hardly paid by his boss (50-100 CHF per month, a much lower amount than was initially agreed). Once he learned that he was refused to stay in Switzerland he decided to first stay on illegally for more than one year with the hope that his boss would pay him the amount accrued. Motivation for assisted return When his mother passed away he decided to come back to his remaining family in Turkey. He was not aware of return assistance but a friend told him about the opportunity and a public official – he cannot recall where – explained everything to him in detail; she was supportive and helpful. The return process unfolded without any problems. Reintegration He recalls having received some 5,000 CHF (according to files: 3,000 CHF plus cash payment) to purchase a van and a packing machine so he could produce and sell dairy products; given that he is a farmer and he had cattle before, this kind of support seemed obvious for him. The process at the Swiss Embassy and payment modalities were easy and not bureaucratic. The condition that he had to send a registration document before the money was spent was a good one; otherwise, had it been given to him in cash, he “would have spent the money recklessly”. I.I. first returned to his hometown, but meanwhile moved to another city closer to his farm where nobody knows him and his background. He managed to find a job as manufacturer in a company in Gaziantep which provides for his family's main income. For this reason he presently uses the van only occasionally for his dairy but he can make some extra money with it (TL 200-300 per month) by renting it to others or transporting things for pay. Plans In the long run, however, he wants to invest more time into his cattle farm and dairy. He has concrete plans that would allow him to make about 1'500 TL per month of additional income. He is grateful for the support he received, which he feels helped him to gain a footing in Turkey again. Still, if there would be a chance, he would go to Switzerland again.	

J.J.	
Gender	Male
Education / previous experience	Secondary school
Civil status	not specified
Return to Turkey	February, 2007
Migration Trajectories In the beginning of February 2002, J.J. left Turkey for Switzerland and arrived in Basel the same month. His trip lasted approximately 15 days and the costs of the illegal transport via Kosovo and Italy amounted to approximately CHF 6,000. He chose Switzerland among other European countries for emigration, because he had lived there in 1987. Being familiar with Switzerland was the key factor for his decision. He left Turkey because of financial problems. Motivation for assisted Return After living at a refugee centre in Basel for around 10 days, he was moved to Winterthur. Altogether, he lived in the Zurich area for a total of 5-6 years. He had the opportunity of talking to his family back home once, maybe twice a month. Even though he had tried hard and searched for a job, he could not find one. He never worked during the time period he spent in Switzerland. He was informed that he had to leave through a notice delivered to him. This was also the first time he had heard of return and reintegration assistance. He did not want to leave Switzerland, so he decided to appeal against the decision. His appeal was turned down, however. Reintegration He received a cash payment at the airport, which also included the funds for him to purchase medicine for his illness, and a further 3,000 CHF for a business project. He discussed his plans in Switzerland of starting a teahouse in Turkey; it was his idea. Because there were many other teahouses within the district, his teahouse went bankrupt. He could only recuperate around 500-600 TL by selling the equipment. In spite of being appreciative for receiving the assistance; he argues that this amount is insufficient to realise a business idea, which has chances to be successful. He was disappointed with what he confronted, since he had a stable job before he left for Switzerland. In general, he experienced problems in readapting to the Turkish way of life, and considers the Swiss one more comfortable. He now works as a construction worker temporarily, which occasionally requires him to travel around the region to find jobs. The amount of money he earns is hardly enough to cover his living costs. Plans He is desperate about his future because as an unqualified worker he thinks that it is impossible for an unqualified person to sustain a good life in Turkey unless having funds to start up a business.	

K.K.	
Gender	Male
Education / previous experience	Secondary school
Civil status	not specified
Return to Turkey	December 2010
Migration Trajectories K.K. left Turkey and arrived in Basel towards the end of 2009. He wanted to move to Switzerland for economic reasons. In Turkey, he did not have a stable job and could not make a living. He arranged illegal transport to Switzerland and arrived there in a truck. The cost for this journey was about 2000 €. When he first entered the country, he went to the Basel refugee centre; later, he was transferred to Zurich. After 6-7 months, K.K. got a negative response to his asylum request. He did not work in Switzerland. He appealed against the decision, but was not successful. Motivation for assisted Return After the decision, he was informed about AVVR; he says that he received sufficiently information. He argues the money was not enough to be a primary cause for his return. He left for Turkey only because he was not successful in his attempt to get asylum. Reintegration At first, he planned to open a small shop, but changed his mind: the money was not enough for it. Instead, he bought some furniture and paid for dental care. He says that the money had helped him a little with resettling in Turkey. K.K. says that overall, he did not have much difficulty reintegrating. He was able to find a job as a driver in a company; a job, he still has now and is happy about. Plans His basic plan is to keep his current job and earn a living for himself. If possible, he also wants to start a family in the near future.	

L.L.	
Gender	Male
Education / previous experience	Secondary school
Civil status	Married
Return to Turkey	June 2011
Migration Trajectories L.L. left Turkey because of political oppression he faced there. He applied to the Swiss Embassy in Ankara for asylum and flew to Basel in August 2010. He went directly to a relative's house in Basel. After two days, he went to the refugee camp in Basel. Later, he was transferred to Olton where he stayed until his return to Turkey in June 2011. L.L. could not find employment in Switzerland Motivation for assisted Return His decision to return was twofold: On one hand, his wife back in Turkey was alone and depressed (she was pregnant with their second child as he left Turkey). On the other hand, his prison sentence for 10 years was cancelled due to exculpation (he did not want to state the cause of the prison sentence). Therefore, he felt free to return. L.L. learned about AVVR in the refugee centre where he stayed. Once he decided to move back, he wanted to apply for the assistance. He states that he was well-informed by the officials about the content and modalities of individual return and reintegration assistance. In about ten days, his return flight was arranged. He received EUR 800 at the airport and CHF 3,000 on his return to Turkey. He used the money for the renovation of his father's house (adding a new storey to the house) where he and his family currently stay. The money was not enough for the renovation (L.L. complains that he had to sell "<i>his wife's golden jewellery</i>" to complete it). Reintegration L.L. has difficulty resettling in Turkey. The main reason for this difficulty was his economic problems. He also thinks he has not been able to reintegrate due to the different living conditions between the two countries. He tries to find a job, but it is difficult because of his criminal record. He is still having political problems. Plans He states that his plan for the future is finding a job to feed his family.	

5 Reintegration

5.1 Frame Conditions for Reintegration

The 2012 Progress Report by the European Commission describes progress made, inter alia, in the fields of **democracy, rule of law and human rights**. The report praises that in preparation of a new Turkish constitution, a democratic and participatory process is being used. Progress has also been made in the area of judiciary efficiency and to reduce the increasing backlog. Further efforts are still needed in this respect, the report concludes. Similarly in the fight against corruption or in regards to human and civil rights: Examples of excessive use of force by security forces (for example in cases of not authorised demonstrations), overcrowded prisons with serious impact on physical conditions, inadequate legal aid or early and forced marriages remain. The report voices concern because of increased violations of freedom of expression as well as further restrictions and pressure on the media freedom which also led to widespread self-censorship besides frequent website bans (European Commission 2012).

A key challenge for Turkey remains **the Kurdish issue**. The conflict with its large minority (around 18 % of the Turkish people are Kurdish, according to the CIA Factbook) took over 40,000 lives since 1984 (mostly in the period of open war between the outlawed Kurdish Worker Party PKK and the Turkish army). Despite much progress, Kurdish and religious minorities are prone to discrimination. Inter alia, they are practically excluded from civil service positions (BTI 2012). There are on-going negotiations with PKK and its jailed leader, Abdullah Öcalan, which have recently resulted in the decision of PKK to withdraw its forces to Kurdish-controlled northern Iraq on 8 May 2013. This would mean an end to the war, and for the Kurdish side, potentially, the release of “thousands of Kurdish activists jailed on thinly supported terrorism charges” (The Economist 2013a).

Economically, Turkey has experienced strong growth in recent years, inter alia due to favourable structural reforms and tightened monetary and fiscal policies. Successful implementation of a strong stabilization programme also helped Turkey through the global financial crises and led to rapid recovery (BTI 2012). Driven by the public sector the economy grew by impressive 8.5% in 2011, but growth is slowing now due to weaker domestic demand. For 2013 The Economist forecasts a growth rate of only 3.5 % (which is, in the light of sluggish growth in many other countries, not that lacklustre). Because of its large market and high growth, Turkey has developed into the world's 17th largest economy (nominal GDP, BTI 2012). GDP per capita stands at \$17,110 (purchase power parity adjusted) which puts Turkey on the 63th place out of 247 entities covered by World Bank data, below Chile and just above Mexico (World Bank, 2013). Unemployment has been falling due to the positive economic development, and is now back to a level of 10.6 % (January 2013b, The Economist). Again, compared to neighbouring Greece (27.2 % unemployment in January 2013), this has to be considered a good value.

While Turkey's economy develops well overall, there remain large income differences between rural and urban regions, and the gap between poorer and wealthier classes has widened. The poverty rate is still high at 9.1 % of the population living on less than \$2 a day. Adult literacy is 88.7% with considerable differences between males (96.2%) and females (81.3%). Gender inequality persists in other fields too, such as access to education and employment (BTI 2012). Reforms and increased educational spending

have extended the coverage of compulsory education and have broadened access to education, but participation in higher education remains low and the quality of education is still problematic (European Commission 2012).

Today most emigrants to Switzerland are family members of Turkish refugees, who left Turkey in the 1980s and 90s for political reasons, or family members of the emigrants of the first emigration wave to Switzerland in the 1960s to 1980, which took place in search for employment (Haab 2010).

5.2 Assessment of the Quality of the Reintegration

Many returnees reported that they encountered difficulties upon return to Turkey. This seems to be due either to financial hardship, readjustment to the conditions back home (after being abroad and having seen higher standards of living), or to problems which prompted returnees to leave Turkey in the first place which still made their lives difficult upon return (such as harassment because of statements in favour of the Kurdish cause, family members being or having been active in the PKK). Many returnees had family and friends to come back to; therefore, difficulties in terms of social reintegration were indicated only in exceptional cases.

Among the interviewed returnees there were several mothers or fathers with school-age children. They all reported that their children had difficulties to readapt; mostly because of language issues or because the Turkish school system is very different from the Swiss one (e.g. curriculum and class sizes).

Most of the interviewed returnees have found a way to support themselves and their families; mostly not through the business projects supported by AVR, however (see below). They all have found some form of (self-) employment (apart from the four persons studying, looking after the children and being retired, respectively⁵). Two persons are involved in (subsistence) farming, which enables them to make a very basic living. Of the other nine returnees, four have found fixed employment and a further four have temporary jobs and are looking for odd jobs here and there. One is self-employed due to the business he started with AVR assistance. The income of the group with only temporary employment is likely to be much more precarious than the one of the former two groups. Among the returnees with a fixed position, one returnee reports that he only earns the minimum income, which is too little to provide for himself, his family and pay off his debts at the same time.

Summarising, many of the returnees visited by the evaluators find themselves in a difficult economic situation (even though some of them have already been back for one or more years at the time of the interview). This has to be seen in the context of various factors, such as widespread poverty in certain areas, and that returnees often faced hardship of economic, political, or personal nature before they left Turkey (resp. which prompted them to leave in the first place).

Turning to the AVR assistance, one can observe a clear dominance of business and accommodation assistance projects (see Table 2). Just over half the returnees interviewed have implemented a business project of some kind. Most of these business projects fall into the category small shop (selling fruit and vegetable or electric parts for example). Among the returnees interviewed there were also some with projects in

⁵ Two more returnees did not want to comment on their current situation.

agriculture (tools or livestock), hospitality (restaurant) or transport (van transporting goods).

Almost as important in terms of numbers were accommodation projects, where the money was used either to cover rent, to pay for renovation or to buy some furniture. The high frequency of this type of project (relative to other countries of return) can be explained through the high cost of living – and more importantly: the high cost of doing business – in Turkey. Once purchase power is considered, Turkish returnees received much less than returnees to other countries. While gratitude was expressed in most cases, practically all returnees (with business projects) stated that the amount was not enough to successfully run a business.

Table 2: Overview of assistance provided to the interview sample

Types of assistance	Examples	n
Business project	Small shop, restaurant, subsistence farming, transportation	8
Accommodation assistance	Rent, renovation, furniture	7
Medical assistance	Dental care	1
Cash for Care	-	-
Education / Training	School / university fees, training as beautician	3
Other (...)	-	-
None	N/A	-

Note: Some returnees have implemented projects of two types; therefore, the number of projects displayed in the table is higher than the number of returnees visited

The high cost of doing business in Turkey was one of the reasons stated by returnees with a business project for their failure to get the business off the ground: The money was just not enough to either get a suitable location or to buy enough goods. This reason was quoted by all business owners with failed projects who constitute the vast majority: Six out of eight returnees say their project has failed (see Table 3). In half of these cases, the returnee has got some personal benefit from the project: either useful contacts or at least some of the assets could be retained and used in another form. Three returnees however, stated that their business went bankrupt and they lost everything in the process. Finally, two projects could be considered successful. In one case (a hospitality project) the returnee has invested large amounts of money himself; the other case is subsistence farming (i.e. the tools purchased are still being used).

It is difficult to draw lessons learned from only two successful cases resp. to pinpoint success factors: Success is the rare exception and seems to come when there are either more assets to be invested or when the risk is very low (such as the subsistence farming project which could not really go wrong). Looking back, most returnees with a business project did not find the assistance helpful because of the low success of these projects.

Table 3: Self-assessment business projects

Indicators / Definitions	n
A Project successful, returnee can cover living costs fully with proceeds of business	1
B Project successful, living costs partly or minimally covered / supplemented with proceeds of business	1
C Partly failed, but had some impact ("personal benefit")	3
D Failed, same situation or even worse than before	3

Note: The project rated as "A" is a subsistence farming project. It does not represent a typical business project

There were three cases of educational projects: Two of them were used to cover school resp. university fees. These projects can be considered successful for the time being (since education is on-going, the long-term impact cannot be assessed). One returnee used the money for a year-long training course. She has worked two years on the job, and earned enough to make a living. The returnee is now getting retrained in another occupation because the one she was trained in does not offer the long-term prospect she is looking for. However, the returnee found the assistance very helpful for her reintegration.

Apart from projects in the category “business” and “education”, the assistance was also used for medical purposes and accommodation. This assistance was considered helpful by the majority of returnees. It has made coming back to Turkey for the returnees at least somewhat easier. In exceptional cases, returnees had nothing to come back to, and hugely appreciated the assistance they have received. Returnees visited at home lived in humble circumstances and it was obvious that the support for renovation, for example, made a difference.

Apart from the immediate success of the business projects (as displayed in Table 3), a possible indicator for the success of reintegration are the wishes to migrate again, as expressed by the returnees themselves. We asked the returnees about a possible plan to migrate again (a plan, not just a wish), which three out of 17 confirmed. Among the three persons, it is hard to make out the common ground: One has left his wife and children in Switzerland; both other ones also have family members living in Switzerland. None of them has implemented a business project; instead they have received accommodation or educational support. The low number of cases who expressed a wish to return does not allow any further interpretation, however, in terms of characteristics. It does indicate however, that even though reintegration was and is considered hard work by many returnees, they are trying to forge their future in Turkey.

5.3 Effects on and Perception of non-migrant Populations

Because of the relatively small size of AVRR assistance to Turkish returnees (when adjusting the assistance to purchase-power parity, the assistance is much smaller than on average), a pull-effect of AVRR, understood as an incentive for Turkish citizens to leave for Switzerland because of the assistance, seems highly unlikely. None of the interview partners (returnee or other stakeholder) believes in its existence: the costs (financial and non-financial) of migration are too high in comparison to the potential benefits through the AVRR package.

More likely than such a primary pull-effect would be a secondary AVRR pull-effect: an effect on asylum-seekers already in Europe, deciding to migrate to Switzerland as one of the few countries still providing assistance. This, however, seems also unlikely since none of the returnees interviewed reported that AVRR played any role in choosing their destination. A strong indicator against such a pull-effect is the fact that all returnees reported that they heard about the assistance after arrival in Switzerland; most were informed once they received the negative decision to their asylum claim.

It seems the image of Switzerland as a rich and politically stable economy has much more impact than AVRR, and the fact that the majority of returnees already had family living in Switzerland: 8 out of 14 returnees (for whom this information was gathered) had at least one family member living in Switzerland. The relatives were always a first port of call upon arrival in Switzerland. Interestingly, they do not seem the source of information

on AVRR (like family of Sri Lankan returnees, for example). Therefore, more than the return and reintegration assistance, the existence of family and friends provide a certain pull-effect (this well-known phenomenon of migration pattern is known in the literature as “network effect”).

In the cases of non-business projects, the assistance can be considered a success insofar as it has made the return to Turkey somewhat easier. As most returnees found it difficult to return, the assistance has made a welcome contribution. In regards to the business projects, however, the success is less satisfactory: Six out of eight business projects failed, which is a far too high number. According to the returnees, this is due to the fact that in their eyes, the amount is just too low to start a business without having access to further funding. The low success rate might also be due to the fact that not everyone is suited to run a business (even in a thriving economy such as Turkey’s).

6 Cooperation Switzerland – Turkey

6.1 Basis of the Cooperation

Switzerland and Turkey entertain close relations that have intensified over the past years. There are regular political consultations and growing economic and trade ties. There are no special agreements on the topic of migration (such as a readmission agreement). The operations of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) in Turkey ended in 2006.

6.2 Assessment by Turkey’s Authorities

Based on instructions received from both the Swiss Embassy in Ankara and the FOM the evaluators refrained from contacting Turkish authorities for purposes of interviews or data collection. As a result it is not possible to provide an assessment of the perceptions and opinions of the authorities on the Swiss return and reintegration assistance that is offered to Turkish citizens.

6.3 Assessment by Swiss Authorities

Switzerland does not maintain any specific contacts with Turkish authorities on the topic of AVRR nor has the subject been on the agenda on the occasion of bilateral discussions in the recent past. The assistance is thus implemented without consultation of Turkish authorities; because of this and the overall small volume of returnees it has to be assumed – and this assumption is shared by the Swiss Embassy – that the assistance is too small that it would cause any specific interest by the Turkish authorities. One interview partner states that the Turkish authorities might not be interested in any formalisation of the AVRR support in light of the visa liberalisation negotiations with the European Union: since formalisation of the AVRR support would be a form of confession that there are significant numbers of Turkish citizens illegally residing in Europe.

The AVRR support might raise more interest in the future, however, because Turkey is increasingly in a situation in which it has to consider offering incentives to the refugees arriving in Turkey.

The assistance is provided to help Turkish returnees rather than to improve bilateral cooperation. This seems to be acceptable to all Swiss representatives interviewed (FOM and Swiss Embassy).

7 Conclusions

The following chapter provides a summary of the findings presented in chapter 1 to 6, and the evaluators' conclusion on the Swiss AVRR assistance in Turkey. It should be pointed out that the assessment is primarily based on 17 interviews with returnees who agreed to meet the evaluators, and who could be contacted in the first place. Many returnees expressed a feeling of gratitude; such feelings can have an impact on the feedback. Finally, cultural differences in providing feedback / criticism have to be considered when comparing these results to the ones provided in reports of other countries (such as the ones from the other six countries covered in the evaluation).

7.1 Return

The majority returnees confirmed that the information they received in Switzerland on AVRR – on topics such as the course of events, the requirements and conditions – was sufficient. However, a few returnees (with business projects) felt like they have not been informed enough (inter alia, about payment modalities). This has to be seen in the light of the high rate of failure of this type of project and the frustration the failure generated. The administration of paperwork and payments in Turkey by the Swiss Embassy on the other hand was praised highly by all returnees who commented on it (with only one exception).

Almost all returnees reported that they had heard about AVRR as they received the negative response to their asylum claim (majority) or when they informed the authorities about their wish to go back to Turkey (exceptions). Only in two cases, returnees said that they had heard about AVRR through friends or family. According to FOM, returnees are systematically informed about AVRR during their initial interview (i.e. right after their arrival). None of the interviewed returnees has mentioned this initial information; this could be due to their initial lack of interest in return resp. the assistance, they did not think it was worthwhile mentioning or they merely forgot. However, this could also be interpreted as a signal that the information is not prepared in a way to have a lasting impact.

Processing AVRR in Turkey (by the Swiss Embassy) is implemented in an efficient way which is welcomed by the returnees. This is a good advertisement for AVRR back in Switzerland, if the information spreads back through feedback loops (returnee networks). A more critical point is the feedback that some returnees felt under-informed in Switzerland. It seems that especially in the case of business projects, the process (and pitfalls) have to be explained in a very detailed way.

The fact that many of the Turkish asylum seekers already had family who are familiar with the asylum system in Switzerland, does not seem to ensure that information on AVRR is passed through the network in a way that people heard about it before the negative decision on the asylum claim.

The reason to return to Turkey most frequently mentioned was a negative response to the asylum request (9 out of 14 responses to this question). Other common reasons were family issues (a member of the family fell sick) or the returnee (or his/her family) found it difficult to integrate in Switzerland. The fact that the situation back home in Turkey changed for the better in the years observed by the evaluation (booming economy, improving political situation for Kurdish people), was not mentioned in the interviews. Two returnees referred to prison sentences being lifted (sentences for undisclosed reasons) which helped them in the decision to return.

The AVRR itself did not seem to influence Turkish returnees in their decision to return; however, in one case (possibly two cases) it was asserted that the assistance did have somewhat of an impact.

The AVRR package is not strong enough to be a major incentive to return home (neither is it a pull-factor for people to leave Turkey). While AVRR might not be the decisive cause, it might still act as a contributing factor as it provides a bit of a softer landing back in the home country.

7.2 Reintegration

Social reintegration upon return was considered a problem only by a minority of the returnees interviewed. Nevertheless, the majority of returnees who were interviewed found it difficult to come back; mostly because they encountered economic hardship and had to readjust to life in Turkey.

The returnees accessed different types of assistance: Business projects, accommodation and education assistance. There was one person who received medical support. The relatively low number of business projects might be explained, inter alia, by the high cost of living and doing business in Turkey; the price level makes it difficult to start a business with the amount of assistance provided.

Overall, economic reintegration seems to be very difficult: Many returnees struggle to make ends meet, particularly those who just have odd-jobs here and there, earn the minimum wage, or work in subsistence farming (this hardship has to be seen in the light of poverty in Turkey overall, of course).

The reintegration assistance of 3,000 CHF is in the light of high Turkish cost-of-living relatively small. For this reason, about half of all projects (more than in other countries) are used for accommodation (rent, furniture etc.) projects. These projects can be considered a success since they all made life somewhat easier for the returnees (even if not turning the situation around).

About half of all projects of the interviewed returnees were business projects. The success rate is very low: only 2 out of 8 projects can be considered at least somewhat successful. Most have lost the money respectively the assistance they have received. The reason for failure is, in the eyes of the returnees, that the amount is not big enough to be successful in Turkey. It might also be due to the fact that not all returnees are equally suited to be entrepreneurs.

Contrary to other countries the Swiss Embassy is responsible for operating the return and reintegration assistance, in collaboration with the FOM. Comparing the feedback of returnees in Turkey with that of returnees who were supported by IOM in other countries, the evaluators cannot discern a qualitative difference in the service provision. The feedback is very positive.

8 Recommendations

8.1 Preconditions and their Shaping

Currently, any change of a project (e.g. purchase of a machine instead of a car) requires approval by the FOM. This results in additional administrative effort – albeit arguably little effort and small in numbers – for both the Swiss Embassy as well as the FOM. It is recommended that this process in Turkey is simplified, e.g. by conceding the possibility to the Swiss Embassy to make such changes autonomously.

It should be periodically assessed if the assistance cannot be used to improve bilateral relations. It might eventually be possible to pass lessons-learned on to Turkey if the country plans to implement such support itself.

If FOM wishes to increase the visibility of the Swiss AVRR in Turkey, it will have to engage the Turkish authorities further. Such an involvement does not seem required for the assistance itself, however, and should therefore only be done if deemed beneficial for bilateral cooperation.

8.2 Incentives for Return

Most returnees reported that they have heard about AVRR when they received their negative response to their asylum claims. Two deductions can be drawn: The Turkish diaspora in Switzerland knows (or cares) relatively little about the return and reintegration assistance and asylum seekers are not informed proactively enough upon arrival in Switzerland (FOM, however, changed this practice two years ago; asylum seekers are informed during initial interview). In order to encourage earlier return FOM should ensure that the information reaches Turkish asylum-seekers better and earlier.

None of the interviewees stated that the return and reintegration assistance played an instrumental role for her/his decision to return. In this respect, from a return perspective, and neglecting that the assistance might have a secondary role in strengthening the perspectives in the home country, it could be argued that it should be reduced or scrapped altogether. Assessed from a reintegration perspective, however, it is recommended to maintain the actual payment amount at current levels, because of its (overall) positive impact, particularly for non-business projects, and its capacity to help returnees to have a better start.

8.3 Implementation of Reintegration Assistance

To curb the high rate of failure of business projects, we advise to scrutinise them carefully. These projects should only receive green lights in exceptional cases, when the pre-conditions look promising, such as: returnee has previous experience in the field; person has assets she / he can access and invest on top of AVRR; the project is low risk (e.g. subsistence agriculture). If these conditions are not met, returnees should be advised to use the assistance for something safer / more tangible).

A business project modality that appears to work well in Georgia is that returnees buy a stake in an existing business. The approach offers advantages: new capital is brought into an established business (clients, network, etc.), there are no start-up costs, the entrepreneurial risk is shared and complementary knowledge and skills are pooled. It is recommended to consider offering this project modality in Turkey too.

8.4 Follow-up of Reintegration

The evaluators were not able to access comprehensive and systematic monitoring data, e.g. indicating which projects were still running after one or two years. The cost of such a systematic monitoring would be relatively low if done by a very short phone interview and would provide relevant data for the adaptation of AVRR. This seems particularly relevant in the case of Turkish returnees: The low success rate of business projects should have been picked up earlier.

Interview partners in Turkey and in Switzerland

In chronological order:

- Thomas Lory, FOM, 19 March 2013
- Lorenz Glauser, FOM, 19 March 2013
- Ulrike Dobretsberger, IOM REZ, EVZ Kreuzlingen, 21 March 2013
- Walter Haffner, Swiss Embassy, Ambassador, 25 March 2013
- Didier Chassot, Swiss Embassy, Deputy Head of Mission, 25 March 2013
- Urs Wuest, Swiss Embassy, Counsellor Trade and Economy, 25 March 2013
- Francesca Cardillo, Swiss Embassy, First Secretary (Migration), 25 March 2013
- Pehlivan Süreyya, Swiss Embassy, Visa Officer, 25 March 2013
- Fatma Özkan, Swiss Embassy, Visa Officer, 25 March 2013
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Photographs of returnees

(Photographs of 6 out of a total of 17 returnees interviewed)

