



Project “Country of Return Information—Belgium” (CRI-Belgium)

The CRI-Belgium (Country of Return Information) project is operational since 1 November 2009 and will run until December 2010. CRI-Belgium is financed by the European Return Fund for Belgium.

In the last years Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen has been the lead agency for two European projects on Country of Return Information, CRI I and CRI II. CRI-Belgium builds further upon the expertise of the former two projects and continues the developed services adapting them to the Belgian context. Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen will work in partnership with CIRE (Coordination and Initiatives for Refugees and Migrants) and Caritas Belgium.

Aim of the project

The project contributes to the general objective of enhancing the availability and quality of services in Belgium for migrants who want or need to consider the options of voluntary return. The project focuses on two aspects: the need for quality information in order to develop a realistic future perspective and the need for quality assistance in social services in weighing the options of return. Two types of services, both adapted to the Belgian reality, will therefore be delivered in the framework of CRI-Belgium.

Country of Return Information: the helpdesk and the database

Vluchtelingenwerk will collect up-to-date **information about 25 countries of return, on individual demand** of potential returnees or their assistants. As in the former CRI-projects, Vluchtelingenwerk wants to continue the valuable cooperation with independent organisations and researchers based in the countries in order to collect detailed information about general and specific topics related to an individual's return situation in the country and reintegration possibilities.

The collected information will be made available to potential returnees and their assistants in Belgium through different tools.

Returnees and their assistants will be able to access the information and ask questions via an **helpdesk**. Moreover a **database** will be created on which the most relevant information will be published. The database will be on line, **accessible for everybody and free of charge**.

Supporting return counselling in Belgium

Approaching the issue of return is often something really difficult for social assistants who provide support and advise to asylum seekers. However, for many (rejected) asylum seekers return is to be considered as an option for a sustainable future and to rebuild their lives back home. It is therefore important that this option is given sufficient attention during the counselling provided by social assistants.

Vluchtelingenwerk wants to support social assistants in their task of addressing return options, which is often perceived as a delicate topic. To this end a range of participative training sessions will be organised, with the objective of identifying current obstacles and challenges for assistants and elaborating on the importance and shape of return counselling.

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