

Return assistance

A fresh start with perspectives



Did you know that...?

Austria has a **long tradition in supporting voluntary returnees**. Already in 1991 return assistance and the establishment of "return counselling centres" - as they were then called - were written into law. In the meantime, the Federal Ministry of the Interior supports **several thousand people every year** who voluntarily return to their home countries with various services.

What is voluntary return?

Persons, whose **asylum applications** (application for international protection) in Austria are **rejected in a legally binding manner**, are obliged to return to their country of origin **within a certain period of time**. Only if these persons have not departed voluntarily by the given date, may they be forcibly removed. However, also persons who are in ongoing proceedings under aliens law or who are lawfully residing in Austria may decide to voluntarily return to their home countries. **Austria also provides support in these cases** if the necessary requirements, such as individual need, are met.

Priority of voluntary return

In the implementation of applicable EU norms, **voluntary return** is always the **preferred and prioritized option** for Austria unless there are compelling reasons against it, such as the protection of public safety and order. Voluntary return is more **sustainable, less invasive** for the persons concerned and can **contribute to supporting structures** in countries of origin. Usually a **time limit** for voluntary return is granted by a legal decision.

How does return assistance work?

Return assistance includes **counselling and advice on individual perspectives** during and after the (asylum) procedure, the **organization of the return trip** as well as the **coverage of travel costs**. It can also consist of granting **financial and other support** to facilitate the return journey, arrival, and the reintegration into the society of the destination country.

Return counselling in Austria

Since January 1, 2021 return counselling - which was laid down by law nearly 30 years ago - is carried out in Austria by the **Federal Agency for Care and Support Services** (BBU GmbH). A uniform and high-quality return counselling is intended to further strengthen voluntary return. Counselling on possibilities to return may be obtained at **any stage of the proceedings** - including in an ongoing proceeding. If a person has to leave the country, e.g. **after a negative decision** on an asylum application, they are **obliged** to use return counselling.

Return from Austria

The Federal Ministry of the Interior was able to establish a comprehensive system to support voluntary returnees, which also stands out in a European comparison:

Travel support

- Organization of the trip including flight booking
- Assistance in obtaining a travel document
- Special care for vulnerable people incl. those with medical needs
- Coverage of travel expenses and medical care costs

Reintegration programmes*

- Additional support for a new start in about 30 countries of origin
- Further advice and support after arrival
- Cash for first investments after return
- Benefits in kind, such as help with starting a small business, temporary accommodation, medical care

Return counselling

- Possible at any stage of the procedure
- Comprehensive throughout Austria
- Counselling and advice on individual perspectives
- Information about support services

Financial start-up support


- Cash to cover initial needs during the return journey and upon arrival in case the requirements are met
- Amount of start-up support depending on the time of application
- No legal claim

Individual reintegration support is offered for **selected countries of origin** in order to facilitate a new start and sustainable **reintegration into the society** of the destination country. This creates perspectives for individual returnees and contributes to the **development of structures** in countries of origin.

Often, reintegration assistance is used to **promote business start-ups** in various fields of commerce/trade (e.g. grocery), craft (e.g. carpentry) or services (e.g. beauty salon) or to finance **training and further education**. These programs are implemented in **co-operation with European and international partners**.



Find **more information** on return assistance and the current reintegration programmes* at:
www.returnfromaustria.at

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