



International Organization for Migration (IOM)
The UN Migration Agency

Mr. Martin Eber
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Siseministeerium
Pikk 61, 15065 Tallinn

1 June 2023

NO-COST EXTENSION OF AMIF2020-16 "Vabatahtlik toetatud tagasipöördumine ja reintegratsioon Eestis"

Dear Mr. Eber,

With this letter, we kindly request your approval to extend the project "Vabatahtlik toetatud tagasipöördumine ja reintegratsioon Eestis" for an additional five months until **30.11.2023** on a no-cost basis.

Please find revised Annexes I and II in support of this request for a no-cost extension enclosed for your kind consideration. Please excuse that our letter comes only in the last month of the current project implementation period. This delay is a result of the recent change of Head of Office at IOM Estonia, which prevented us from finalizing this request earlier.

The project currently has a duration until 30.06.2023. However, as a result of restrictions to international travel during the global Covid-19 pandemic - which led to lower than anticipated numbers of voluntary returnees - we have remaining project funds. We propose to continue using these remaining funds to support the voluntary return of beneficiaries for an additional five months until 30.11.2023. This would allow a seamless continuation of voluntary return support from Estonia and bridge any possible gaps in services that could otherwise arise until a new AVRR project from Estonia can start under the new AMIF funding cycle.

There is a continued need for AVRR assistance from Estonia. We are observing an increased caseload of beneficiaries interested in voluntary return support in comparison to previous years. Restrictions of international travel that applied during the project implementation period in 2021 and 2022 due to the global COVID-19 pandemic no longer play a significant role. In 2023, we have so far registered 57 people to the VARRE program and there have been 52 assisted voluntary returns until 31.05.2023. This number is higher than the sum of beneficiaries we had in 2022 and mirrors the number of beneficiaries we supported in 2019.

We believe that this increased need for voluntary return assistance from Estonia will continue. Amongst others, Estonia is currently experiencing a rise of migrant workers from Uzbekistan and Tajikistan as a result of Russia's war on Ukraine and changing migration trends towards the Baltic States as a result. Migrant workers from Central Asia can encounter problems with work visas and their migration status in Estonia. If their stay is or becomes irregular, they can benefit from AVRR services to voluntarily return to their countries of origin with dignity and personal integrity.

Also as a result of the war in Ukraine, Third Country nationals who have fled from Ukraine to Estonia are currently waiting for a decision on their application for international protection status in the centers of Vao and Vägeva. Several third country nationals whose asylum applications were not successful in Estonia have recently returned under the VARRE program to different countries, such as Cameroon and Nigeria.

Lastly, there has also been a sharp increase in the number of Georgian migrant workers in Estonia because of the changed political and economic situation in Georgia.

We anticipate a strong need for assisted voluntary return from Estonia until the end of 2023 and beyond because of the above developments and hope to continue the excellent cooperation with the Estonian Ministry of Interior under the VARRE project.

Please don't hesitate to contact me or our IOM Estonia colleagues Martin Dislis and Maria Jefanov in case of any questions. We look forward to hearing from you and thank you in advance for your kind consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Marian Benbow Pfisterer
Head of Office Ad Interim
IOM Estonia

Enclosures:

- Revised Activity Plan (Annex I)
- Amended budget (Annex II)