



Return assistance: a change of perspective

Return assistance – in practice

Tunisia, Jbeniana

In spring 2013, after having spent nearly two years outside of Tunisia, Mr. C. decided to return voluntarily to his country of origin, Tunisia. He participated in the return and reintegration assistance program, which is funded by the Swiss Federal Office for Migration (FOM) and implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Through this program, Mr. C. received reintegration assistance and counselling in order to implement a sustainable business project upon return.

After his arrival in Tunisia, Mr. C. followed a business training organized by IOM, which allowed him to acquire basic business management skills. As he had several years' experience in cattle breeding, Mr. C. decided to start a sheep farming project. With the support of IOM Tunis advisors, he developed a project plan and submitted it to the steering committee, composed of representatives from the governments of Switzerland and Tunisia and IOM staff, for approval. Then Mr. C. contacted sheep merchants and collected all necessary supporting documents for his project. After having sent IOM Tunis the invoice for the sheep, the confirmation from his municipality that he exercises an agricultural profession and a certificate from a veterinarian (attesting that the sheep he intended to purchase were healthy), Mr. C. could purchase the sheep herd and IOM Tunis paid the merchant directly for the animals.

Mr. C. concedes that it takes time and effort before raising sheep generates a substantial income. Despite these difficulties, Mr. C. does not intend to leave his village or to change his profession and, counting on his family's support, he wishes to further expand his project to increase his profits.



As a humanitarian and, at the same time, reasonably-priced solution, the concept of Return Assistance has proved itself and gained acceptance in many European countries. The object of Return Assistance is to harmonize the justified interests of migrants with those of Switzerland and the countries of origin. Return Assistance makes a valuable contribution to a sustainable and successful return. It is conceived so as to rule out undesired pull factors in the direction of Switzerland.

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