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Support to New Ukrainian Country of Origin Information Unit

The Country of Origin Information Unit (COI) of the State Committee for Nationalities and Religion (SCNR), established in February 2009 within the framework of a Danish Refugee Council project, is now becoming operational with two persons in charge of the country of origin information research. After the necessary infrastructure was put in place to enable the Unit to become functional, the ERIT workshop in May focused on the elaboration and development of joint guidelines for co-operation between the case workers of different Regional Migration Services of Ukraine and the SCNR COI unit. In addition to SCNR COI unit representatives, case workers from the 12 main RMSs

also participated. In an interactive, open workshop atmosphere, particular attention was paid to the request procedure and standards for answers from the COI unit. The discussion, case studies and work in break-out groups were led by experts from Slovakia and Poland. They provided participants with an overview of EU practice in the field of COI research and encouraged them to disseminate their gained experience among their colleagues. The results of the workshops were summarized and handed over to the COI unit, who incorporated them into the guidelines for the work of the COI unit in the framework of the Ukrainian asylum procedure.

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Chernigov RMS and SCNR COI Unit Receive Support from Slovak and Polish Experts



Since the recent establishment of a new detention center in the region, Chernigov has been receiving an ever increasing number of asylum seekers. Therefore case workers and Country of Origin Information specialists from the Polish and Slovak asylum authorities visited the Regional Migration Service Chernigov to discuss the daily practices of processing asylum applications, the use of COI, handling bogus asylum applications, as well as the interpretation of the Geneva Convention ground of “social group”.

During the two days of on-the-spot support at the COI unit of State Committee for Nationalities and

Religion, the EU experts focused on the actual running of such a unit, including the data sources that are of utmost importance in the Country of Origin Information research. They examined forms for COI requests and answers, and



discussed the storing of information and sharing of research results with case workers. Additionally, they reviewed and discussed the guidelines developed during the workshop for the work of the Ukrainian COI unit. The visit concluded with an agreement that the representatives from Poland, Slovakia and Ukraine will keep in close touch and will be ready to support each other in their daily work as much as possible.

Dutch Expert Assesses the Feasibility of Using Video Conferencing System for Interpretation

In March 2009, Mr. Robert Roos, an IT expert from the Netherlands, who was strongly involved in the development of the GDISC Interpreters Pool, conducted a five-day technical mission to Ukraine focusing on a feasibility study for a Video Conferencing System (VCS). Equipment for interpretation during the asylum interviews is to be provided to the State Committee for Nationalities and Religion under this project module. After the meetings at the SNCR Headquarters in Kyiv and visits to two newly built detention facilities of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Chernigov oblast and in Volyn oblast, Mr. Roos visited several companies that provide telephone lines and supplies to these institutions in order to estimate

the running costs of their equipment. Both detention centers are located in remote areas and host a number of foreigners, many of whom apply for asylum. As interpreters in the region are scarcely available, these locations were selected for the potential instalment and pilot use of a VC system to enable connection with Kiev, with to its better access to interpreters. The expert's technical report will present an assessment of the system feasibility together with possible alternative solutions and will be shared with the SCNR in the coming month. The best suitable solution reflecting the current situation and needs in Ukraine will be chosen for development under the project.

COI Unit Networking and Study Tour to the Slovak Republic

At the beginning of May, a group of five representatives from the SCNR, the Regional Migration Services and the High Administrative Court, began a study tour of the Slovak Republic while, at the same time, two members of the newly established Ukrainian COI unit conducted a 10-day internship at the COI unit of the Slovak Ministry of Interior.

All seven participants received first a general overview on the Slovak asylum system, after which the meetings divided into different divisions of the Slovak MOI. The mixed group of

into their daily work. The Ukrainian COI unit representatives used the internship period to research the current requests from Ukrainian



migration services and to discuss the results with their Slovak colleagues. The internship was concluded with additional meetings at ACCORD Austria, in Vienna (Austrian Center for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation).

five representatives visited the asylum reception facility, the appeals court and an NGO dealing with asylum procedure, while the Slovak COI unit brought their two counterparts from Ukraine

While the study tour gave a good overview of the work and challenges of the Slovak Republic in the field of asylum, the internship specifically supported the state-to-state approach by broadening the network of the Ukrainian COI unit with counterparts from the Slovak Republic as well as ACCORD Austria.



Need to Strengthen Assisted Voluntary Return

Ms. Helen Cordingley and Mr. Geoff Kemble, experts from the UK Border Agency, facilitated the third meeting of the Return Working Group, which took place on 27-29 April in the ICMPD Kyiv office. During active discussions and facilitated brain-storming sessions, representatives of the two main beneficiaries of the module, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the State Border Guard Service, together with participants from the High Administrative Court, the State Committee of Nationalities and Religion, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Security Service achieved important results. The Group identified basic elements of a future vision of AVR and formulated proposals for improvement of the existing procedures for forced return. Being two of the most important partners of the Ukraine authorities in this matter, IOM and UNHCR also were invited by the workshop organizer to take part in the workshop. IOM presented their experiences in carrying out individual AVR cases in Ukraine, while UNHCR provided important input for meeting human rights and refugee protection standards.

The work within the Return Working Group and return seminars has had an impact already. The concerned agencies and ministries have concluded that changes are necessary in the legislation to specifically address AVR procedures. The first steps to initiate this legal reform have already been proposed. As a starting point, the Legal Status of Foreigners needs to be amended to include a provision on AVR. Once this is done, the implementing instruction(s) will need to be worked out.



Personnel of Zhuravichi Detention Centre Receives Training from Czech Experts

Following the successful implementation of the September workshop in Rozsuviv detention center, it was mutually agreed between Czech experts and the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) of Ukraine that similar activities would be organised for the personnel of the detention center in Zhuravichi, opened in September 2008. During a three-day workshop at the end of March 2009, Czech experts presented their national experience to 45 officers responsible for the temporary holding of irregular migrants and exchanged their know-how covering practical, organisational, logistical, and security aspects of their daily work. Parallel to the workshop, Mr. Kostal, Czech technical expert and the Deputy Head of the Refugee Facilities Administration, re-assessed the technical situation at the centre focusing mainly on its security aspects.

Moreover, the Director of the Czech detention center Bela-Jezova, Mr. Andrassy, carried out, at the beginning of April 2009, a support mission to the center focusing on the daily work and exercise of the center's procedures in practice. The findings of his on-the-spot work with staff



members of various units, accompanied by conclusions of the technical expert, contributed to the detailed expert report. The report provides the MIA with gaps and a needs analysis of the security situation, including a proposal for technical and organisational arrangements for increased security of the center. It also forms a basis for the concrete planning of technical support for the center.

Ukrainian – Russian Border: Increasing Protection

The Eastern Ukrainian border that is a focus of some GDISC ERIT activities has recently attracted more attention. This is not only due to the effective Readmission Agreement between Ukraine and the European Union but mainly because of such an agreement between Ukraine and the Russian Federation. This latter



Agreement was ratified in Russian Duma last December, bringing it into partial force. The provisions, including third country nationals, will come into effect in three years.

The 2295 km long Eastern Ukrainian border, with 1974 km of land segment, has not yet been demarcated. However, the border was delimited in 2004, a year after Ukraine and the Russian Federation signed a treaty on the Ukrainian-Russian border. Taking into consideration the length of the border, the annual growth of passenger-transport traffic and the accompanying need to create a relevant structure, the Cabinet of Ukraine adopted a state purpose-oriented program, “The refurbishment and reconstruction of the state border”, designed for the period up until 2015. So far, over 8 thousand “border” signs have been set up, 453 km of engineering fence have



been fitted, 222 surveillance towers have been installed and 1138 km of controlled-traced line maintained.

The Eastern Regional Directorate hosted a visit of

international counterparts at the end of April to introduce its capability for effective Eastern border protection. ICMPD representatives took part in the event. After visiting several border crossing points of different roles and sizes (e.g. in Dergachi and Zhuravlivka), the representatives of the Directorate introduced their daily work to the visitors in a very professional manner. They also pointed out the main challenges they are facing, in addition to financial constrains. These are the transit channels of the illegal migration movement from South-East Asia, CIS Middle Asia countries and Caucasian region, illegal movement channels of drugs, weapons, ammunitions and explosives,



and also economic contraband.

Thanks to international support (EC, EUBAM, US GOV etc.), the border guards are technically well equipped with cars, surveillance devices and the like. Moreover the GDISC ERIT project is going to provide installation of five special premises along the border. The question of whether all that is enough for effective border protection, however, remains open, and we wish our colleagues from the State Border Guard Service good luck in their hard work.

Note: In the first quarter of 2009 the Eastern Directorate detected 1556 illegal migrants. 92 migrants were detained for illegal crossing of the state border and 1462 persons were not permitted to enter Ukraine.

Enhanced Security System for Rozsudiv Detention Centre

Based upon the Czech comprehensive expert report on Rozsudiv from October 2008, it was agreed that GDISC ERIT provides enhancement of the existing external security system. Details for the security development of the Rozsudiv detention centre were identified and some broad market research conducted. In a careful tender procedure and thorough evaluation of available offers, the winner was selected at the end of April 2009. The enhanced external security system will be available by June/July 2009.



May and Coming Events

Module 1:

18-26 May - Seminar on screening procedures, Odessa, Kharkiv, Orshanetsk

Module 2&3:

27-29 May – Workshop on asylum procedure
September – Follow-up COI workshop

Module 4:

June/July - Delivery and installation of the enhanced security system for Rozsudiv detention centre
July - Tendering phase for enhanced security system for Zhuravichi detention centre

Module 5

16 – 19 June - Workshop on returns, documentation procedures, and escorting, Kyiv
19 – 20 June - 4th Return Working Group meeting
27-30 July - Study visit to London

Module 6

27-28 May - Visa training for Ukraine consuls on EU standards for visa processes and procedures, Kiev
26-28 August - Study visit to London

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