

Practical Handbook for Return Counsellors on the Frontex Joint Reintegration Services

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Glossary

CoO	Country of Origin ¹
ECRET	European Centre for Returns Division
EMN-IES	European Migration Network Information Exchange System
EU	European Union
Frontex	European Border and Coast Guard Agency
JRS	Joint Reintegration Services
LRP	Local Reintegration Partner
MS	Member States ²
PA/PR	Post-arrival/post-return
RIAT	Reintegration Assistance Tool
RC	Return Counsellor
RP	Reintegration Partner
RP_Meet	Reintegration Partners Meetup
RP_Meet members	As per rule, Frontex ECRET staff, Member States, Commission and Reintegration Partners
TC	Third Country
TCN	Third Country National ³
UAM	Unaccompanied Minors

¹ The term Country of Origin includes for the purpose of this document also the term "Country of return" and covers also TCs to which TCNs return on a voluntary basis.

² For the purpose of this document, the term "Member States" includes also the States participating in the relevant development of the Schengen acquis within the meaning of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and its Protocol (No 19) on the Schengen acquis integrated into the framework of the European Union.

³ Under Article 2(6) of the Regulation (EU) 2016/399 (Schengen Border Code) third country nationals are non-EU nationals, who are not covered by point 5 of the Article. That means TCN, who are members of the family of a Union citizen enjoy the same right of free movement as Union citizens.

1. Introduction

Reintegration assistance under the Frontex Joint Reintegration Services (JRS) can only be effective when the third country national's expectations are properly met. To that end, it is instrumental that they are supported by well-informed return counsellors informing them about the modalities and procedures under the JRS.

The procedures and modalities of the JRS, deriving from the contracts are not always easily translated into a practical narrative. Therefore, Frontex developed this practical handbook for Return Counsellors as a tool to raise general understanding and awareness on the functioning of the JRS and the offer to the third country nationals eligible to receive support under the JRS. Secondly, it serves as a practical guideline on how to use those services and intends to inform and support return counsellors in their daily counselling practice, by answering the most important questions from the return counsellors and returnees' perspective.

Core information boxes:

To ensure that return counsellors find the relevant information quickly, there are summary boxes at the beginning of the most important sections.

• The core information can be found there in bullet points.

2. Context

2.1. Legal basis

Regulation (EU) 2019/1896 of 13 November 2019 on the European Border and Coast Guard extended the mandate of Frontex⁴. In particular, Article 48(1)(a)(i) and (iv) of the Regulation mandates the Agency to provide technical and operational assistance to Member States in all phases of the return process, including in post-arrival and post-return phases, also better known as reintegration assistance.

2.2. ERRIN Transfer to Frontex

Prior to the Frontex JRS, reintegration assistance was offered under, the EU-funded European Return and Reintegration Network (ERRIN)⁵, which provided assistance from 2018 to June 2022 in several third countries. After the new Frontex regulation came into force, the transition of reintegration assistance from ERRIN to Frontex was organised by Frontex in cooperation with the Member States and ERRIN to ensure the continuation of reintegration assistance and knowledge transfer. However, the JRS goes far beyond the project characteristics of ERRIN, in funding and providing reintegration assistance for all Member States on a permanent basis.

⁴ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32019R1896,

⁵ https://returnnetwork.eu/

3. Setup of the Frontex Joint Reintegration Services

In the following section an overview of the general set-up of the Frontex Joint Reintegration Services and the most important workflows is presented.

3.1. General set-up of the Frontex Joint Reintegration Services

3.1.1. Contractual settings

Frontex established Framework Partnership Agreements on Reintegration Assistance (FPA) till 27th January 2026 with the following reintegration partners:



- Caritas International Belgium (CIB⁶),
- International Returns and Reintegration Assistance (IRARA⁷),
- Women Empowerment Literacy and Development Organisation (WELDO⁸),
- European Technology and Training Centre (ETTC9),
- Life Makers Foundation Egypt (LFE¹⁰)

 $^{^{6}}$ <u>Assistance to victims of violence, natural disasters, and poverty | Caritas International Belgium</u>

⁷ <u>Home - IRARA</u>

⁸ Weldo.org

⁹ Home (ettc-iraq.net)

¹⁰ <u>Life Makers Foundation - Homepage</u>

Frontex also signs Specific Agreements (SA) ¹¹ on an annual basis with the selected RP. The SA are to include all priority countries of origin and enable the reimbursement of costs including operating costs, handling fees and reintegration packages.

Framework Partnership Agreement, Frontex - RP	Agreement between Frontex and a RP for a period of 4 years (3 years for case entry plus 1 year for case closures)
Specific Agreement, Frontex - RP	Agreement between Frontex and a RP in the context of the JRS, stating the activities and financial terms and conditions, allowing for coverage of the operating costs, handling fee and reintegration packages (see section 3.2.2 below).

3.1.2. Geographical coverage under the Specific Agreements

Frontex signed specific agreements with the above-mentioned reintegration partners to cover a portfolio of 26 countries of origin. The table below lists the countries where the JRS is operational since 1 April 2022.

The availability of reintegration assistance in the listed countries under the JRS can vary from Member State to Member State. The implementation of the JRS can be subject to national legislation, based on national needs and therefore be limited in some countries. return counsellors should therefore consult the responsible national authorities, to what extend the JRS is used and implemented.

Country of Origin	Local Reintegration Partner	Reserve List Reintegration Partner
REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA	Caritas Int. Belgium/ Caritas Albania	IRARA/ Deutsche Industrie und Handelsvereinigung in Albanien
PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA	Caritas Int. Belgium/Human Development Network Algeria	-
REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA	Caritas Int. Belgium/ Caritas Armenia	-
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH	Caritas Int. Belgium/ Caritas Bangladesh	IRARA / BRAC
FEDERATIVE REPUBLIC OF BRAZIL	Caritas Int. Belgium/Projeto Resgate	-

¹¹ Specific agreements as a result of the call for proposals 2022/CFP/POST/01. Awarded to RP for the provision of reintegration services to non-EU nationals returning to their country of origin restricted to Frontex framework partners selected under the call for proposals no 2021/CPF/POST/01.

ARAB REPUBLIC OF EGYPT	Life Makers Foundation	IRARA / Egyptian Youth
REPUBLIC OF EL SALVADOR	Caritas Int. Belgium/Caritas Santiago de Maria	-
FEDERAL DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ETHIOPIA	Caritas Int. Belgium/The Ethiopian Catholic Church Social and Development Commission (ECC SDCO)	IRARA / Positive Action for Development
GEORGIA	Caritas Int. Belgium/Caritas Georgia	-
REPUBLIC OF GHANA	Caritas Int. Belgium/AG Care Ghana	-
REPUBLIC OF GUINEA	Caritas Int. Belgium/3 A Enterprises	-
REPUBLIC OF INDIA	Caritas Int. Belgium/Caritas India	IRARA / Development and Justice Initiative
REPUBLIC OF IRAQ	European Technology and Training Center Iraq	-
REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA	Caritas Int. Belgium/ Caritas Moldova	-
MONGOLIA	Caritas Int. Belgium/ Caritas Mongolia	IRARA / PCC
KINGDOM OF MOROCCO	Caritas Int. Belgium/ Foundation Orient Occident	-
NORTH MACEDONIA	Caritas Int. Belgium/ CSI Nadez	-
FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA	IRARA / Advocacy for inclusion and support initiative	-
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF PAKISTAN	WELDO	IRARA Pakistan/RSPN
(RUSSIAN FEDERATION) ¹²	Caritas Int. Belgium/ Caritas Moscow	-
FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF SOMALIA	IRARA / Gargaar Relief and Development Organization	-
DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST REPUBLIC	IRARA / Janathakshan	-

¹² Due to the ongoing armed conflict between Russia and Ukraine and the imposed sanctions on Russia in this regard it is not foreseeable when reintegration services can be delivered in 2022 and onwards.

OF SRI LANKA		
THE GAMBIA	Caritas Int. Belgium/ Caritas Gambia	IRARA / The Gambian National Youth Council
REPUBLIC OF TURKEY	IRARA/ Association of assistance solidarity and support for refugees and asylum seekers	-
UKRAINE ¹³	Caritas Int. Belgium/Caritas Ukraine	IRARA / Right to Protection
SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM	IRARA/ Center for Supporting Community Development Initiatives	Caritas Int. Belgium/Light Institute

3.2. Reintegration support offered under the JRS

3.2.1. Eligibility criteria

Core information eligibility:

- Eligibility criteria
- Member States' and Frontex's responsibilities
- Assistance for voluntary and forced return
- Retroactive case entry (after departure)
- Eligibility letter

Member States are responsible for determining the eligibility of returnees¹⁴ according to their national legislation when submitting applications for Frontex JRS. However, Frontex will be checking eligibility of the cases submitted by Member States in RIAT as well according to the JRS eligibility criteria.

Assistance under JRS will be offered following *voluntary* or *forced* return, including to persons in a vulnerable situation.

Cases can be submitted retroactively, which means that returnees may apply for reintegration assistance even after arrival in the CoO. For the returnee to be eligible for reintegration support, the case must be initiated, and the reintegration plan must be validated by the responsible MS within 6 months after the date of departure.

¹³ Due to the ongoing armed conflict between Russia and Ukraine the implementation of reintegration services are temporarily suspended for an indefinite period.

¹⁴ For a better understanding we use the term returnee from a return counsellors' perspective. The term is used throughout the document for third country nationals, who are eligible to receive reintegration assistance under the JRS.

Returnees, who refuse to sign an application for reintegration assistance prior to their forced return, can receive an eligibility letter to receive assistance after their arrival. The eligibility letter can be downloaded in RIAT under the following path: Subareas, 3. Active Projects, 3.2. Current RIAT projects, 3.2.1. FX JRS 2022. If MS wish, they may issue such eligibility letters even to those returning voluntarily, if for any reason they do not apply for reintegration assistance before departure.

Please note that third-country nationals enjoying the right to stay, legal residence and/or international protection within the meanings of Directive 2011/95/EU15, or temporary protection within the meaning of **Directive** 2001/55/EC, in a Member State, are not eligible to receive reintegration assistance under the Frontex JRS.

3.2.2. Reintegration packages

Core information Reintegration packages:

- Post-arrival package (3 days after departure)
- Post-return package (12 months after departure)

The Frontex reintegration assistance comprises of 2 packages, post-arrival package for 3 days (short-term package), and a post-return reintegration package for a maximum period of 12 months (long-term package). MS may opt for any of the 2 packages, for example only post-arrival or only post-return or both, on a case-by-case basis. MS may also provide additional assistance on top of JRS.

The type of amounts offered as reintegration assistance, under the JRS, are stated below:

Type of reintegration assistance	Amounts per person
Post-arrival package	One unit cost per person:
	EUR 615
Post-return package	Three separate unit costs:
	One for a case/main applicant in voluntary return (VR):
	EUR 2000
	One for a case/main applicant in forced return (FR):
	EUR 1000

¹⁵ Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection, and for the content of the protection granted

One for each additional family member (in case the application is for a family) - same amount for both VR and FR:

EUR 1000

3.2.3. Post-arrival package (3 days after arrival in CoO)

Core information post-arrival package:

• Eligible assistance categories for short-term assistance

Post-arrival package is immediate assistance upon arrival, organised and coordinated between the responsible Member State and the Reintegration Partner prior to the departure of the TCN. This assistance is provided outside the reintegration plan. The package will be in the amount of **EUR 615**, equivalent to 3 days of the average EU Commission's global daily rate of the DSA/Hotel Ceiling for TC (EUR 205/day). This package can only be granted if the MS initiates the case in RIAT at least 19 calendar days prior to the departure and includes all the relevant information needed, (e.g., flight tickets, immediate medical needs, need for emergency housing, after arrival COVID-19 test, onward transportation need, etc.)

- Cash assistance: the MS may decide to give part of the post-arrival package in cash. This is communicated prior to return to the RP in RIAT. A returnee may benefit from the cash assistance in both packages (post-arrival and post-return). The MS decides which part of the assistance can be paid out in cash or in kind.
- Airport pick-up: provided that the RP/LRP is allowed at least five working days prior to the scheduled return to organise the airport pick-up. Contact details of the returnee are shared prior to return for the necessary arrangements to be made.
- Onward transportation: To be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Contact details of the returnee are shared prior to return to make the necessary arrangements.
- Housing upon arrival: Temporary accommodation or emergency housing upon arrival (max. 3 days) can
 be arranged by the RP/LRP. This is possible with or without an airport pick-up. Contact details of the
 returnee are shared prior to return for the necessary arrangements to be made. In case of UAMs,
 appropriate housing is to be ensured.
- Medical assistance upon arrival: The needs assessment is done by the MS prior to departure. This kind of
 assistance entails referral to medical professionals, which can lead to purchase of medication with a
 prescription or over the counter. Urgent needs upon arrival need to be communicated at least 19 days
 prior to the scheduled return. Contact details of the returnee are shared prior to return for the necessary
 arrangements to be made. This kind of assistance can also include the following:
 - Quarantine costs (in this case the package may be used to cover the entire quarantine period and it is not limited to 3 days).

• Family reunification for UAMs: The RP/LRP facilitates and monitors the entire reunification process and informs the MS accordingly. This reunification can be with a family member or with a governmental appointed guardian.

3.2.4. Post-return reintegration package (12 months after departure from MS)

Core information post-return package:

• Eligible assistance categories for long-term assistance

Post-return reintegration package is assistance beyond immediate arrival, discussed and agreed between the RP/LRP and the returnee during one or more meetings in the CoO. This process can also start before departure and be (partly) agreed between the returnee and the return counsellor. The resulting reintegration support and costs are described in the reintegration plan which is accepted and approved by the responsible MS and by Frontex.

- Cash assistance: a MS may decide to give part of the reintegration assistance in cash. This is communicated prior to return to the RP/LRP via RIAT. The cash assistance may be delivered in both packages.
- Long-term housing and related costs: Rent, basic furniture and renovation/refurbishing costs can be covered from the reintegration assistance. Long-term housing can be covered for a period up to 12 months after departure. The period of 12 months starts on the day of departure from MS. This can also include referral to appropriate housing for vulnerable groups (elderly, victims of human trafficking, disabled, etc.)
- Regular medical assistance: Any type of medical assistance is included as long as it falls within the budget and timeframe for reintegration, including for vulnerable groups.

Education

- Schooling: School fees or further education costs for both children and adults can be covered,
 Specific advice and guidance regarding the most appropriate/adequate structures should be given by the RP/LRP. This may also include special needs referrals and schooling.
- Vocational training: Fees for vocational training may be covered. Specific advice and guidance regarding the most appropriate/adequate structures are given by the RP/LRP.
- Job counselling and assistance in accessing the labour market: RP/LRP may inform the returnee about the current labour market and give guidance on how to access it. If needed this may be combined with the referral to other organisations.
- Legal counselling: This includes advice and referral to relevant organisations in relation to the concrete needs of the returnee. Administrative support for the renewal of ID documents, driver's license, enrolment of children in school, translation of legal/medical documents, support to UAMs regarding guardianship, etc. is also included. Due care and specialised assistance are to be provided in case of UAMs.

- Psychosocial support: psychosocial support may be offered by RP/LRP. If needed, the RP/LRP will refer
 the returnee to more specialised organisations/hospitals
- Assistance in setting up a small business: The RP/LRP may offer assistance to the returnee during the preparation and implementation of a business project. Depending on the needs and capacities of the returnee in setting up a certain business, the role of the RP/LRP can be limited/extended. In any case, the RP/LRP may advise the returnee about possible business ideas and explore together the strengths and weaknesses of a certain project. In the end, the returnee decides which type of business to implement.
- Family reunification (monitoring): RP/LRP checks/monitors if reunification has happened and provides feedback.

All other expenses that do not fall under the above categories are not eligible for Frontex financial support (i.e. - any third country income tax on reintegration assistance is not eligible).

3.3. Workflow of the JRS - Case Management

3.3.1. What is RIAT?

The day-to-day management of cases will be done via the **Reintegration Assistance Tool (RIAT)**. It is the application management tool for using the JRS, which was developed by the EU Commission. **Applications for reintegration assistance can only be made via RIAT**, which ensures an encrypted way of data entry and transmission, according to EU data protection standards.



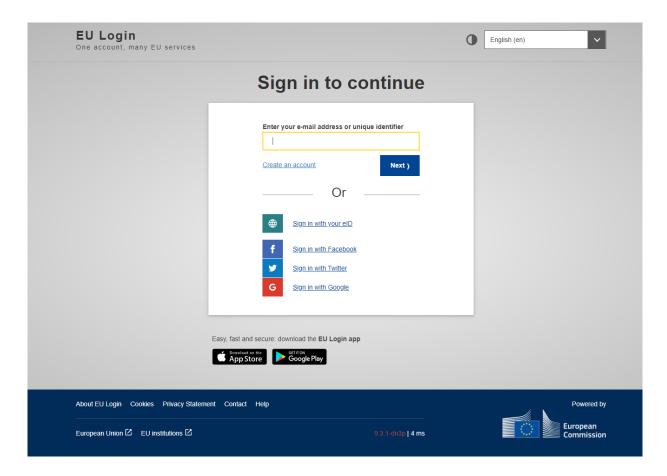
3.3.2. Access to RIAT

To use RIAT, return counsellors need an EU login, which requires a two-factor authentication. The EU login can be requested on the website of the European Migration Network Information Exchange System (EMN IES)¹⁶.

With the EU login and training in RIAT, which is organised and done in coordination with the MS by the RIAT team, which is part of the Return and Reintegration Facility (RRF) under the umbrella of the ICMPD, return counsellors can enter cases. Any requests for training can be requested via ECRET.JRS@frontex.europa.eu.

Without EU login and training there is no possibility for return counsellors to use the JRS.

The operational workflow of the reintegration assistance, via RIAT, are structured in three different Key Moments (KM).



¹⁶ European Migration Network Information Exchange System (europa.eu)

3.3.3. Pre-departure Return and Reintegration Counselling

Core information Pre-departure counselling:

- How to make an application in RIAT
- · The application form

The MS checks the returnee's eligibility according to the Frontex eligibility rules (cf. section 3.2.1.) **Eligibility of** the returnee).

The return counsellor or competent officer ensures that the returnee is provided with sufficient information about the opportunities and procedures to receive post-arrival/post-return assistance under the Frontex JRS.

Frontex provides detailed information on the JRS in RIAT and the Frontex website.

Application (Key Moment 1)

A case can be initiated by a MS authority or by the RP/LRP after return (retroactive cases) after the returnee has expressed interest in receiving reintegration assistance. Retroactive cases follow the same workflows, being validated by the MS before any reintegration plan can be started.

Prior to collecting personal data of the returnee, the return counsellor must ensure that the returnee is provided with relevant information about processing of his/her personal data (section 2 of the application form) and that all individuals on the application form have provided their consent for processing personal data.

The MS decides the amount of the reintegration assistance and submits the application in RIAT. The reintegration assistance cannot be smaller in amount than the Frontex packages (see section 2.3.2). MS may supplement the reintegration assistance if needed. All cases within the JRS must be logged into RIAT before they can be further processed.

RIAT application form

The RIAT application form can be downloaded from RIAT under the under the following path: **Subareas, 3. Active Projects, 3.2. Current RIAT projects, 3.2.1. FX JRS 2022.**

It is intended to be used in case a return counsellor has no stable internet connection or has no possibility to access RIAT during the counselling session (e.g., in a detention centre with restrictions to Wi-Fi and internet access). Since the application form is mirroring the application process in RIAT it can be used to gather all the relevant data, that is needed later to create a case in RIAT.

The application form is divided into the following sections:

Section	Content - information required	Mandatory to be scanned & uploaded
1	Case Registration	Yes
1.1	ID and Family Composition	Yes
1.2	Jointly Returning Family Members	Yes
1.3	Jointly Returning Children	Yes
2	Consent Form (Data protection)	Yes
3	Travel and Reintegration Information	- (just fill in RIAT)
4	Reintegration Budget	- (just fill in RIAT)
5	Contact with Returnee	- (just fill in RIAT)
6	Preparation of Reintegration Plan	- (just fill in RIAT)
7	Assets and Skills	- (just fill in RIAT)
8	Assessment by Return Counsellor	- (just fill in RIAT)

The first 5 sections (1; 1.1; 1.2; 1.3 and 2) of the application form **must be completed, signed and uploaded to RIAT**. The rest of the form can be used to collect the needed data in case the return counsellor does not have the possibility to upload it directly to RIAT, as explained above.

For further clarification of necessary information needed in the application please see section 4 (FAQ).

Once the MS submits the application, it will be forwarded to Frontex for validation/rejection. This validation/rejection refers to the eligibility, quality and completeness check done by Frontex. After validation, the case will be forwarded to the RP for its validation. After the validation of KM1 by the RP, the case moves to KM 2 in RIAT.

The application shall be submitted in a minimum of

- 14 calendar days before departure of the returnee, for receiving the post return package
- 19 calendar days before departure of the returnee, for receiving the post arrival package (see section 3.3.6 on Timers)

There are automatic timers in RIAT to ensure that cases are not "forgotten" or "stuck" in a certain stage of the process. If RIAT users don't reject a case but do not validate it either, it will be validated automatically after certain days. The above-mentioned days for submitting an application pre-departure, are the sum of days it would take for RIAT to auto-validate, if users do not validate the case manually and proactively. After submission of the application, all communication proceeds via RIAT. The RP/LRP checks and validates the application if it is in line

with the requirements stipulated in the Framework Partnership Agreement¹⁷ and the Specific Agreements between Frontex and the RP. If the application is not in accordance with those specifications, the RP may reject the application, providing a very detailed justification. Should the application be rejected, the MS either makes the necessary changes and re-submits the application, or the application is withdrawn.

After the application is validated, it is transferred by the RP to the LRP, if applicable. Based on the information received from the MS, the RP/LRP is responsible for making a note in RIAT, to confirm that the TCN has effectively arrived in the CoO.

3.3.4. Return

Organising the return to the CoO is out of the scope of the JRS and in general done by the MS. However, Frontex can provide support via Frontex Application for Returns (FAR). It is strongly recommended that MS use FAR for booking the flights of the returnees, however the usage of FAR might differ from MS to MS. Return counsellors should check the national requirements and procedures on booking and obtaining the return flight tickets.

3.3.5. Post-Arrival/Post-Return

Core information Post-Arrival/Post-Return:

Preparation and implementation of the reintegration plan

Preparation of the reintegration plan (Key Moment 2)

After arrival in the CoO, the returnee should contact the RP/LRP. The reintegration package will remain allocated to the returnee for 6 months after the date of departure, meaning that the reintegration plan must be validated by the responsible MS within this timeframe. The RP/LRP is expected to register the date of the first contact in RIAT, to keep the MS informed (using the RIAT comment function). After the 6 months have expired without any action, the case will be automatically closed.

If the returnee has not contacted the RP/LRP within **four weeks after the date of departure**, the RP/LRP shall proactively try to contact the returnee. To facilitate this, the MS should provide contact details of the returnee in the CoO.

Once contact has been established, the RP/LRP organises one or more meetings in which both sides develop the reintegration plan. The reintegration plan shall be elaborated, according to the RIAT template, the MS requirements and wherever possible, according to the wishes and in the best interest of the returnee. Once the reintegration plan is validated by Frontex it will be reviewed and validated by the MS. If the MS doesn't react within 7 calendar days, the reintegration plan is auto validated in RIAT.

In KM2 Frontex is checking if the submitted reintegration plan matches the eligible activities under the JRS. If a reintegration plan is rejected by Frontex or the MS, it is sent back to the RP for amendments and re-submission. Rejections must be duly justified.

¹⁷ Framework Partnership Agreements as a result of the call for proposals for Framework Partnership Agreements for Reintegration Assistance 2021/CFP/POST/01. See for further information: Grants (europa.eu) (https://frontex.europa.eu/about-frontex/grants/)

Implementation of the reintegration plan

Once the reintegration plan is validated, the RP/LRP starts the implementation, i.e., the budget for reintegration is spent. The RP/LRP contacts the returnee as often as necessary to implement and monitor the reintegration process. The RP/LRP shall be available to the returnee for additional questions and support. The RP/LRP shall register the dates of contact with the returnee in RIAT to keep MS informed (using the RIAT comment function).

Note: The returnee has 12 months after the date of departure to complete the reintegration and to use the approved reintegration budget. The allocated funds need to be used within that time frame, to be eligible for reimbursement.

3.3.6. RIAT Timers

The purpose of timers within RIAT is to ensure that cases will progress within the timeframe allocated for reintegration. Once the pre-defined time period has passed, the case will be auto validated and move to the next status in RIAT.

Overview of timers in RIAT for each user and KMs

RIAT user or Returnee	KM 1 (application)	KM2 (reintegration plan)	KM3 (final report)
Returnee	-	6 months after date of departure ¹⁸	12 months after date of departure
Member State	7 days to validate	7 days to validate	3 months to validate
Reintegration Partner	7 days to validate	7 days to validate	-
Frontex	7 days to validate	7 days to validate	30 days to validate

4. Frequently asked questions

4.1. Questions related to data entry quality

4.1.1. How much detail is needed for a successful application in general?

To deliver tailored reintegration assistance, RP/LRP need to have sufficient information on the immediate and specific needs of the returnees. That is especially the case if returnees have certain vulnerabilities (illiteracy, disabilities, medical issues, victims of human trafficking, pregnant women, etc.).

¹⁸ If the reintegration plan isn't submitted in RIAT within 6 months after the date of departure, the case is closed in RIAT and the reintegration package can't be granted.

The information provided by the RC in RIAT should be detailed enough, that the RP/LRP can adequately prepare the necessary assistance before arrival, without having to ask additional questions.

All sections marked with a red * must be filled in. If one of these essential fields was not filled in, there appears a notification field with hints what information is still missing.

4.1.2. What details are needed for medical cases?

Medical cases require special attention and make up most of all vulnerable returnees. The RP/LRP needs to know the following details:

- As a general rule, all medical data should be, if possible, in Latin characters or translated into English
- Diagnosis
- Treatment plan
- Medication plan (not older than 6 months), preferably with the agents (active ingredients) of the medicine
- Special immediate medical needs upon arrival (e.g., dialysis)
- Mobility issues, which require a specialized airport pick-up (e.g., returnee is in a wheelchair or has a wheeled walker)
- Any disability, like deaf, visual impairment, etc.,

4.1.3. What details are needed for mental health or psychosocial cases?

Psychosocial cases or people with mental health problems can create additional challenges for the RP/LRP. In addition to the above-mentioned requirements, it is important to add the assessment of the RC on the following details:

- Does the returnee have a record of being aggressive and uncooperative?
- Share impressions of uncooperative behaviour during counselling meetings
- Does the returnee have a record of being harmful towards himself/ herself or towards others?
- Family relationship (support in CoO) → Possible information about the availability of relatives in returning country. This information will help the LRP to solve the problem of referring the returnee to a corresponding state institution.

4.1.4. What details are needed for pregnant returnees?

Pregnant woman can have specific needs upon arrival depending on the due date and their general health condition. It is therefore necessary to provide:

- The expected due date, preferably with a doctor's confirmation (in English)
- Pregnancy reports (indicating probable difficulties)
- Family relationship (support network in CoO)

4.1.5. What details are needed for educational needs?

Reintegration into the education system in the CoO can be challenging for families with children who spend several years abroad under a different educational system. The following information is needed:

- Which languages do children speak?
- School records, preferably translated
- Specific needs for children (autism, etc)

4.1.6. What details are needed for the airport pick-up?

To ensure an uncomplicated airport pick-up, the RP/LRP needs the following information:

- · Flight details: date of departure, arrival date and time, final destination, flight number
- If possible and if further transportation is needed
- Name of the main applicant, preferably an ID with a recent photo to be able to pick the arriving returnees
- Contact phone number, in case the RP cannot find the returnee at the airport

4.1.7. What details are needed for emergency housing?

Every returnee has different needs and expectations regarding emergency accommodation. To avoid misunderstandings and conflicts between the RP/LRP and the returnee, it is necessary to communicate the wishes of the returnee. On the other hand, it is also necessary to manage the returnees' expectations by preparing him/her that it cannot be guaranteed that temporary accommodation is according to the wishes of the returnee (regarding standard and possibilities to cook). The main purpose for temporary accommodation is that the returnee does not need to sleep on the street or in an insecure place after arrival.

- For how long is accommodation needed (1,2 or 3 days)?
- What type of accommodation is needed (hotel, apartment with possibility to cook, hostel)?

4.1.8. What details are needed for onward transportation?

Onward transportation in some CoO can be challenging due to local conditions (e.g.: limited railway coverage or lack of public transportation). In cases of long distances to the final destinations, private transport must be organised or negotiated prior to return. To ensure the availability of onward transportation upon arrival the RP/LRP needs the following information:

- What is the exact final destination (name of the village/town, ideally with the exact address)?
- What type of transport is preferred (train, plane, bus or taxi)?
- What amount of luggage does the individual/family have?

4.2. Questions related to the application procedure

4.2.1. How long does it take to get an answer on the JRS eligibility check?

There are automatic timers in RIAT to make sure that a case is not stuck in a certain stage, due to inactivity of a user. If a case is entered by a return counsellor, it will be forwarded to the internal control, which is doing a quality of data entry, eligibility and quality check. After that the case is forwarded to the designated MS coordinator. The coordinators check once more if all relevant data was inserted and whether the necessary documents were uploaded. Once the case is validated by the MS coordinator and forwarded to Frontex, the eligibility check won't take longer than a maximum of 14 or 19 calendar days (see section 3.3.6. on timers). In practice the validation process will be faster because Frontex won't take 7 days to validate a case.

4.2.2. What means the 19- and 14-days pre-departure deadline?

As mentioned above there are automatic timers in RIAT, which ensure that cases are pushed forward to the next stage (Key Moment) if they are not rejected at a certain point. The maximum number of days if no manual validation would take place are 19 days pre-departure for cases with post-arrival assistance and 14 days for cases without. However, in practice there will be a swifter validation process if all necessary data is provided correctly.

4.2.3. Is it possible to contact the Local Reintegration Partner prior to departure?

Once a case is validated by Frontex, it will be forwarded to the RP/LRP. Case related questions can always be addressed by the RC in RIAT through the comment function. If a new comment has been made the RC, the MS and the RP/LRP will see a **red dot below the comment icon**. RP can be contacted as well through the Frontex Help Desk (<u>ECRET.JRS@frontex.europa.eu</u>) or through the coordinators of the MS in RIAT.

If there is an immediate need to contact the RP/LRP, for instance regarding vulnerable cases, the RC can find the contact details in the country leaflets, to arrange/schedule a pre-departure VC session between the returnee and the RP/LRP.

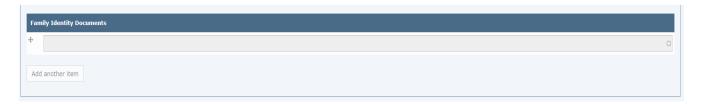
But that can only happen after the case has been validated. Any communication that needs to happen before the case is accepted, is done by email. However, communication, containing personal data is only possible via secure and encrypted ways. **Under NO circumstances** can emails be sent between the RP/LRP and the RC containing personal data.

4.2.4. Is it possible to change the date of departures in RIAT?

Yes, it is possible to change the date of departure in RIAT. At the moment of submitting the application an estimated date of departure can be entered by the RC. It is important to note that the exact date of departure must be known to the RP/LRP at least 5 calendar day in advance for a returnee to be eligible to receive post-arrival assistance.

4.2.5. Is it possible to apply for reintegration assistance without any ID documents?

Since the effective return of a third country national (TCN) is not possible without ID documents, all TCN eligible for reintegration support, must have an ID document, whether it is a passport, identification form or laissez-passer or any other type of document legally accepted for travel. Whatever the case, the respective document should be uploaded in RIAT under 'Family Identity Documents'.



4.2.6. Is it mandatory to upload the ID document at the time of the case registration?

No, ID documents do not have to be uploaded at the time the case is created. Nevertheless, the ID documents must be uploaded before the case is pushed from the MS to Frontex in KM1, so this means that the documents should be uploaded before the 19/14 days pre-departure.

Where travel documents are issued by TC authorities only a few days before departure, and the case has already been forwarded to the RP, the scan of the document shall be uploaded as an attachment to a comment using the comment function as soon as it is available.

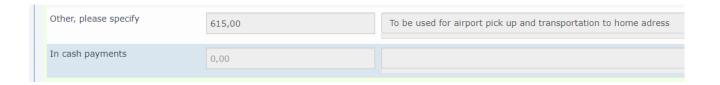
4.2.7. Is it mandatory to use the provided PDF application form and to upload it into RIAT?

The paper application form is intended to be used in the situation when a return counsellor does not have access to RIAT during the counselling session. It is a mirror of the information that is required to be entered in RIAT. The application form should also be used by the RP/LRP when initiating a case from the CoO. From this perspective, sections 1-2 are mandatory every time since they contain identifying data and the consent form, and the rest is not mandatory on paper but can be filled in on RIAT. A PDF fillable form is available for downloading in RIAT. Of course, the information in the application form mirrors exactly the RIAT application form, so the information should be entered into RIAT in their respective fields. Otherwise, the paper copy can be used (sections 3 to 8) by a return counsellor to collect this data, then later, be introduced in RIAT by them or someone else. Therefore, these sections are not mandatory to be uploaded as a scanned PDF.

4.3. Questions related to the post-arrival package

4.3.1. Where do I fill in the post-arrival package in RIAT?

At the moment there is no extra field in RIAT which is labelled 'post-arrival package'. It needs to be filled under the section 'Reintegration Budget' in the category 'Other, please specify' and labelled as post-arrival package or with the assistance requested upon arrival.



4.3.2. How much of the post arrival and the reintegration package can be given in cash?

For the purpose of the JRS, there is no limit imposed by Frontex to the MS on how much cash they should offer to the third-country nationals (TCN). This is left to the MS to decide based on their national legislation or internal procedures. RC should check the national provisions to know to what extend cash assistance can be offered. This being said, Frontex strongly advises against giving all of the assistance in cash, as this could create a pull factor.

4.3.3. Who will pay the cash assistance to the returnee?

Cash assistance is part of the post-arrival or the reintegration assistance and will be paid by the RP/LRP in the CoO after arrival. If no airport pick-up was requested prior to departure, the returnee needs to contact the RP/LRP proactively to get the assistance.

4.3.4. How is it possible to contact the Reintegration Partner after arrival?

Before departure the RC should hand out the country leaflet with the address and contact details of the RP/LRP to the returnee. The returnee can also get the eligibility letter, which can be downloaded on RIAT. If the returnee does not contact the RP/LRP within 4 weeks after departure, the RP/LRP is requested to contact the returnee proactively. It is therefore crucial that the contact details of the returnee, which were provided in RIAT are correct. If the returnee changes the mobile phone number and has no valid address in the CoO, it won't be possible to contact him/her.

4.3.5. Is it possible to give cash assistance prior to departure as part of the JRS reintegration budget?

MS can always provide cash assistance pre-departure, either from their own national budgets or AMIF funded, as a top-up to the JRS. Such pre-departure assistance is not part of the JRS budget and cannot be reimbursed by Frontex. Assistance offered under the JRS can only be given after the arrival in the CoO. The cash amounts will be distributed by the Local Reintegration Partners (LRP) in the CoO.

4.3.6. What are the eligibility conditions for retroactive cases and how is the workflow?

Retroactive cases fall under the same eligibility criteria as cases logged in RIAT before the date of departure. Every returnee can apply for reintegration assistance in the CoO by contacting the RP. All data will be entered into RIAT by the RP and must be validated by the responsible MS and Frontex. It is mandatory to submit the reintegration

plan within the first 6 months after the date of departure. For retroactive cases the same time frame, of 12 months after the date of departure to finalise the reintegration process, applies.

4.3.7. Is there a post-arrival package for retroactive cases?

No, for cases submitted after the date of departure there is no possibility to receive the post-arrival assistance.

4.3.8. How is the post-arrival package delivered in practice?

The RP is responsible to deliver the post-arrival package to the returnee and to take care of the prior agreed services such as airport pick-up, emergency housing etc. In cases where MS indicates that the post-arrival package should all be given just in cash, the returnee has 3 calendar days after the day of departure to contact the RP to receive the cash assistance.

Like mentioned above, the field "Other, please specify" in RIAT KM1 (reintegration budget) should be used to describe the activities that fall under the post-arrival package.

4.3.9. How to proceed regarding onward transportation if returnees change plans?

(In cases when the returnee makes a last-minute change of the final destination after arrival?)

The RC is only responsible for identifying the need to provide the 3-day post-arrival assistance and possibly identify in broad strokes important emergency needs. Also, it is the responsibility of the MS to give enough notice to the RP/LRP so they can prepare themselves and be able to provide the necessary assistance. In case of changing the destination for onward transportation, it can easily be solved by the LRP upon arrival. If there is a cancellation fee or the ticket will not be refunded, that amount will be deducted from the post-arrival package.

Of course, if the returnee changes his mind prior to departure, then the RIAT comment function can be used to communicate to the LRP the new, updated information.

4.3.10. What happens if the returnee needs temporary housing for more than 3 days?

Especially in cases when he/she has also applied for a reintegration package. Is it possible to cover costs of the prolonged stay with the post-return package?

In theory, yes, if the temporary housing exceeds the 3 days that are covered by the post-arrival package, then the following nights can be covered by the post-return package. Nevertheless, it must be considered that no spending of the post-return package can be done before the reintegration plan is finalised by the RP and validated by Frontex and the responsible MS. If the reintegration plan can be finalised and validated in the 3 days, covered by the post-arrival package, then it is feasible to continue with the following nights to be paid from the post-return package.

As this might be very difficult to achieve, we would recommend that, the first three nights would be paid by the post-arrival package and the remaining amount paid out in cash. The returnee could then pay the accommodation by cash in the coming days, until the reintegration plan is validated. In some MS returnees receive additional cash grants prior to return, which they could also use to pay for additional nights.

At the same time, provided that the situation is duly justified and communicated fully to all stakeholders, Frontex, MS and RP can work together to assure the speedy development of the reintegration plan and its validation.

4.4. Questions related to the post-return package

4.4.1. Where do I fill in the post-return package in RIAT?

To fill in the amounts designated for reintegration it is necessary to choose 'Yes' in the box 'Is the reintegration budget defined prior to return?' Only then a box with the categories eligible for assistance is opening in RIAT. If the returnee is not sure how to spend the budget and wants to determine it after arrival together with the reintegration partner, it must be filled in the category 'To be defined post-arrival'.

Is the reintegration budget defined prior to return? * Yes				
Reintegration budget	Budgeted Amount (EUR)	Short description		
To be defined post-arrival	2000,00			
Income-generating activity	0,00			
Purchase of professional equipment	0,00			
Vocational training/education for adults	0,00			

4.4.2. How much of the post-return package can be given in cash?

Like mentioned before, it is solely up to the MS to decide how much of the post arrival or post return packages is allocated for the assistance category 'cash'. Even though it is not advised to do so, Frontex does not restrict, if a MS decides to grant cash assistance only. This being said, the provision of high amounts of cash might lead to reintegration becoming a pull-factor for migration, with migrants potentially getting the idea that it is easy to get cash when they ask for return and reintegration. At the same time, it has been proven over and over that providing mostly in-kind assistance has a higher success rate of achieving sustainable reintegration of the returnees.

However, the amount paid out in cash cannot be given for a specific activity, for example for setting up the business/income generating activity, because in such a case obtaining proof of payments for the reintegration partner would become unfeasible and thus the risk of no reimbursement comes into play.

Cash amounts that are paid to the returnee and will be recorded as an expense through a receipt the returnee needs to sign.

All other eligible activities are delivered in-kind.

During the MS consultation conducted by Frontex in 2021, where all of the existing reintegration programmes in Europe were evaluated, it was found that, on average, the MS provide 300 EUR in cash assistance in the case of forced returns and 400 EUR in the case the return is voluntary.

4.4.3. What is the difference between the post-arrival and the post-return package?

The post-arrival assistance of the JRS can only be used for the immediate needs of the returnee in the first 3 days after arrival (e.g.: emergency accommodation, onward transportation, cash assistance, etc.). The RP/LRP needs to know the specific needs and the date of departure at least 5 calendar days in advance to organise the delivery of the assistance.

The aim of the post-return package is to cover the medium and long-term needs after return (maximum 12 months), such as housing, starting a micro-business or school enrolment and tuition fees.

4.4.1. When is the mix of reintegration assistance services decided by the returnee?

Is it prior to return, or upon arrival? And if prior to return, can they adjust their choice once they arrive in the country?

Both possibilities are available. The reintegration plan can be started pre-departure by the RC together with the returnee or it can be left to the returnee to decide together with the case worker in the CoO. This decision is left up to the MS.

Of course, if there are any limitations or obligations on the spending stipulated in the MS's national legislation, this should be indicated from the very beginning in the budget part of the applications form (for example: the amount of 2000 EUR is left for the returnee to decide together with the case worker in the CoO.

For income-generating activities it should be taken into consideration, that there might be restrictions from MS, what type of businesses are not allowed to open (e.g., shops that sell cigarettes or alcohol).

If the process of defining the reintegration plan was started prior to departure, it is not set in stone. Once the returnee arrives in the CoO and based on new information received locally regarding the business or labour markets, for example, they can decide to change their plans. The new plan would be submitted to the MS and the MS would validate or reject it as they would any other plan.

4.4.1. Can returnees benefit from more than one service category?

(e.g., receiving both medical care and transportation to another location) Up to the maximum amount attributed?

Yes, any combination of eligible activities, which are decided when the reintegration plan is developed, is possible (i.e., the father/mother gets a microbusiness, the children schooling).



4.4.2. How can the returnee get the reintegration assistance (Reintegration Plan)?

The reintegration assistance can begin only after the approval of the reintegration plan. The returnee needs to contact the RP/LRP to confirm the reintegration plan, which was already created pre-departure or to create/negotiate a new one, together with the case worker of the RP/LRP. Once the plan is submitted in RIAT, the responsible MS and Frontex will evaluate and validate it, which won't take longer than a few days. After the validation of the reintegration plan, in-kind or cash assistance can be delivered by the RP/LRP.

4.4.1. How is the in-kind assistance of the reintegration plan delivered in practice?

After the approval of the reintegration plan, the returnee can receive the in-kind assistance.

The RP will support the returnee with all the administrative and financial aspects of the in-kind assistance. This support can be, but it is not limited to:

- Arranging doctor's appointments
- Arranging lawyer's appointments
- Supporting the returnee with enrolment in school/courses and making the payments to these external entities.
- Traveling to the returnee's area to monitor the reintegration process if needed
- Arranging the purchase of goods and equipment for setting up a small business and providing all the support with the documentation of starting such an endeavour, etc.

Depending on the local circumstances the payments should be done directly by the RP and the proof of payments collected by the RP and uploaded into RIAT. Where the situation does not allow for this approach, the returnee can be entrusted with the equivalent cash amount with the condition that they submit the proof of payment for the goods/services purchased as soon as possible. This second alternative is not recommended, but at the same time not excluded.

4.4.2. Is reimbursement of expenses possible before the reintegration plan was validated?

A clear no. In some cases, returnees could be impatient and want to get started, believing that up to the total amount promised, they can purchase goods, e.g., for starting a micro-business. It is very important to inform the returnee that without the approval of the reintegration plan by Frontex and the MS, there is no reimbursement of expenses possible. To avoid frustration and possible misunderstandings with the RP/LRP the returnee must be informed about this prior to departure.

4.5. Other questions

4.5.1. Will the reintegration assistance be available to unaccompanied minors (UAM)?

Is Frontex organizing returns for UAM?

In the framework of the JRS there is no mandatory link between Frontex providing reintegration support and Frontex supporting the actual return operation.

In this context, even if the return of UAMs is not supported by Frontex, if the return happens anyway, either organised by the MS itself or through another organisation, then Frontex will provide reintegration support to these UAMs. Of course, the UAMs must have a legal guardian upon return to be able to represent him/her in the legal/financial relationship with the RP/LRP.

4.5.2. Is it possible to receive reintegration assistance after arrival in cases of forced return?

Could a returnee, who is returned by force, and who refused to apply for reintegration prior to his return, still receive reintegration assistance under the JRS?

Forced returnees that refuse to sign any consent or application form can receive an "Eligibility Letter "(a customizable template will be available for download in RIAT) which is issued to them by the MS, containing the contact information of the LRP. If they decide, within 6 months after departure, that they wish to receive reintegration support, they can contact the LRP and get the process started.

This letter can also be used for voluntary returnees that are not sure if they should ask for assistance or not before departure.

4.5.3. Is it necessary to register non-voluntary returnees pre-return for reintegration assistance?

In some MS non-voluntary returnees under ERRIN do not have to be registered pre-return. Is it possible to continue doing so under Frontex JRS?

Non-voluntary returnees that refuse any help or refuse to sign any documents in the beginning do not have to be registered pre-departure. This is also why we have provided a template "Eligibility Letter" which could be just given to them to inform them that if, within 6 months after departure, they would still like to receive some assistance. Following their contact with the local RP, the case can be created and started by the local RP as soon as this feature will be available in RIAT.

5. Expectation Management

Core information Expectation Management:

- Preparation of the returnee for possible challenges
- Shape realistic expectations
- Encouragement

To return voluntarily as an individual or as a family is a huge step which requires courage and support. It is often a decision which is not taken easily and under difficult circumstances (e.g.: issued return decision by national asylum authorities or order to leave). However, it is in the best interest of the returnee to take that step with financial and in-kind support. To help returnees in the reintegration process, the RC needs to dedicate time to expectation management, because well prepared returnees can be more resilient to cope with the challenges after arrival.

Some recommendations on aspects which should be mentioned prior to departure:

5.1. Possible challenges of the reintegration process and coping strategies

Migrants leave their CoO for various reasons - such as: security issues, problems with family members, persecution or the lack of prospects and the perceived opportunities and better living conditions abroad. To start again in the country, a returnee left once is can also confront him/her with the same challenges, which were the reason to leave in the first place.

Important questions to prepare for the return:

- What expectations do you have when you return to your CoO?
- Who will wait for you there?
- Where will you stay?
- What are your plans if the micro-business is not generating the amount of money you expect?
- What do you think how long it will take to set up your business?
- What is your plan B if the business idea you have, doesn't work?
- What other challenges do you expect and how are you preparing for them?
- What strengths and resources (skills, experience, social network, family, etc.) do you have to face the challenges?
- What weaknesses or constraints (unrealistic expectations, responsibility for too many dependant family members, etc.) could threaten your success?

Even some returnees might not be willing to talk about these things in depth, it is recommended that the RC is raising awareness for different scenarios. The goal should be to increase the returnee's resilience because a failure to reintegrate could lead again to emigration.

5.2. Explain what the RP/LRP can do and what is unrealistic

The most important partner for returnees after arrival is the RP/LRP. In general, the RP/LRP is obliged to help and assist the returnee and to develop the reintegration plan. However, reintegration is not a one road, and the returnee is expected to take responsibility for his/her reintegration.

That includes the following aspects which should be mentioned prior to departure:

- RP/LRP have office hours and are not responsible to care for returnee's needs 24/7
- The amount of reintegration assistance, which can be paid out in cash is determined by the MS national legislation and rules and cannot be negotiated with the RP/LRP
- The RP/LRP should also be treated with respect in the same way as the returnee expects to be treated
- RP/LRP cannot solve all problems returnees may face, but are limited to deliver the prior agreed reintegration assistance

5.3. Encouragement of the returnee

Even with good preparation and sufficient information, unexpected things might and will happen after return. It is not possible to prepare for all kind of scenarios, since neither the RC nor the returnee know all the future challenges of the reintegration process. However, it is one of the RC (and the RP/LRP) main tasks to motivate and encourage returnees to not give up easily when such challenges arise. Reintegration is a long-term process and returnees have a better chance to succeed if they know that it won't be easy. Not just the circumstances and the amount of reintegration assistance determines the success of a returnee, but also the mindset and determination to reintegrate.

After all it is also a chance for the returnee to become stronger by overcoming the challenges ahead and that he/she will enjoy the fruit of all the efforts made.

6. How to improve the JRS?

The JRS intends to make the reintegration process easier and more successful. Feedback from RC is appreciated to gather data for future improvements and developments of the Frontex Reintegration Programme. Ideas and recommendations could be sent to ECRET.JRS@frontex.europa.eu.

7. Contact details

Frontex Joint Reintegration Services

Frontex European Border and Coast Guard Agency Plac Europejski 6 00-844 Warsaw, Poland

www.frontex.europa.eu

ECRET.JRS@frontex.europa.eu

Landline: +48 22 2366875 (Service Desk Helpline)

8. Annex I - JRS Process Flow Chart

