



**AD HOC QUERY ON 2019.78 AHQ on Red Cross Restoring Family Links program in detention centers and border crossing points**

**Requested by Vytautas EŽERSKIS on 9 August 2019**

**Compilation produced on 13 November 2019**

**Responses from Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom (21 in Total)**

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**1. Background information**

Lithuanian Red Cross Society, member of International Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (hereinafter – Red Cross), reached out to the State Border Guard Service and Foreigners' Registration Centre of the Republic of Lithuania to consider the possibility of providing Restoring Family Links service for irregular migrants in the Foreigners' Registration Centre, as well as, border crossing points. Red Cross informs that the goal of the Restoring Family Links program is to prevent the loss, restore and maintain family links. Implementation of this program would include these services:

- Tracing people;

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- Family reunification;
- Exchanging family messages (Red Cross Message, RCM);
- Registering and keeping track of individuals;
- Collecting, managing and forwarding information on the dead;
- The transfer of official documents;
- Confirmation of the detention status, issuance of other documentation, etc.

Therefore, the State Border Guard Service and the Foreigners' Registration Centre of the Republic of Lithuania would like to inquire other Member States and Norway to share their experience in cooperation and implementation of the Red Cross Restoring Family Links activities in their respective countries.

## **2. Questions**

**1. Does The Red Cross offer “Restoring Family Links“ activities in detention centers and / or border crossing points to irregular migrants in your MS?**

*Available choices: Yes, No*

**2. If yes, please briefly describe what activities / services are implemented in your Member State.**

**3. What challenges do detention centers/border crossing points face cooperating with The Red Cross while providing such services to irregular migrants? What are the examples of good practice?**

**4. Were there any cases of misuse of these services in your MS? If yes, please describe.**

We would very much appreciate your responses by **9 September 2019**.

## **3. Responses**



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<sup>1</sup> If possible at time of making the request, the Requesting EMN NCP should add their response(s) to the query. Otherwise, this should be done at the time of making the compilation.

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		Wider Dissemination <sup>2</sup>	
	EMN NCP Austria	No	
	EMN NCP Belgium	Yes	<p>1. No</p> <p>2. In Belgium the Red Cross offers family tracing, but this is not actively promoted in the detention centers or at the border. The Red Cross is not really present at border crossing points at the Belgian border or in detention centers. However, the ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross) has access to the Belgian Detention Centers. Their aim is to ensure humane treatment and condition of detention for all detainees, regardless of the reasons for their arrest and detention. They promote the Restoring Family Links (RFL) services to the detention authorities, whenever they visit. The Belgian Red Cross has some projects in detention facilities, such as the guiding of children who are going to visit their mother or father in detention facilities.</p> <p>3. NA</p> <p>4. NA</p>

<sup>2</sup> A default "Yes" is given for your response to be circulated further (e.g. to other EMN NCPs and their national network members). A "No" should be added here if you do not wish your response to be disseminated beyond other EMN NCPs. In case of "No" and wider dissemination beyond other EMN NCPs, then for the Compilation for Wider Dissemination the response should be removed and the following statement should be added in the relevant response box: "This EMN NCP has provided a response to the requesting EMN NCP. However, they have requested that it is not disseminated further."


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	<p>EMN NCP Bulgaria</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>1. Yes</p> <p>2. The Bulgarian Red Cross (BRC) is the only national organization of the Red Cross on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria which is part of the international Red Cross and the Red Crescent. The status and the powers of the organization are regulated in a special law, accepted in 1995.</p> <p>In art.4, para.1, item 7 of the Bulgarian Red Cross Act are regulated the powers of the organization, namely: "item 7 – in compliance with the Geneva conventions of August 12, 1949, the Additional protocols to them of June 8, 1977 and the resolutions of the international conferences of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent search on the territory of the country and out of it for members of families, separated as a result of wars, armed conflicts and natural disasters".</p> <p>In art.5, para.2 in the same Act is mentioned that the obligation of the state institutions in the Republic of Bulgaria is to support the Bulgarian Red Cross when implementing its tasks. In this regard, the Migration Directorate – Mol is bound by the obligation to assist the Bulgarian Red Cross in searching third country nationals (TCNs), indicated by the organization in connection with family reunion.</p> <p>The Bulgarian Red Cross is a key partner of the Migration Directorate in care and support of the accommodated TCNs in the special homes for temporary accommodation of foreigners (detention centers), which are part of the Migration Directorate. The interaction between the Migration Directorate and the Bulgarian Red Cross is regulated on the basis of bilateral agreement. Employees of the Bulgarian Red Cross visit every week the special homes for temporary accommodation of foreigners (SHTAF) to assist TCNs with specific needs by providing humanitarian assistance – sanitary ware, clothes, shoes, specific baby food, and medicines. There is a Bulgarian Red Cross (BRC) group at the Restoring Family Links Service, which is assisted by the International Committee of the Red Cross. The BRC group visits regularly the SHTAF to assist the family reunion by collecting information.</p> <p>The BRC carries out the whole package of activities listed by NCP Lithuania in connection with the searching and family reunion. Detailed information can be found on the website of the organization – <a href="http://www.redcross.bg">www.redcross.bg</a>.</p> <p>3. There are no challenges in the interaction between the SHTAF and the BRC representatives. The exchange of information for searched TCNs, between the BRC and the Migration Directorate,</p>
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			<p>is carried out in an official manner by sending check lists with searched TCNs about whether they are registered on the territory of the country and by providing data on their location.</p> <p>Good practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- weekly visits of BRC employees in the SHTAF;</li> <li>- provided opportunity for direct meetings with accommodated foreigners;</li> <li>- good interaction with the management of the SHTAF and the staff which works directly with the accommodated foreigners (police inspectors-interviewers);</li> <li>- written information for TCNs in different languages is provided on the activities carried out by the BRC and specifically on the activity of searching and family reunion;</li> <li>- dashboards affixing pictures of searched TCNs by their relatives through the International Red Cross Network;</li> <li>- check lists of searched TCNs submitted by the BRC.</li> </ul> <p>4. No</p>
	<p>EMN NCP Croatia</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>1. Yes</p> <p>2. Croatian Red Cross is implementing activities in detention centers according to the Agreement with Ministry of Interior that allowing regular visits of this centers (3 centers). In detention centers Croatian Red Cross is providing RFL activities and psychosocial support to all categories of migrants. RFL activities are focused on promotion of the RFL activities and information on measures with the aim to prevent family separation, restoring had maintaining contact between separated family members and searching for family members by initiating tracing request. Taking into account that migrants are staying in detention centers for short period of time, the most useful tools are those that enable family members to connect as quickly as possible (e.g. to restore and maintain family contact - distributing phone cards). In the case of family separation, beneficiaries can initiate tracing request during the regular visit of the Red Cross staff to the centers. During the tracing procedure Croatian Red Cross Tracing Service is contacting international RFL network (national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies or the International Committee of the Red Cross),</p>



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			<p>if the separation occurred in other countries, or Ministry of Interior if place of disappearance/separation took the place in Croatia.</p> <p>Croatian Red Cross is providing different activities in reception centers for asylum seekers (2 centers). RFL activities provided in reception centers are, as well, focused on promotion of the RFL activities and information on measures with aim to prevent family separation, restoring and maintaining contact between separated family members and searching for family members by initiating tracing request. For restoring and maintaining family contact RFL staff is offering phone calls or assisting in using web apps. As well RFL staff is working on promotion of the tool "Trace the Face" for families who have lost contact with their relatives somewhere within or on their way to Europe.</p> <p>3. Migrants, those who are irregularly entering Croatia, are mostly just passing through the country on their way to the Western European countries, trying to stay "invisible" during their journey, which limits the access and use of the traditional RFL tools. In the case of the separation, from our experience, migrants will open tracing requests when they reach the country of desired destination.</p> <p>Example of good practice is that Croatian Red Cross has regular access to the detention centers and good cooperation with the management and personnel of the center, focused on assisting the beneficiaries. Likewise, in the case of the tracing requests received from other national societies Croatian Red Cross can check at the Ministry of Interior (in charge of the registration of migrants in Croatia) data related to the traced persons.</p> <p>4. No.</p>
	<p>EMN NCP Cyprus</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>1. No</p> <p>2. N/A</p> <p>3. N/A</p>




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			4. N/A
	EMN NCP Czech Republic	Yes	<p>1.</p> <p>2. The possibility of people tracing was announced on notice-boards in our detention centres. From time to time we answered questions about presence of some concrete person in our facilities.</p> <p>3. It was a big challenge for us, how to effectively inform our clients and at the same time to protect personal data of all interested persons.</p> <p>4. We do not know any case of misuse of these services.</p>
	EMN NCP Estonia	Yes	<p>1. Yes Estonian Red Cross Tracing Service/Restoring Family Links does not offer their activities to irregular migrants at border crossing points, but in case of need, it is possible to organize an interview in the detention center.</p> <p>2. Red Cross helps to find a family member in another country, restore contact with a family member, be reunited with a family member, exchanges family messages, transfers official document. In case of need, an interview with a Red Cross Tracing Service officer can be organized in detention center.</p> <p>3. The cooperation between the Estonian Red Cross and the detention center has been good.</p>

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			<p>There have been very few cases of family tracings, hence there are no challenges or good practices to highlight at this point.</p> <p>4. There have not been any misuse cases.</p>
	EMN NCP France	Yes	<p>1. No</p> <p>2. n/a</p> <p>3. n/a</p> <p>4. n/a</p>
	EMN NCP Germany	Yes	<p>1. No</p> <p>2. No direct integration of the Red Cross by German authorities. But in reception centers there are put up posters of the Red Cross to enable petitioners to get directly in contact with the Red Cross.</p> <p>3. n/a</p> <p>4. n/a</p>
	EMN NCP	Yes	<p>1. Yes</p>



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	Hungary		<p>2.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tracing people;</li> <li>• Registering and keeping track of individuals;</li> <li>• Providing support to fill in the registration form;</li> <li>• Distributing leaflets, putting posters on RFL service;</li> <li>• Providing information about the RFL service;</li> <li>• Collecting, managing and forwarding information</li> </ul> <p>3. We haven't experienced any difficulties in the cooperation. As a good practice, it's worth mentioning that National Directorate-General for Aliens Policing and the Hungarian Red Cross have signed an official cooperation agreement, which – among other things – lays down the details of the RFL programme.</p> <p>4. No</p>
	EMN NCP Italy	Yes	<p>1. Yes</p> <p>2. The Italian Red Cross helps reunite people with their families in Italy or abroad, if this is possible. Support is offered to refugee and migrants in cooperation with other organizations such as IOM or CARITAS, as well as local organizations or representatives of ethnic communities. To this end the Italian Red Cross tries to facilitate family reunification and restoring family links through the following activities and services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Advocacy activities with the Italian authorities to facilitate the issue of visas for those who are currently involved in procedures to reunite them with their family;</li> <li>- Advocacy activities with the Italian authorities in order to facilitate the issue of the formal "Nulla-Osta" (non-objection declaration) for those who are currently involved in procedures to reunite them with their family abroad.</li> <li>- Providing support in family reunification;</li> </ul>




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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Transmitting relevant documentation (birth certificates, death certificates ecc);</li> <li>- Helping prisoners of war or political prisoners' in obtaining the ICRC certificates of imprisonment;</li> <li>- Obtaining travel documents released by the ICRC;</li> <li>- Management of demands concerning the research of relatives disappeared during WW1 and WW2;</li> </ul> <p>The "Restoring Family Links" project is usually realized in reception centers; among the activities realized within the framework of this project, it is important to mention the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prevention of family separation for the migrants arriving in the Italian territory: Thanks to this activity the Italian Red Cross volunteers have been able to collect 435 cases of family separation and to deliver "Safe&amp;Well" messages released by migrants to communicate the safe arrival in Italy to the relatives in their countries of origin;</li> <li>- Identification procedures of bodies recovered from the sea: In January 2017 a memorandum of understanding has been signed between the Italian Red Cross, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Extraordinary Committee for Missing Persons to facilitate the identification procedures of the bodies recovered from the sea and the communication to the families of origin.</li> </ul> <p>In addition, in 2017 the Italian Red Cross implemented the following Restoring Family Links initiatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tracing Bus Project: The Tracing Bus project was realized by the Dutch Red Cross in cooperation with Vodafone Dutch and promoted in the Italian territory by the Italian Red Cross. More specifically, the Italian Red Cross made available a travelling bus stopping in different Italian cities to offer migrants the possibility to easily contact their relatives using a free of charge three minutes phone call. Thanks to this project, 7000 migrants have been able to contact their families in the countries of origin;</li> <li>- Trolley chat boxes: Starting from November 2017, the Italian Red Cross decided to support the following reception centers ( Lampedusa Hotspot, extraordinary reception centers of Lecce and Messina, and the Ventimiglia reception centers) with some tools able to realize phone calls in selected countries. More specifically, the trolley chat box is a portable trunk containing useful material for the equipment of a station to help migrants in restoring and maintaining family contacts.</li> </ul>
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			<p>3. N/A</p> <p>4. N/A</p>
	EMN NCP Latvia	Yes	<p>1. No</p> <p>3. N/A</p> <p>4. N/A</p>
	EMN NCP Lithuania	Yes	<p>1. No</p> <p>2. Red Cross reached out to the State Border Guard Service and Foreigners' Registration Centre of the Republic of Lithuania with the possibility of providing Restoring Family Links services described in the background section of this AHQ.</p> <p>3. N/A</p> <p>4. N/A</p>
	EMN NCP	Yes	<p>1. Yes</p>



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	Luxembourg		<p>2. "Restoring Family Links" (Service de Rétablissement des Liens Familiaux) is a service provided by the Luxembourgish Red Cross that can help migrants and refugees with tracking family members abroad. It applies to irregular migrants that are in detention and even is available for Luxembourgish nationals who are looking for lost family members.</p> <p>When the Luxembourgish Red Cross receives a request for tracing, it will launch the search by using its international network of national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies or by contacting the International Committee of the Red Cross. The latter is generally contacted for a search in a country affected by war or by internal conflict. Applicants who wish to trace a family member can make a request for tracing to the Red Cross. The Luxembourgish Red Cross informs the individual having applied for family tracing of the results of its investigation.</p> <p>3. The only problem is to keep the contact with the third country national if s/he is returned. One of the good practices is that the Luxembourgish Red Cross has easy access to the detention center so it can be in constant contact with the applicant.</p> <p>4. No.</p>
	EMN NCP Malta	Yes	<p>1. Yes</p> <p>2. Provision of Initial Calls to new Arrivals in Initial Reception Centre (IRC) and Detention</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Assisting Family reunification through tracing;</li> <li>· Exchanging family messages (Red Cross Message, RCM);</li> <li>· Collecting, managing and forwarding information on the dead;</li> <li>· The transfer of official documents when required ;</li> <li>· Referrals to AWAS (Agency for the Welfare of Asylum Seekers) and other services for vulnerable cases.</li> </ul> <p>3. No particular difficulties.</p>



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			4. N/A
	EMN NCP Netherlands	No	
	EMN NCP Poland	Yes	<p>1.</p> <p>2. National Information and Search Office is implementing the Restoring Family Links programme. The programme is carried out as part of the implementation of the public task: Running the National Information and Search Office, provided for in international conventions on the treatment of prisoners of war and on the protection of civilians during war (in the current year based on the agreement with the Ministry of Interior and Administration No. 1 1 / DAP I2019 of 29 March 2019). However, at this moment the employees of the Office do not visit detention centers and do not work at border crossing points.</p> <p>Moreover, in January 2015 the Head of the Office for Foreigners (the entity responsible for asylum procedures in Poland) signed an agreement with the Head of the Polish Red Cross setting out principle of cooperation towards restoring family links .</p> <p>The Polish Red Cross, after receiving the request for the search for a missing family member, asks questions to both the Office for Foreigners and the Border Guard in order to check whether the missing person is on the registers of the above-mentioned institutions.</p> <p>Additionally, according to the Act of 13 June 2003 on granting protection to foreigners within the territory of the Republic of Poland after receiving an application for international protection from a minor, the Head of the Office for Foreigners without delay: informs the minor about the possibility of seeking his/her relatives through international NGOs – in this case with polish red Cross and assists a minor in establishing contact with NGOs and initiates the search for relatives.</p> <p>Informing minors about the abovementioned rights usually takes place during the interview. It is</p>



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			<p>worth noting that in practice minors rarely use this opportunities.</p> <p>3. N/A.</p> <p>4. N/A.</p>
	EMN NCP Slovakia	Yes	<p>1. No</p> <p>2. n/a</p> <p>3. n/a</p> <p>4. n/a</p>
	EMN NCP Spain	Yes	<p>1.</p> <p>2. The Red Cross is present in Spanish detention centres, as well as in disembarkation points for rescued migrants. There is no specific agreement for the implementation of the Restoring Family Links Program. However, the Red Cross is implementing this program in Spain, so eventually it can also be accessed by migrants at the places mentioned above. In principle, detainees are not likely to demand these services, since they are in detention in order to leave the country. On the other hand, migrants having just arrived on Spanish soil normally have other priorities to be required from the Red Cross, such as medical assistance. The Restoring Family Links program is more likely to be used in assistance centres for migrants, where integration is worked upon.</p>

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			<p>3. There are other priorities</p> <p>4. Not to our knowledge</p>
	EMN NCP Sweden	Yes	<p>1. No</p> <p>2. The Swedish Red Cross volunteers that visits the detentions centers in Sweden does not have any RFL activities, but they are able to do referrals to the RFL services handled by employees at the Swedish Red Cross.</p> <p>3. To the best of our knowledge the cooperation is working well. The Red Cross is for example providing posters of Trace the face and the RFL services at the Swedish Red Cross and how they can be reached which are posted at the detention centers.</p> <p>4. No information available</p>
	EMN NCP United Kingdom	Yes	<p>1.</p> <p>4. We are not aware of any.</p>

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